

ADVENTURES ON TÉKUMEL

PART TWO/VOLUME ONE: COMING OF AGE IN TÉKUMEL

Solitaire Adventures by M.A.R. Barker



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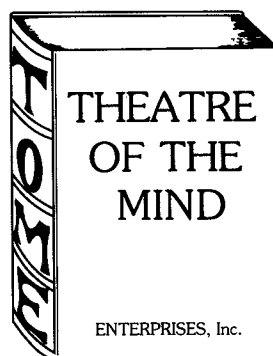
**Part Two, Volume One:
Coming of Age in Tsolyánu**

**Solitaire Adventures for Tékumel
by M.A.R. Barker**

Illustrations by Kathy Marschall and James Bailey

**With special thanks to:
Bob Alberti, Jr. and Thomas Juntunen**

Adventures on Téकुmel Part Two, Volume One Coming of Age in Tsolyánu A TOME, Inc. Presentation



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SOLITAIRE ADVENTURES

Part Two is devoted to "solitaire adventures." It assumes that you have developed a character in Part One, and that this person is now about fifteen years old and ready for the "on-the-job" training young aristocrats (both male and female) receive in Tsolyáni society.

10. DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Instruction: Part two of this book is divided into three volumes. In volume 1 you go on adventures A (Bey Su), B (The Army), and C (The Priesthood). In other volumes there are other adventures. Most of these adventures do not overlap or repeat more than the initial combat Sections (Secs. 11, 12, and 13), plus the short Section listing some useful "Eyes" (Sec. 14). Each set of adventures thus stands on its own, with a few exceptions that direct you forward or back to other parts of this work.

You may go on any or all of the adventures in Part Two. You cannot go on the same adventure twice, nor do you need to go on every adventure. You should at least go enough to raise yourself above the level of a novice when you start the rôle-playing game. When you have finished an adventure, you return here to Sec. 10 to go back to school the following year (repeat Sec. 9., ff. in Part One), choose a new adventure, or enter the rôle-playing game.

The adventures are not necessarily sequential: you can select "C," go forward to "B," and come back to "A." There is a logical time-continuity in the case of the "historical" adventures, however: parts of "A" occur before "B," and parts of adventures in other volumes follow "B." The time frame will be obvious.

Instruction: if you go off on a mission and return home alive (i.e. are not killed, enslaved, or delayed abroad), you still get a HALF year's worth of skills and hobbies in Sec. 9, ff. in Part One, just as if you had stayed home for six months! Very few journeys last as long as a year, and it is assumed you spend the rest of your time in school, the temple, or the practice-yard.

Instruction: record changes in your personal attributes on your Character Record Sheet. Keep a careful check on the number of years you spend adventuring so that your

character enters the rôle-playing game at the proper age. If you wish, you may space your adventures farther apart in order to develop an older character. By the time you are thirty, however, you should choose a career and settle down. Keep track of your possessions. Money and prices are stated in Tsolyáni Káitars; cf. Sec. 4.3 in Part One. Ranges of amounts instruct you to roll a D10 or D100. For example, 1-100 Káitars = a D100 roll; 100-1,000 Káitars = a D10 roll x 100; 1,000-10,000 Káitars = a D10 roll x 10, etc.

Instruction: whenever you wish to join the rôle-playing game, the gamesmaster will provide a rationale for your character to be in the proper place to join the players' party.

Your adventure choices for this volume of Part 2 are as follows. Good luck!

1. You travel to Béy Sü; start in Sec. 15. If you live in Béy Sü, go on the adventure anyway. Your clan-mothers and aunts think you should socialise more.
2. The Seal Emperor wants YOU! Join the army: start in Sec. 16. Even non-warriors, priests, and pacifists can find careers in the army. It is also a fine way of getting kids out of the clanhouse.
3. Join the temple of your choice as a priest or priestess; start in Sec. 17. You surely have some talent the temple can use!

11. I DON'T THINK THEY LIKE US!

When you are instructed to fight, you are allowed only ONE D100 ROLL, whether you are alone or whether you are accompanied by comrades or even a whole Legion. This roll is based solely upon your own fighting ability. Combat is thus very different from the rôle-playing game. In this book all weapons, magical devices, and spells are abstracts: they are identical for combat purposes! In the rôle-playing game each has its powers, strengths, and weaknesses. Clever uses of a weapon, spell, or item are thus not possible here but can be done in the rôle-playing game (to the frustration and fury of the gamesmaster!). In every combat you have three choices:

1. Fight physically: use your modified Height-Build-Strength number (Sec. 6.4) plus FIVE POINTS per skill level in the weapon you wish to use: i.e.:

$$\text{H.B.S.} + (\text{Weapon skill level} \times 5) \\ = \text{your combat number}$$

For simplicity's sake, this applies whether you use a hand weapon or a missile weapon. Cross-reference this with your opponent's "type" (identified whenever fights occur in the text of this book) on the combat table below. Now roll D100: if you score lower or equal to the number listed in the table, you win; go to Sec. 12; if you score above the listed number, you lose. Go to Sec. 13.

2. Let your comrades fight for you: if you have no warrior skill, and/or your magic is not powerful enough to help, you may fight physically using only your Height-Build-Strength number, or you can make your one D100 roll based upon the 101-150 column of the table below; this simulates letting your friends fight for you. If you win, you still go to Sec. 12, and if you lose, you go to Sec. 13.
3. Fight magically: find your "sorcerer level" (first through fourth only in this book; cf. Sec. 8.5). Cross-reference this with your opponent's "magical resistance" type number in the lefthand column. You cast your "aggressive" spells at this level. Aggressive spells from Book I include only "Domination," "Soporiferousness," "Terrorisation," and (for animals) "Zoic Domination." More are provided in Sec. C. ff. below. If you have a magical weapon (e.g. an "Eye"; cf. Sec. 14), you may use it instead of a spell (you can't do both!) Your opponent's magical resistance number depends upon size and strength, plus any skill levels in sorcerer. In this book, each opponent's "type number" is given in the text. When you have found your level and the opponent's number, roll D100: if you score lower or equal to your opponent's number, you win. Go to Sec. 12. If you score above this number, you lose. Go to Sec. 13.

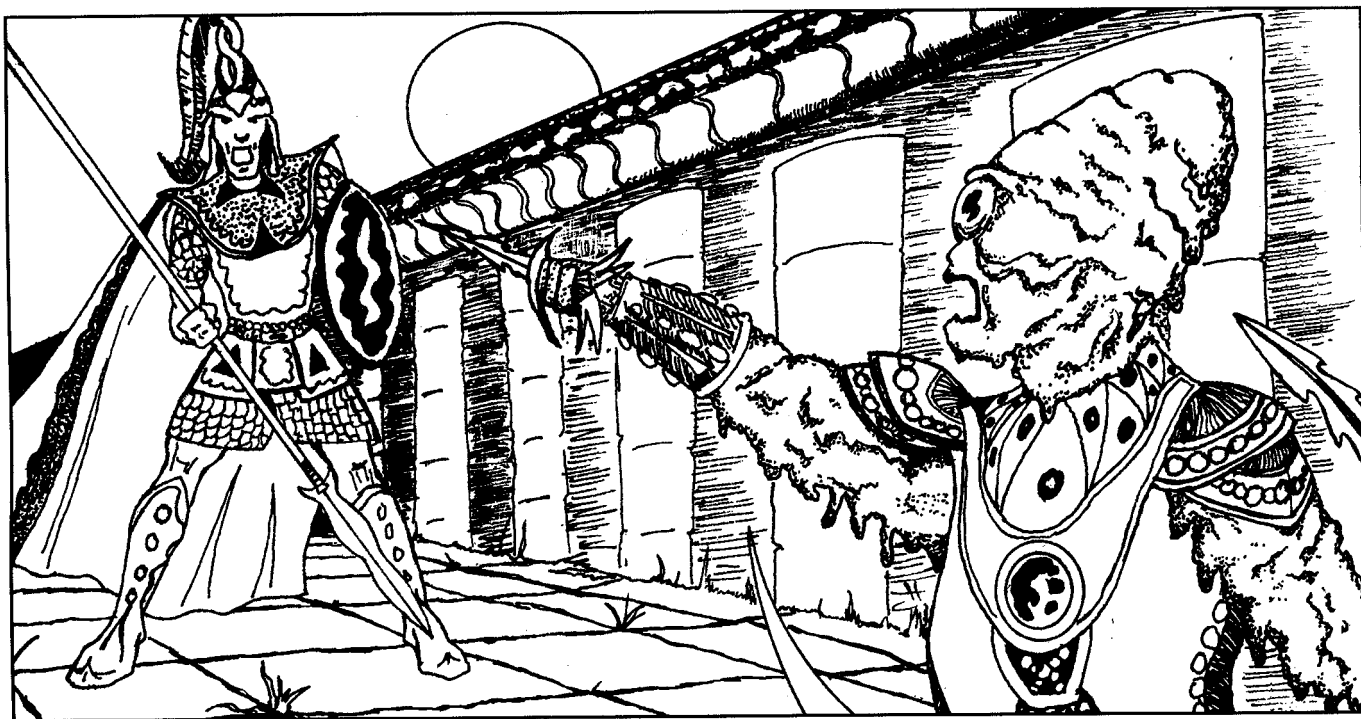


TABLE 11.1: PHYSICAL COMBAT

ENEMY'S TYPE NUMBER	YOUR H.B.S. + (WEAPON SKILL LEVEL X 5)						
	0-50	51-100	101-150	151-200	201-300	301-400	401-up
Type 1	40	50	60	70	80	95	99
Type 2	35	45	55	65	75	90	95
Type 3	30	40	50	60	70	85	90
Type 4	25	35	45	55	65	80	85
Type 5	20	30	40	50	60	75	80
Type 6	15	20	25	35	50	65	75
Type 7	10	15	20	30	40	55	65
Type 8	5	10	15	20	30	45	55
Type 9	1	5	10	15	20	35	45
Type 10	You lose!	1	5	10	15	30	35

TABLE 11.2: MAGICAL COMBAT

ENEMY'S TYPE NUMBER AND DESCRIPTION	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD	FOURTH	MAG. WPN.
1 Small animal; human of Type 1	65	75	85	95	90
2 Large animal; human of Type 2	50	60	70	80	85
3 Bigger animal; human of Type 3; First Level sorcerer	35	45	60	70	75
4 Very large animal; human of Type 4; Second Level sorcerer	20	35	45	55	65
5 Gigantic animal; monster; human of Type 5*; Third-Fourth Level sorcerer	10	25	35	45	55
6 Big monster; Fifth-Sixth Level sorcerer	5	15	25	35	45
7 Gigantic monster; Seventh- Eighth Level sorcerer	3	15	20	25	35
8 Absolutely world-shaking monster; Ninth-Tenth Level sorcerer	2	10	15	20	25
9 Eleventh-Twelfth Level sorcerer	1	5	10	15	20
10 Thirteenth-Fifteenth Level sorcerer. Pray you never meet one of these, in this book at least. Higher levels exist	You lose!	3	5	10	15
*No human is more powerful than Type 5 unless he/she/they have levels of sorcery.					

12. BANG, IT'S DEAD! YOU WIN!

Instruction: when you win a combat, roll a **D10**: 1-9 = you get nothing and are lucky to be alive; 10 = you gain one skill level in the weapon you are using, or one spell if you used sorcery. If you had your friends fight for you (option 2 in Sec. 11), you get no benefits — but at least you're still live!

Instruction: animals and monsters do not carry cash or valuables, but humans often do. If you have defeated

bandits, mutineers, etc., roll **D100**. The score is the number of *Káitars* you find. Again, if you had your friends fight for you, you get no plunder.

Instruction: return to the adventure Section you came from and continue.

13. BANG, YOU'RE DEAD (YOU HOPE NOT!) YOU LOSE!

Instruction: if you lose a fight, roll a **D10**: 1-3 = you're dead (sorry!); 4-5 = you are seriously wounded; 6-8 = you are lightly wounded; 9-10 = you are miraculously unharmed and return to the adventure.

Instruction: if you are lightly wounded, you lose 1-10 (a **D10** roll) Body Damage Points (Sec. 6.5). You may choose to employ only Body Damage Point totals, or you may roll randomly to see which body part is hit. If this kills you, apologies! A serious wound loses 2-20 (a **D10** roll x 2)

Body Damage Points. You regain these points after you have returned to *Tsolyánu*: i.e. to Sec. 10. If your Body Damage Points fall below your total in Sec. 6.5, you are dead. If you live, return to the adventure.

Instruction: if you have the skill of "physician," a spell of "healing," or an "Eye of Healing" (Sec. 14), roll a **D10**: 1-6 = your wounds are healed without any loss of points; 7-10 = you do not use your device, spell, etc. in time: go to the preceding paragraph..

14. THE EYES HAVE IT!

During various of the adventures in this book you may find an "Eye." These are devices of the Latter Times, which perform functions similar to magical spells. Eyes were developed later after humankind had become adept in penetrating the "Wall of Reality" and bringing energy over into *Tékumel's* Plane. An Eye is about the size and shape of a human eye but is made of ancient non-conducting metals, which do not impede spell-casting. An Eye has an aperture in front, and a firing stud on the back. Some also have a little charge-counter beside the firing stud with numerals written in the unreadable languages of the distant past. Later owners

sometimes added translations in *Llyáni*, *Bednálljan*, etc. An Eye may contain up to 100 charges, but most have been depleted over the centuries.

Instruction: roll a **D10** to determine which Eye you have found. Then roll **D100** TWICE and subtract the smaller score from the larger score to discover how many charges it has. (Eyes with many charges are rare.) Eyes affect varying numbers of targets: e.g. 1-5 = a **D10** roll ÷ 2. Eyes marked "A" are "aggressive and may be used as weapons. All Eyes and spells allow unwilling targets a "saving throw" in the rôle-playing game; this is assumed in the "magical weapon" column in Sec. 11.



TABLE 14.1: THE “EYES”

NAME OF THE EYE	DESCRIPTION
1 The Excellent Ruby Eye	Puts 1-5 human-size beings slightly out-of-phase with this Plane, causing them to be “frozen” in a faint reddish glow. Victims cannot move, think, or act. They cannot be harmed or touched. Time stops for them until another charge of this same kind of Eye releases them. Range: 50 feet; instantaneous.
2 The Eye of Aerial Excellence	The user and 1-5 comrades may fly up to 300 feet per minute. Lasts 10 minutes. Persons or equivalent weights must be within 5 feet of the user in order to be picked up, and a saving throw is allowed to a target who does not wish to go along on the ride!
3 The Eye of Frigid Breath (A)	Projects a beam of intense cold, which freezes 1-5 targets solid (and dead!). Range: 50 feet. Instantaneous.
4 The Eye of Incomparable Understanding	Translates any spoken human or nonhuman language (but not the languages of the Latter Times, the Great Ancients, nor the secret tongues of the various priesthoods, however) into speech intelligible to the user. It does not act upon written materials. Its effects last 4 minutes and have a range of 20 feet.
5 The Eye of Non-Seeing	Renders the user and 1-5 comrades (within a 5 foot radius) invisible; foes of invisible beings go up two rows in Sec. 11. Lasts 5 minutes.
6 The Ineluctable Eye of Healing	Heals 1-10 lost Damage Points and cures diseases. Range: 5 feet. Instantaneous.
7 The Terrible Eye of Raging Power (A)	Fires a charge of raw electricity that hits 1-5 targets; takes away 3-30 (a D10 x 3) Damage Points! Range: 100 feet, but will rebound upon the user in a smaller space. Instantaneous.
8 The Eye of Hastening Destiny	Causes the user and 1-5 comrades to move at 3 times their normal speed. Comrades must be within a 5 foot radius of the caster. Lasts 2 minutes.
9 The Eye of Allseeing Wonder	Projects a beam which reveals invisible objects or beings, nexus points, and enchanted items. It does not reveal ordinary secret doors. Range: 30 feet. Lasts 1 minute.
10 The Eye of Being an Unimpeachable Shield Against Foes	Provides immunity from hand weapons and physical missiles for the caster and 1-5 comrades within a 5 foot radius. It offers no protection against spells or magical devices. Lasts 5 minutes.



15. Béy Sü

A. THE SOUL OF THE WORLD

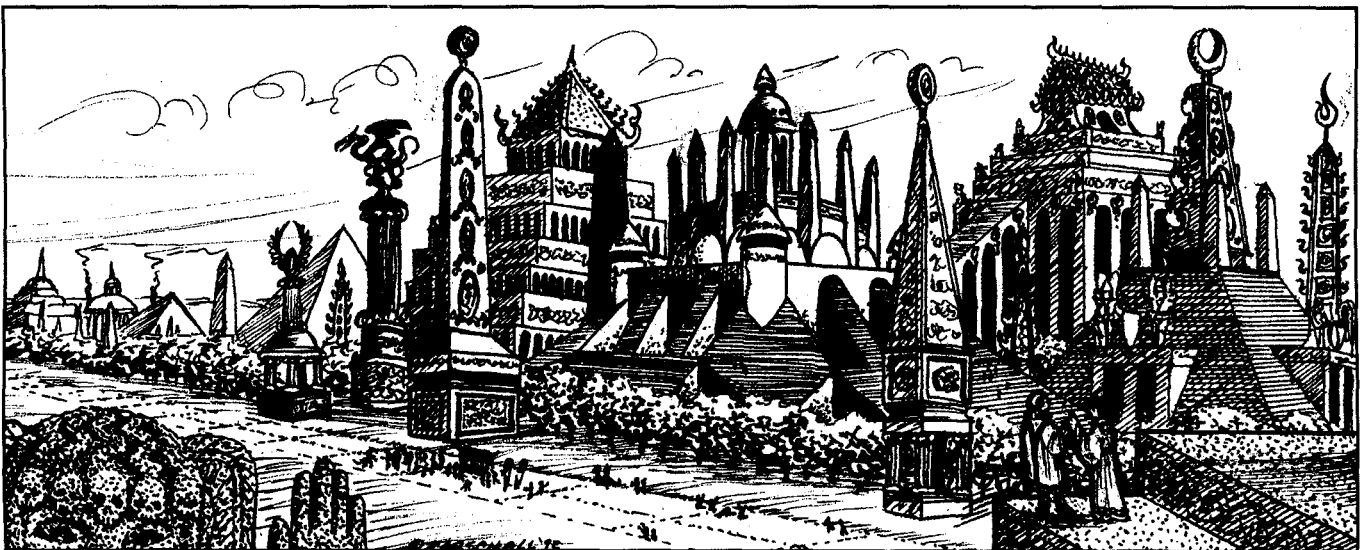
Almost a thousand *Tsán* upstream from Jakállá, along the muddy banks of the broad Missúma River (or as the Bednálljans called it, Mssúma), stands the city of Béy Sü. The name means "Soul of the World" in the Bednálljan tongue, and modern Tsolyáni *bá* "soul" and *wísu* "world" are said to be cognates. Built first on a nearby site by King Utékh Mssá, the grandson of Queen Nayári of the Silken Thighs who founded the First Imperium, the city was soon moved upstream to its present location by King Girandú, the grandson of King Báshdis Mssá I and cousin of Báshdis Mssá III. This mighty metropolis has thus remained the capital of Tsolyánu for millennia.

Béy Sü has undergone many changes, of course. The Tsolyáni still practice the ancient Bednálljan custom of *Ditlána*: every 500 years or so, a ruler may order a city vacated and its buildings pulled down to their foundations and rebuilt. The stones of the old form the foundations for the new. This has both practical and ritual significance. "Thus is the world made pure," as the Bednálljans put it. Military and economic exigencies may cause *Ditlána* to be postponed, and Béy Sü is now 384 years overdue. When *Ditlána* is carried out, many hallowed sanctuaries and secret treasure-chambers are buried beneath the new streets and edifices. The priesthoods (and others) dig tunnels down to these places, excavate subterranean rooms, and thus continue to use them. All manner of corridors, chambers, tombs, and dungeons are thus found in the *Tsu'urúm* ("Underworld"), as this type of catacomb is called. There are often several levels, some directly over one another, but others are offset by considerable

distances as the river and the city above shifted over the ages. The priesthoods and the Imperium patrol underworld areas important to them, while collapsed basements, unused tunnels, and lesser regions are inhabited by homeless people, beggars, bandits, and — further down — by beasts, monsters, tomb and temple guardians, and beings somehow surviving since the Latter Times. Some of these "Creatures of the Night" are horrific indeed.

You approach Béy Sü from the south, along a *Sákbe*-road that is the pride of the Empire: huge bastions, escarpments, and crenellated walls march between towers that are fortresses in themselves. Just to the east, the brown Missúma River flows turgidly amongst sandbars and mudflats that require constant dredging. On the eastern bank, half a *Tsán* or more away, you can make out the grey battlements of the matching *Sákbe*-road that leads northeast to Fasiltum and south to Thráya.

Road-guards stop you at the gates to the Walls of Emperor Hejjéka V, "the Openhanded." They inspect your papers — all must carry identification, usually from their clan and from the Palace of the Realm in their home city — and at last let you pass. Around you the throngs of travellers swell to a great concourse, marshalled by soldiers in blue and gold livery. *Chlén*-beasts bawl and rumble; *Hmá* and *Hmélu* bleat plaintively; then these animals are funneled away towards the carters' and butchers' clanhouses in the western suburbs. You continue north, past slums and tenements occupied by the poor. Patyél's Wall lies ahead, a mighty bastion with machicolated parapets, bartizans to provide enfilading fire, and rows of arrow slits. Here the Gate of Imperial Blue Glory blocks your way, a vision of



sapphire-hued enameled tiles and calligraphy inlaid in white and gold. The guards here wear helmets and breastplates, defying the suffocating heat that rises like a wave from the baking stones of the city.

You pause to look out over the river, for here is a famous marvel: a natural promontory that projects out into the stream, with Patyél's Wall running along on top of it. At the end, where the river rushes through a narrow channel, there is a single tower from which a great bronze chain extends across to a similar tower on the eastern bank, thus blocking the river to traffic, if desired. The channel would soon be silted shut, were it not for subterranean conduits that carry most of the river's current underneath the promontory. If you look hard among the mists on the eastern shore, you can make out the grim walls of the Imperial prison, the Tólek Kána Pits, and the barracks of the prison guards, called the Legion of Kétel, beside it. The Bednálljan Emperor, Báshdis Mssá I, originally dug real pits for his captives into the ooze called the Swamps of the Blessed, but the Engsvanyáli architects sank proper foundations and erected the buildings you see today. You are not even inside Béy Sü yet, and already your mind reels with wonders!

Your route leads through prosperous business and residential districts. Ahead, at each corner of the Great Square, loom the pyramidal towers of the Four Palaces: the Palace of the Priesthoods in the northwest, the Palace of Foreign Lands in the northeast by the wharves, the Palace of Ever-glorious War in the southwest, and the Palace of the Realm in the southeast closest to your road. Behind these, farther to the east, the quays and warehouses of Pà-Setlkolúm Harbour bustle with ships and commerce. There is little chance to gawk, for more miracles lie ahead: the glorious temples of the Gods! Your eyes cannot take in the sculptured columns, the marble porticoes, the tessellated pavements, the colonnades whose ceilings are slabs of stained glass, the inscriptions in a dozen tongues inlaid in semi-precious stones upon panels of purest white marble, the high, sloping roofs of bluish slate, the towers with upcurving eaves topped with mythological demons, the many-hued robes of the clergy, the thronging worshippers, the food-stalls, the sellers of relics and amulets, the soldiers swinging along to their cadenced drums, the nobles riding like gods in their palanquins, accompanied by entourages of slaves and parasol-bearers — it is too much.

"First time, eh?" Tétkoru hiSashán, your caravan-master, asks sympathetically. He is a big man, running to fat in late middle age, with a cap of iron-

grey hair and a nose so bent that it looks like a knob of putty stuck to his face.

"Yes — I have heard — the Governor's Palace — the Great Arena — the —!"

"La! You'll see it all. We travel right through the city since most of the houses of the better clans are way up north, by the city wall. You'll get a peek at the old Pyramid of Ssirandár III, the Governor's Palace, the Walled Gardens, and a lot more. Tomorrow you shall have a litter and a guide to show you around and see you don't get lost."

"The eastern bank of the river? What's there?"

"Not much." Tétkoru wipes his florid face with one end of his headcloth. The humidity is stifling. "Mostly the Tólek Kána Pits to the south, then the Necropolis — the City of the Ever-Peaceful Dead, where the great folk are entombed — and a few temples. You can take the ferry over from the quays by the Palace of Foreign Lands. But don't pay the ferrymen more than a *Hlásh*!"

"I have heard of the temple of Lady Avánthe there. And Lord Thúmis' famous shrine."

"Aye, and his Cohort, Lord Keténgku, too." Tétkoru's eyes twinkle with humour. "And the temple of Lord Sárku, right in the middle of all those tombs where he can be with his worm-friends! Best you not get lost over there. The Quarter of the Shroud-Makers is a city by itself: coffin-makers, embalmers, professional mourners, amulet-sellers, flower-weavers, manufacturers of tomb candy so you can feed sweets to your dead granny — all that."

As you pass the stern walls of the Governor's Palace, the city's *Tunkúl*-gongs begin to boom, announcing the end of the day. A *Tunkúl*-gong is a mighty metal cylinder suspended inside a high tower and struck by a squad of priests with a gigantic padded log hung from chains. Every temple has at least one *Tunkúl*-gong. Their notes are all different, and from afar they sound together like a strange, cacophonous carillon.

Your clanhouse looks a bit stifled, crammed between others in the wealthy Northern Quadrant of the city. Inside, however, there is luxury beyond imagining. The baths alone are worth coming a thousand *Tsán* to enjoy: cavernous chambers choked with steam, then separate pools of hot, cold, and lukewarm water, towelling rooms, exercise rooms, massage rooms, and even a small, dry chamber where Pé

Chói clan-brothers may scrape their chitin clean with little strigils of bone.

Oh yes, you do have Pé Chói clan-brothers and sisters: there is no bar to enrolling nonhumans who obey the precepts of “noble action.” One might wish to draw the line at Ahoggyá or Pygmy Folk, of course, but Pé Chói, Páchi Léi, Swamp Folk, Shén, Tinalíya, and even the Hláka are welcome. The hostile races (the Hlüss, the Hlutrgú, the Shunned Ones, and the Ssú) can never join, nor would the underwater-dwelling Nyaggá who do not care, nor would the Mihállí, who are extinct — perhaps. You have heard of recent contact with a new race, the Urunén, who live literally at the other end of the world, near the South Pole; they are reachable only by tubeway car, and communication with them is still tentative. Scholars speak of two more sentient races, far off on the other side of Tékumel: the Hokún, who look like giant transparent-shelled insects, and the seafaring Chíma, who resemble shambling beasts but are said to be intelligent. Little is known of either species.

Slaves rub soap of Vé-paste into your hair, rinse you, dry you, and lay out garments in a dozen different styles and colours. Others offer perfumes, oils (particularly the cloyingly sweet *Purú*-oil so beloved here in the capital), and cosmetics. You have never looked, smelled, or felt so elegant!

It is time for dinner. The refectory serves a delicious meal: slabs of fresh-baked *Dná*-bread, roasted and broiled meats, whole baked river fish, a dozen bright-hued vegetables, and desserts rich enough to sate even the Demon-Lord Giritlén, the insatiable “Eater of Souls.”

Instruction: *the following day you have several choices. Select an adventure from the following table. You may go on each adventure only once, with the exception of shopping, which you may do twice. When you have gone on as many adventures as you wish (and if you still live!), go to Sec. 10.*

EVENT	INSTRUCTION
You are invited to a feast at a wealthy nobleman's palace	Go to Sec. A.1
You cross the Missúma River to see the east bank	Go to Sec. A.2
You go shopping	Go to Sec. A.3
You attend the Hirilákte Arena	Go to Sec. A.4
You visit the temple of your faith	Go to Sec. A.5

A.1. PARTY TIME!

Tétkoru informs you that your clansmen will attend a party tonight, given by Lord Srüqu hiTánkolel of the Great Stone clan. You are invited to come along. Lord Srüqu is the Legate of the Palace of the Realm in Béy Sü and a devotee of Lord Grugánu, the Cohort of Lord Ksáru. He is said to be one of those who “fell on his feet” when Emperor Dhich'uné assumed the throne: he had previously been a supporter of Prince Mridóbu, the old Emperor's third acknowledged son, and when Mridóbu disappeared after Dhich'uné's coup, many of his followers disappeared with him — to fates unknown — but Lord Srüqu performed a magnificent balancing act and managed to stay in favour with the new Emperor. He has a reputation for elaborate, enthusiastic, and extravagantly orgiastic feasts.

You must attend the party garbed in one of the “Twenty-Four Forms” prescribed by Imperial tradition: each is worn for specific functions and has its own unique style, headdress, accessories, and accoutrements. Lord Srüqu's party tonight is relatively informal, and your clan's tailors fit you with a costume of the Twelfth Form. For this, males wear kilts cut just so, upcurved shoulder pieces winking with jewels and intaglio-work, oval pectorals blazoned with clan symbols made of precious stones, greaves of thin gold foil laid over Chlén-hide molded to fit your calves, bracelets of traditional designs, a cloak hung diagonally at just such an angle from the left shoulder, a tall headdress with lappets of gilded plaques that drape down over your breast, and plumes of dyed Khéshchal-feathers that cascade to the floor behind you. Women go attired in full-length gowns of alternate panels of transparent *Thésun*-gauze and opaque *Güdrü*-cloth in a variety of colours, gilded sandals with laces that wind around the leg to the knee, long armlets of beaten gold that resemble a soldier's vambraces, a large, begemmed, circular ornament of gold filigree worn at the right side of the head, from which graceful *Khéshchal*-plumes hang down to the ground and are carried by a train of children — etc. You can't even imagine the costumes of the Twenty-Fourth Form, worn only to Imperial audiences before the Petal Throne in Avanthár!

Once the deep-voiced *Tunkúl*-gong of the temple of Lord Hrü'ü has struck to proclaim the Victory of the Night, you and your fellow clansmen are escorted to the feast by a swarm of servants, litter-bearers, musicians, guards, link-boys, singers, and dancing maidens sprinkling flower petals. Your palanquins wend their way through streets flowing with people,



marketplaces lit with flaring torches and fire-baskets, and esplanades crowded with folk seeking relief from the enervating heat of the day. In the glimmering twilight the city takes on the look of legend, perhaps vanished *Purdánim*, or even *Lost Bayársha* itself, dreaming all alone amidst its enchanted forests.

The façade of Lord *Srūqu*'s clanhouse is alight with purple, green, and amber paper lanterns. Rows of uniformed guardsmen line the steps, and chamberlains in the livery of the Great Stone clan, its glyph blazoned upon their breasts, guide guests to their places within. No invitation is needed; that is not the *Tsolyáni* way. Poor folk are shown into a side courtyard where cooks roast whole *Tsi'il* on spits the size of small houses, bakers pile breads and cakes higher than even a *Shén* can reach, boys broach casks of beer made of *Dná*-grain or *Yáfa*-rice, and servants from the catering-clans fill clay bowls with stews and vegetables and sweets. Wealthier people are escorted to another plaza where the cuisine, the service, and the utensils are better, and members of the highest clans are taken on into the clanhouse proper. Your escort forms up, your clan-brothers and sisters arrange themselves in neat rows, your clan-master cries "*Hói*" and waves his staff, and you march in.

The great hall is very high, lit by torches, candelabra, and hanging lamps. At first you can make out

nothing but chaos; then your eyes begin to pick out details. On either side are receding stairstep-like daises, each tier only a fingersbreadth or so high. Everyone has an assigned place: high clans do not sit and eat on the same level as lower ones; each priesthood has its own daises, with the upper levels reserved for the senior clergy; and the army has a similar arrangement. At the far end of the hall a taller pyramid of daises rises almost to the ceiling, on the highest of which stands a representation of the Seal of the Imperium. The dais below this is reserved for any Prince or Princess of the Empire who might attend — impossible now since Emperor *Dhich'uné*'s coronation since he has no children, and none of the old Emperor's surviving offspring are available. The next dais down is occupied by the glittering entourage of Lord *Khámiyal hiSayúncha* of the Clan of Sea Blue, the Governor of *Béy Sü*, and his darkly beautiful sister, Lady *Khámra*. Below this, Lord *Srūqu*'s own dais is crowded with members of his Great Stone clan, which is not high but wealthy and numerous. You can see little more in the smoke and the glitter of candlelight.

As each group arrives, it parades up a central aisle to do homage to the Seal, bow to the Governor, and greet the host. No one stays to chat — too many await impatiently behind — and those who are finished make their way down to their own places by a side aisle. A chamberlain notes your clan livery, points to the correct dais, and seats you. When most of the guests are present, Lord *Srūqu* signals, and slaves serve dinner, the highest daises first.

For the first time you notice the niches high up in the walls. Mimes are performing mythological tableaux up there, their white body-paint like pale marble amidst the flickering shadows. There is music, too, but nothing is audible over the throaty roar of the crowd except the thump-a-thump of a drum. In one of the niches a nude girl dances prettily. There is a second figure with her, and you see a giant *Shén*, who pretends to seize and ravish her. — Or perhaps he really is ravishing her; this is the house of Lord *Srūqu hiTánkolel*, after all.

When the last course of the dinner has been taken away, the party starts to relax. People wander up or down the aisles, stopping at the daises of friends, sitting to have a drink here or a snack there, then on to further levels to meet other acquaintances.

"Where's the entertainment?" you whisper to *Tétkoru*. "I don't see much."

He looks surprised. "Why, it's in the side rooms, of course. There's a gambling room where you can play at guessing the sticks — *Tsahlén* — or at *Kévuk*-dice, or at *Dén-den*, if you're in the mood for such intellectual pastimes. There are rooms for singers of epic poetry, stages for dramas, arenas for gladiators and athletic contests, another theatre for the puppeteers — magicians, acrobats, jugglers, whatever you've a mind for." He leans closer. "There are rooms for erotic dancers and performers, too, but if you're clever you won't have to bother with them. You'll meet plenty of young folk of good clans who will offer you 'private entertainment.' You can sample the 'powders,' too, if you like, but beware of drugged wine. Some of Lady Hrihayál's mischievous devotees enjoy making innocent visitors do strange things. And never, NEVER touch any green powder! It may be *Zu'úr*, a narcotic that causes instant addiction! First, it awakens uncontrollable passions; then you'll sink into a coma from which only more of the drug can arouse you; and after a month or two you'll be as stone-cold dead as King Ssirandár the First."

"Nice! Must I carry an unsheathed sword in my hand, too? I thought this was supposed to be a pleasant party!"

Tétkoru blinks at you roguishly. "This is Béy Sü."

Instruction: choose from among the following: (1) the gambling room. Go to Sec. A.6. (2) the epic poetry session. Go to Sec. A.7. (3) the play. Go to Sec. A.8. (4) the gladiatorial and athletic performances and the puppeteers. Go to Sec. A.9. (5) look for the "private entertainment" Tétkoru mentioned. Go to Sec. A.10. You may go on each of these adventures once. When you have finished, go to Sec. 15.

A.2. A TOMB WITH A VIEW

The flat-bottomed ferry scrapes against the worn, grey pilings of the dock on the east bank of the Missúma River. A dozen passengers clamber up the steep ladder, and you start to follow. The steersman holds out a brawny hand. "Hold, Master. That's two *Káitars*!"

"Two — ! The fare is ONE *Hlásh*!"

The man's face looks like a statue of weathered brown granite. "Two, Excellency," he repeats patiently. "Two *Káitars*."

"Well, I shall not pay it! I know the fares here. In fact, I saw that last fellow hand you only five copper *Qirgál*."

"Mayhap, Glorious One. Two *Káitars*, please."

A barrel-shaped man in dusty and unpainted, grey-green *Chlén*-hide armour strolls over to squint down at you from the wharf. A faded blazon on his breastplate identifies him as a member of the Tomb Police. "S'matter, *Kómek*?"

You give him no chance to reply. "This ferryman is overcharging me!"

The big guardsman scrapes his stubbled chin with one paw. "My advice, Serenity? Pay 'im! Otherwise he takes you to court. You'll win, o' course, but you'll cool your heels in the Palace o' the Realm for two-three days waitin' for your case to come up. Then you'll pay five, mebbe ten *Káitars* in bribes to the scribes, the court attendants, and the judge, belike."

"That's outrageous! You — you're a member of the Tomb Police. Can't you do something? I am a member of a high clan, after all."

The guard removes his leather helmet, peers sorrowfully into its dank and sweat-smelling interior, and mutters, "'Course, Eminence. You're right. You speak as true as the God-Emperor his-self." He inspects the palm of his right hand critically. "But I oughtn't to even be here — I was off duty half a *Kirén* ago."

"I should much appreciate it — I'll put in a good word to your superiors."

"Well, mebbe I could make an exception, 'Course, us folk're bone poor. Should be gettin' back to my wives. Two of 'em, y'know. Ne'er give up naggin'."

"Here," you cry in exasperation. "A *Káitar* for your trouble, man!"

The huge paw reaches out to envelop it. The guard rears up to his full height. "*Ohé*, now, *Kómek*, you sly corpse-sucker! You *Nakomé* dog! You creepin', slime-swillin' sweetheart of a blind *Hmá*-beast! Take your proper fare from this noble person, now, and begone!" He raises his bronze-banded staff dramatically.

The ferryman, *Kómek*, trembles, grovels, and humbly accepts the two *Hlásh* you hand him. He bows to the guard, then to you, then scuttles back down into his boat where his eight slave oarsmen are watching phlegmatically.

"Thank you, my good man," you say to the officer. He helps you up the ladder.

As you walk along the tree-lined avenue toward the bronze-barred gates of the City of the Ever-Peaceful Dead, you look back to see Kómek and the guardsman, heads together, dividing your Káitar between them. You sigh. You have learned that all bargains must be struck in advance — and the presence of a muscular clan-brother or two wouldn't hurt either.

You forget your indignation in your amazement at the scene before you. The gates of the Necropolis are open, and the tallest pyramids and tomb-stelae tower high above the *Gapúl* and *Vrés*-trees. There is not much left of the crumbling sepulchres of the Bednálljans and the First Imperium, but the Engsvanyáli governors of Béy Sü erected magnificent mausoleums and "offering-halls." These still stand, as do the monumental pyramids of the Tlakotáni Emperors.

"Guide, Excellency?" A ragged paper is thrust in your face. "Guidebook?" a second voice beseeches. Another asks: "Offerings for the dead, Sublimity? Fruits, sweets, bread blessed by the priests of your faith?" A waxen skull is thrust in your face. "Tomb-candle, Majesty? Light your dear departed's path to the Isles of Teretané?" A gaunt fist takes the skull's place. "Doom! Doom! Make thy fortune secure! Avoid ill-omen! Obtain an amulet of all purpose from Argétl the Wise!" A child whimpers and holds up a dirty hand. Others clamour at you, and you clutch your pouch to avoid cutpurses.

"I am Sivusé hiMarásha," a new voice says coolly. You see a pleasant, rather prissy-looking young man who carries a book-scroll and the pen-box of a scribe. "I am a student at the temple of Lord Keténgku, Physician of the Gods. Perhaps I can aid you." He turns to the crowd of vendors and beggars and snaps, "Be off with the lot of you! My uncle is a *Heréksa* in the Legion of Kétl which guards the prisons of the Imperium! Do you yearn to meet him?" The mob grumbles but drifts away.

"What would you?" Sivusé inquires. "Have you a relative interred here?"

"No, no, just looking."

"Ah. Well, it's too far and too hot to walk all the way south to the temple of Lady Avánthe. The Temple of Eternal Knowing of Lord Thúmis is just as far to the north — and the Quarter of the Shroud-Makers lies beyond that! The Tólek Kána Pits are not open to visitors unless you land at the official quay..."

"Then I'd best see just the Necropolis today and come again for the rest."

"Wise. But not all the Necropolis even so. Leave out the great corpse-pit where the bodies of the indigent poor are thrown to the scavenger-birds. Omit the fields of common graves and the districts of small tombs. You'll want to see only the famous ones. The Pyramid of Ssirandár XV, the House of Rapturous Departure, the Pillared Hall of the Priestking Atlkólum 'the Mediator,' the Sepulchre of the Howling God, the Shrine of the Corpse-Lord, mighty Sárku —" He smiles engagingly. "Come, I have lived near here all my life, and I would enjoy nothing more than to show you around."

The day passes in a kaleidoscope of scenes that blur together like visions in smoke. Sivusé is most helpful. He takes you to out-of-the-way corners the casual visitor would never find, shows you inscriptions, comments on carving styles, and discusses history with learned animation. Eventually you tire and suggest that it is time to go back. The sun is setting in a coruscation of orange glory, and you hear the winding of a distant horn: the Necropolis is closing for the night. Soon there will be no one here but the Tomb Police and other — things — you have heard tales about. You suppress a shudder.

"Of course," Sivusé offers smoothly. "I'll take you back to the dock — and bargain with those rascally ferrymen myself! I hate it when such creatures give our Béy Sü a bad name!" He pauses beside a small tomb-platform, above which the monolithic, square stela of its long-dead owner rises toward the sky. "I wonder if you'd do me a favour, though? I — ah — must relieve myself. This is forbidden in these precincts, but one can just — ah — step out of sight. Await me here and call my name softly if the Tomb Police come by."

Before you can reply, he slips off into a brush-choked path that seems to lead around to the rear of the tomb. You wait. Then you wait some more.

You see figures moving toward you. They may be Tomb Police, but they seem to avoid open spaces. They move furtively, slipping from wall to tree to building like ghosts. As they approach, you back away.

"Sivusé?" the newcomer inquires. He must be one of the young man's fellow students: a big, bluff, handsome man garbed in a kilt of some dark stuff, sandals, and a short overcloak. He carries a bag of some sort. "Where's Sivusé?"

"He'll be right back." You point to the path. There are six of these people; two are young women, both attired only in knee-length kilts and boots. One is an ascetic-looking, shaven-headed man who wears a loose black tunic and sandals. The other three look even less prepossessing: they are older, lower-class by their rough garb and calloused hands, and carry tools. Could they be carpenters or masons?

They file into the hidden trail and disappear. The younger of the two women looks back at you and says, "Guard well, and whistle if someone comes." This makes no sense but adds to your unease. You wait again.

You do not see the next arrivals until they are physically on top of you. Without warning three ghoulish shapes rise up out of the dark bushes and hurl themselves at you. You yelp and struggle. Somebody jams a twist of cloth into your mouth, and someone else throws a thick, smelly bag over your head. Your arms and legs are held, and you are pummeled and beaten with what feel like staves. You can't even yell.

"Enough!" a voice snarls. The bag is jerked away, and you see a helmeted head and a face that is painted bone-white. "Here — let the prisoner speak! Who are you?"

You gasp and suck in air. The men around you wear the copper breastplates and skull-ornamented helmets of the Night Watch of Lord Durrilámish' Tomb Police. They carry swords and banded staves, and a few have bows and crossbows as well. The man who addresses you wears the insignia of a *Kási*: a Captain. You tell your story.

The officer nods. "That's Sivusé the Visitor of Graves, all right! He's as slippery as *Chlén*-grease! Pretends to be a student, a priest, a soldier home on leave —

anything — and then it's into a tomb quickly and out again with whatever he can snatch from the coffin. Got you to stand lookout, did he? Smart bastard! Knew nobody'd think you were a tomb-robber. Look, we're sorry about roughing you up." This helps a little — but not much.

Another soldier squats down beside the first. "Worse, Cap'n," he grunts. "Sivusé's got help this time: Kárshtla and his gang from the Clan of the Nighted Tower are with him. Our informants say they're on to something big."

"We don't have enough men! But we have to go after them, or the Necropolis will be stripped as naked as a Jakállan whore on First Moon Festival Night!"

"What do we do with this'n, Sir? A quick sword-thrust?" You realise the soldier is talking about you.

"Don't be stupid! This is a member of a high clan!" He turns to you. "We can't just let you wander away, though. The night dwellers of the Necropolis would make a nourishing soup of your bones. You have a choice: stay here with a guard until I get back — or until the gates open again in the morning — or else come along and help us catch this tomb-robber."

Instruction: if you don't want to accompany the Tomb Police, you spend an uncomfortable night sitting with a guard on the tomb's upper platform. He won't even let you light a fire. The next day you are released and sent back to your clanhouse with a letter of apology. Go to Sec. 15. If you decide to go with the Tomb Police, go to Sec. A.11

A.3. SHOP TILL YOU DROP

The Great Market of Ashonétl Viriddá is cool in the early morning light. There are still puddles of water left from the market-sweeper's buckets, but peasants



have begun to arrive, squabble over the best stalls, and lay out their produce. The elegant shops are mostly located on the south side of the square, although the armourers have their establishments on the north side, between the Market and Béy Sü's rather ancient *Hirilákte* Arena. The east side of the Market borders on the Four Palaces, while to the west stand the barracks of two of the city's resident Legions: that of Hnálla, Master of Light, the 4th Imperial Heavy Infantry; and its old rival, the Legion of Potent Destiny, the 6th Imperial Heavy Infantry.

Your clan provides four parasol-carriers, a litter with eight bearers, a pair of bodyguards, and three servants to bring back your purchases. They also send along a guide.

Instruction: choose one of the following as your guide. These are clan-brothers and sisters but are either poor or else of lower lineages and hence in need of patronage. You may take *Sríma hiVaskóbu*, a sophisticated, intelligent young woman who is knowledgeable about clothing, gems, jewellery, art objects, and pets. If your interests lie

elsewhere, the clan will send *Hémeth hiShírudai*, who is familiar with arms, armour, wines, slaves, hunting dogs and *Rényu*, the *Küni*-birds used for falconry, and similar hobbies. It is useless to try your charms on either *Sríma* or *Hémeth*: she has a great brute of a boyfriend in the Governor's Palace Guard, and *Hémeth* also has a boyfriend, to whom he has been loyal for many years. You may also take *Tékka hiVisódla*, a pleasant, middle-aged matriarch, whose bargaining talents for jewellery and fashions are said to border on the miraculous, or old *Za'és hiSetkáya*, who is similarly expert when it comes to books, literature, ancient artifacts, and coins.

Instruction: buy items from the lists in the Sections listed below. This depends upon the amount of money you have and the guide you have chosen (see above). You may shop only twice while you are in Béy Sü; you may not return later (i.e. as long as you use this book for this same character) for more items; you must take one (and only one) of the guides each time you shop; you can not take the same guide twice; you may not exceed your current sum of personal money; there is no credit, nor will your clan loan you money. Depending upon which and how

TABLE A.4.1: GLADIATORS

ROLL	GLADIATOR	WIN ON A BET OF 100 KÁITARS	GLADIATOR	WIN ON A BET OF 100 KÁITARS
1	Ha'ára hiAsánuka; two-handed sword 13 wins	100	Hórga hiSarélte; two-handed sword; 9 wins	200
2	Tarkónu hiMriggisa of Béy Sü; long sword; 4 wins	100	Nírkánish Jné of Ssa'átis; long sword; 3 wins	100
3	Ga'én hiSesmúga, a woman from Tumíssa; spear and dagger; 6 wins	100	Two Ahoggyá; maces and short spears; no Arena wins. These creatures are big and ferocious!	100
4	Six Pé Chói; javelins, small shields, and swords; no Arena wins. These are skilled forest warriors	400	Táleth Kájju, a woman from Salarvyá; bolas and trident; 2 wins	500
5	Chtésa Mírgha, a 6'7" woman from the barbarian tribes of N'lüssa; two-handed sword; 15 wins. She despises men and hates this opponent most of all	100	Ortokán Dzakáng of Ghatón; two-handed flail; 12 wins. An ugly and vicious fighter. The Ghatóni treat women like animals. He spits at her	300
6	K'tô, a Tinalíya; short sword and shield; 3 wins. The audience treats this match as a joke	200	Mráth Vrég, a Pygmy Folk; clawed axe and shield; 2 wins. He always stops to urinate in the sand	100
7	Three Rényu (cf. Sec. B); teeth and claws; no wins	300	Two wild Zrné (cf. Sec. B.1); teeth and claws; no wins	100
8	Su'él, a tough-looking slave-girl from Jakálla; dagger; no wins; this is a grudge match to the death!	100	Péa, a slave-girl from Jakálla who is Su'él's rival; dagger; no wins; she's smaller and more delicate-looking	300
9	Ru'utlénu hiVrármish of the City of Sárku; shield and long sword; Captain in the Legion of the Seal of the Worm; a personal duel; no Arena wins	200	Sikkéng hiChúridai of Thri'íl; shield and long sword; Captain in the Legion of Mnáshu of Thri'íl; no Arena wins but more popular	100
10	Némuel hiNangára of Jaikalór; full armour and two-handed halberd; 20 wins; one of the smoothest fighters in the Arenas but a little past his prime	300	Lékka of the Ice Lake, a Lorún princess from northern Yán Kór; fights naked with a two- handed mace set with teeth of the Háiga-fish; 21 wins and a mean reputation!	100

many adventures you have been on, thus, you may be able to purchase several useful items — or very few.

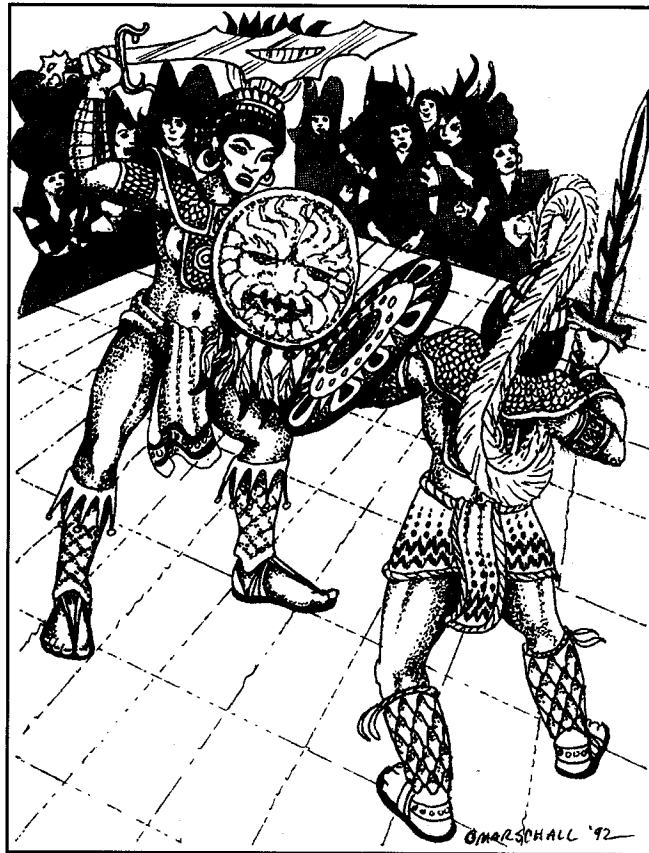
Instruction: for clothing, garments, and materials, go to Sec. A.12. For gems, jewellery, and art objects, go to Sec. A.13. For pets, slaves, etc., go to Sec. A.14. For arms and armour, go to Sec. A.15. For books, coins, and ancient artifacts, go to Sec. A.16.

A.4. WE WHO ARE ABOUT TO DIE

Béy Sü's *Hirilákte* Arena is much like those in other cities of the Five Empires, except that it is older and in need of *Ditlána* — demolition and rebuilding! In form, the stadium is a long oval, with rows of seats, boxes, and bleachers rising to considerable height all around. The floor is packed sand. There is one entrance at each of the cardinal points, and on the north side (toward *Avanthár*) is the Governor's elaborate box, with the representation of the Imperial Seal carved in bluish marble above it. Tall standards hung with blue, white, and yellow *Khéshchal*-plumes mark off the sections reserved for each clan, temple, and noble house. Hawkers wander to and fro, offering *Gegrésa* (broiled or fried meat patties), *Qó* (deep-fried balls of pastry soaked in sweet syrup), sugary *Mnósa*-root (chewed as candy), *Chuméti* (spiced and salted *Hmélu*-buttermilk), *Tuór* (sweet sherbets), *Dná*-grain beer, and — for the better classes — *Ngálu*-wine. The best clans bring their own food and beverages, including cooks to prepare meals on the spot.

Gladiators and fights between beasts are treated as sports events. Many clans own slave-gladiators or support free ones, since fighting in the Arenas is a lucrative business. Fighters who begin as slaves can earn their freedom by winning bouts and becoming popular. They often stay on to become highly-paid professionals. There is no stigma in being a gladiator, and young braves often arrange fights for themselves in order to earn a reputation. Grudge matches and duels are also common.

You and your clansmen enter through the great doors on the north side of the Arena, follow the statue-lined corridors to the sweeping staircase, find seats in your clan's private box, arrange cushions, see to the awnings, send a slave-girl to look for your fan-bearers who should have been here by now, and inspect the day's programme. There are a half dozen events that look interesting. Somebody brings you a cup of cool wine, and the slave the clan has appointed to serve as your personal servant (and bed-mate, if you wish) produces a small gold box and extracts a grey-brown twist of *Hnéqu*-weed for you to



chew. The use of this mild stimulant is almost universal. The first event is about to begin.

Trumpets blare, all rise and shout "*Otuléngba!*" (the ancient Engsvanyáli salutation: "all hail!") in the direction of the carved Seal, drums sound, a few of the Governor's clansmen enter his box — he and his sister are absent today — and a man in a gloriously gilded and chased breastplate, a tall-crested helmet, and a blue cloak strides out to shout the names, ranks, and previous records of the first combatants. He is the *Charukél*, the major domo of the Arena. Unfortunately, there are no magical duels on the programme, but today's gladiators do appear reasonably good. You settle back.

The first pair consists of two swordsmen: gigantic men in scarred *Chlén*-hide armour, who wield massive two-handed weapons of the same material. In the Arena, weapons and armour should be equal or at least agreed upon. It is even "noble" to exchange weapons with one's opponent, and one who seizes an unfair advantage will be booed, stoned, or shot at with slings by angry spectators. Winners receive purses from their owners or patrons, or from their own personal wagers. Losers are not usually killed, although harsh owners may order a fight to the death in order to make more money. Grudge matches and duels are often fatal.

"Ha'ára hiAsánuka, of the Scarlet Stone clan, of Béy Sü, who has won thirteen fights," the *Charukél* cries. "His opponent is Hórga hiSarélte, of the White Stone clan, also of Béy Sü, who has won nine bouts." The two raise their ponderous swords and salute the crowd. At a signal they turn to fight.

Instruction: there are 10 matches. You may bet up to 500 *Káitars* on each one at the odds shown in the table below. These are stated in terms of what you receive on a bet of 100 *Káitars*: e.g. if Ha'ára wins, you will get back your 100 + 100 = 200; if the less-experienced Hórga wins, you get back 100 + 200 = 300. You cannot borrow money or bet "on credit." You need not bet, of course, but may just watch.

Instruction: roll a D10 twice. The first score is for the gladiator on the left, the second for the opponent in the righthand column. Add +1 for each 100 *Káitars* difference between the two odds to the score of the combatant having the lower odds (i.e. the better fighter): e.g. Ha'ára rolls a 4 and adds 1 = 5; Hórga scores a 4 but adds nothing: Ha'ára wins. Ties are re-rolled. See Table A.4.1 on previous page.

Instruction: after spending a pleasant afternoon at the Arena, you return to your clanhouse. Go to Sec. A.

A.5. GIVE ME THAT OLD-TIME RELIGION!

With the exceptions of the shrines of Lords Thúmis, Sáрку, Durritlámish, and Keténgku, and, oddly enough, Lady Avánthe, the great temples of the Gods occupy a rough oblong area between the Four Palaces on the south, and the Imperial administration buildings on the north. To the east, on the river bank, stands the Palace of the Governor, Lord Khámiyal hiSayúncha, with its ancient walled gardens. These are the oldest parts of the original Bednálljan city, as the Pyramid of Ssirandár III and another whose builder is unknown, will attest.

You stroll south, past the porticoes where a thousand scribes sit on tiers of daises to do the work of government, past streets of residences and shops, most roofed with Béy Sü's ever-present blue slate, and out into the cramped confines of Temple Square. It is good to visit one's temple, pay one's respects to the Gods, make a sacrifice and burn some incense, and ask for a favour or two in the coming year.

Béy Sü's temples differ greatly from one another, not only in doctrine but also in architectural and artistic styles. It is difficult to resist the temptation to enter them all just to gawk at the sculptured pillars, the mighty gates with their bronze bas-reliefs, the

colonnades painted with mythological murals, the galleries of statuary, the candle-lit shrines of the Aspects, each with its complement of chanting hierophants and smoking urns of *Vrés*-incense. No one would mind even if you visited the temples of the deities farthest from your own faith, but there's just too much to see. You enter your own temple, thus, pass by the gate-guards, shoo off the talisman-sellers and relic-peddlers, walk through the outer courtyards and gardens, ignore the chapels of the lesser Aspects, and go on into the main shrine. [The more important sanctuaries are buried in the Underworld, of course, but you lack the priestly status to attend the Inner Mysteries. Just do your prayers and go home!]

"How may I aid you?" A woman stands behind you: an older lady in the robes of a middle-level priestess. She smiles. "Do not fear! Unlike the rest of Béy Sü, I shall not rob you or beg for money. I am Dhéya hiVa'anmé, a member of the Sixth Circle of our clergy. If you need a guide, or some other assistance, I can help." For "Circles," see Sec. C.1.

This lady seems decent enough, and you let her show you around. The shrines are only a relatively small part of the temple complex. You also see the dormitories for resident priests and priestesses; the refectory, kitchens, and storehouses; the workshops; the halls where administrators and scribes sit on daises piled with documents relating to tithes, temple lands, and investments; the barracks for the temple guards; the infirmary and poorhouse; the schools; the libraries; and the halls devoted to scholarly research. The last two interest you most, and you inquire whether you can have a longer look. Dhéya says that you may stay until the *Tunkúl*-gong strikes for noon; after that the temple will close for the afternoon siesta — it is too hot to get any work done.

Instruction: if you want to browse in the temple library, go to Sec. A.17; if you'd rather bother the scholars, go to Sec. A.18.

A.6. SEVEN COME ELEVEN!

The gaming chamber is a single, long room. As you enter, you see a large, circular table surrounded by a score of elegantly dressed people. They are playing *Tsahlten*, a game in which one player announces a "pattern" and tosses a handful of painted sticks into the air. A professional judge then declares whether the pattern is "made," "unmade," or "neither made nor unmade," judging by the lie of the sticks on the green baize. Other players and watchers bet on these calls, with the odds varying according to the difficulty of the pattern. The easiest is the "Single

Square," and the hardest is the "Dragon." One can also use more or fewer sticks and thus lower or raise the odds. *Tsahlén* is complicated, and you are not sure what to do.

Farther along, the *Kévuk*-dice table is also crowded; its rules are even less intelligible to a beginner. There are smaller tables for *Dén-den*, too, but tonight this cerebral game lacks appeal. Another group of older people sit frowning over *Nárku*, a game played with circular leather cards painted with pictures and designs. At the far end of the hall a dozen *Páchi Léi* are huddled over a complex pattern composed of figured wooden blocks. They are playing *Tréng*, which requires great powers of memory and concentration and is rarely played by humans. There are many more, but you can't look at them all at once.

A hand brushes your arm, and you turn to find a group of young people eyeing you. A handsome, vapid-looking fellow asks "Newly come? Haven't seen you at Lord *Srūqu*'s little sessions before."

You grunt a reply, and one of the girls steps forward. "Do you want me to show you how to play *Tsahlén*? Allow me." She turns to a slave-girl behind her. "Séna, my purse!

Before you can refuse, she takes your arm, leads you to the table, and tosses a large gem of some kind to the judge. He inspects it, then hands her a dozen red and black counters.

An elderly woman calls out, "I throw the Triple Peak!" The judge echoes her, and she takes up six eight-inch long sticks, bundles them together, and tosses them up into the air. They fall in no discernible pattern you can see, but the judge intones, "The pattern is made." Counters, money, and items of jewellery change hands, and the sticks pass counterclockwise to the next player, a fierce-looking gentleman in the uniform of a soldier from one of the Legions loyal to Lord *Karakán*, the war-god. "Double Peak," he growls, "seven sticks instead of six." He throws, and the judge announces, "The pattern is not made." Somebody groans, and coins clink and jingle.

You now have time to look at the girl who stands by your side. She is fashionably dressed — or undressed — in diaphanous emerald and silver gauze. Her collar, pectoral, armlets, bracelets, anklets, earrings, nose-ring, and hair ornaments would buy a small city, at least! She has a heart-shaped, almost cat-like face, with long, tilted eyes and a wide, generous mouth. "Play?" she whispers, licking her lips.

Instruction: if you'd rather not play, just say so; the girl will pout and leave you for somebody more lively. If you want to gamble, decide on your bet and roll D100. You may make only five bets. Do not go bankrupt; the debtor's prison in Bény Sü is not a happy place. Scores needed to "make the pattern" and the amounts you win on your bets are as listed in Table A.6.1.

TABLE A.6.1: TSAHTLÉN THROWS

PATTERN NAME	D100 FOR SUCCESS	PERCENTAGE YOU WIN
Single Square	01-65	10%
Double Square	01-50	20%
Single Peak	01-40	40%
Double Peak	01-30	75%
Triple Peak	01-20	100%
High Forest	01-10	200%
Dragon	01-05	500%

Another, older woman reaches through and touches your companion's arm. "Come, *Miséna*," she says. "*Kegón*'s new play, 'The Marriage of the *Tinalíya* and the *Shén*,' is about to start."

When she has gone, you ask one of the players who she is. He gives you an odd look. "You don't know? That's Lady *Miséna hiQurródu*, the High Priestess of Lady *Hrihayál* in the Empire! And for good measure, the one who came and got her was Lady *Elulén hiQolyélmú*, who's the High Priestess of Lady *Dlamélish* in *Tumíssa*! Did you see her eyes? Yellow!" He makes a religious sign of warding. "These days we see more of the Emerald Ladies' priesthoods than ever before: Lady *Anká'a hiQolyélmú* is here from *Avanthár*, Lady *Timúna hiReretlésu*, our High Ritual Priestess of *Dlamélish* in *Bény Sü* is here tonight, and I just saw her twin sister, too, Lady *Saréla hiReretlésu*, from *Usenánu*!"

You thank him, nod to the other players, and return to the main hall. You gain one skill level in "gambling" (Sec. 9.3.4). Go to Sec. A.1.

A.7. THE BLIND SINGER.

The room set aside for epic poetry is small and circular, with stepped daises all around its outer circumference and a single, higher dais in the centre. A single branching candelabra in the very centre of the latter sheds buttery light upon the features of an elderly man who kneels there. Behind him, a girl in a simple, white waist-to-floor kilt sits beside a *Ténturen* of dark, polished wood. She wears a golden beast-



mask, and her fingers flash and glitter with silvery plectra. At the other end of the instrument — longer than a man lying down — you see a second woman, masked and attired like the first.

The old man raises one hand, and the Ténturen emits a glissando of deep, slow notes. As he begins to sing, you realise that he is blind. He performs a canto from the Khéiris Recension of the “Lament to the Wheel of Black.” This is popular at concerts of this sort.

Instruction: if you have no skill levels in “epic poetry” (Sec. 9.3), roll a **D10**: 1-6 = you haven’t got a clue how good he is; 7-8 = you think he’s a wonderful singer; 9-10 = he’s awful! If you do have one or more levels in “epic poetry,” you recognise this man as a “has-been,” a once-great performer whose voice and timing are now failing. You shake your head; Lord Srüqu ought to be able to do better than this!

“I see you’re a connoisseur,” a voice from behind you whispers (no matter what you think). “This is hardly worth hearing. Come outside, and let’s talk.”

You drift out of the chamber, then turn to see a very tall, middle-aged man in a brown robe. He is bald, with beetling brows, a squarish jaw, and deep-set eyes “I am Jayárgo,” he says, “Jayárgo hiKhánmu of the Clan of Dark Fear.”

He is a priest of Lord Sárku by his vestments! All he lacks is the white skull face-paint these people wear at their rituals. You smile a trifle weakly and discuss music and the epics with him. He is both knowledgeable and urbane.

A second priest joins you. He wears the brown and purple of Lord Durritlámish, Lord Sárku’s Cohort, and he introduces himself as Su’unkáda hiCháshmüdu. These two obviously want to talk to you privately.

Together, you stroll past tables laden with hors-d’oeuvres, stewards with trays of wines and brandies, soldiers who gravely stand guard at interior doorways, and guests in all manner of costumes. Three Tinaliya scuttle by, their faces painted white and their mandibles rouged — they must be actors late for the performance of the play you heard mentioned (Sec. A.2). You come to a curtained doorway, and Jayárgo leads you into a labyrinth of “conversation rooms.” Small groups sit to chat, others recline at full length, a few are making love, and two or three are already drunk and unconscious.

Jayárgo halts and fixes you with his deep, hypnotic gaze. “Do you know Lady Ayél hiNétkolun?” he asks. The other priest, Su’unkáda, adds, “Or Lord Tsodlán hiTigál and his sister, Lady Résa hiTigál?”

Instruction: roll a **D10**: 1-5 = you have met one or both of these august personages. The two priests tell you to enter Lord Srüqu’s private party rooms. They give you a minor mission to perform, the details of which will be given later. Go to Sec. A.19. 6-10 = you have not met these people so Jayárgo and Su’unkáda make polite conversation and then let you go your way. Go to Sec. A.1.

A.8. THE MARRIAGE OF THE TINALIYA AND THE SHEN

Tsolyáni ideas of comedy range from the slapstick to the cruel. There is less informal humour, however, since a sarcastic jibe may end in a demand for Shámtla damages, a duel, or even a visit from one of the assassins’ clans. Tonight, Lord Srüqu has arranged for a farce based upon the work of the great Engsvanyáli playwright Ressúma Tlángtu. The plot revolves around a brutal and stupid Shén who greedily offers to marry “any girl in the world” for money. Two mischievous human brothers then dupe a literal-minded Tinaliya into believing that she (the creature is female) will inherit much of the land of Shényu as a dowry. There is a human ingenue, who loves one of the brothers but is not sure which, and various side-characters who compound this comedy

of errors. The audience roars at the silly love scene between the seven-foot-tall reptilian "groom" and his two-foot-tall, four-legged "bride." Much is made of the Shén's crudity, versus the Tinaliya's logical but utterly literal personality. The actors are competent, and everyone has a good time, including the three or four Shén in the audience. The two Tinaliya guests cannot see the fun, however, and get into a learned legal wrangle over dowries, marriage customs, and the conjugal rights of a husband.

Afterward, you find yourself in a crowd of guests near the serving tables. Several hundred tiny crystal goblets stand on trays there, sparkling like a forest of diamonds. You take one, sniff the blandly fragrant, bluish-grey contents, and decide that you are not in the mood for the variety of *Tsuhóridu* brandy called *Nezu'ún*, which provides dreams of the wildest ecstasy. A servant hands you a cup of dark purple *Ngálu*-wine instead.

Next to you, an old man wearing the symbols of the Clan of Sea Blue laughs and says, "I haven't enjoyed a play so much since mighty Hrúgga was a babe!"

One of the Tinaliya peers owlishly at him. "Sir, that is not possible! The hero Hrúgga is either a mythological construct or else a human who died many millennia ago. You do not look to be over

sixty years of age." The man's pretty, young companion giggles and puts a hand over her mouth.

The nobleman turns red. "You are lucky you are under Lord Srúqu's protection, bug! I am Assistant Legate in the Palace of Foreign Lands, and I could have you peeled, cooked, and served in a succulent stew!"

"I am a Tinaliya! I am not a bug! We Tinaliya cannot be effectively peeled. As for stews, we are not considered flavourful by humans, and we are too stringy to be succulent. As for you, it is not logical to prevaricate about one's personal antiquity! Hrúgga, indeed!"

Other guests manage to prevent violence, and the Tinaliya scuttles off with its drink.

"Always!" a voice murmurs in your ear. "Always, whenever that play they produce!" Both the accent and syntax are foreign. You glance around.

Instruction: if you are a man, go to Sec. A.20. If you are a woman, go to Sec. A.21.

A.9. A PUNCH FROM ZHÉU DÁI

The gladiatorial exhibition strikes you as faked: the fighters stop to pose, hurl each other to the floor or out of the tiny arena, declaim heroic verses as they strike, and mug unmercifully for the ladies. You wonder how much of the money bet will end up in Lord Srúqu's coffers.

Instruction: if you are a man, one of the gladiators, a sleekly muscled woman named Ga'én hiSesmúga (cf. Sec. A.4), suggests a quick visit to one of the little private rooms. If you accept, roll a **D10**: 1-5 = you have a great time. Continue in this Section; 6-8 = her lovemaking is more like wrestling: two falls out of three. You escape with bruises. Continue in this Section; 9-10 = you throw your back out and are carried home for the evening. Go to Sec. A. If you do not accept, continue in this Section.

Instruction: if you are a woman, you have a choice between handsome Ha'ára hiAsánuka or the N'lüss woman, Chtésa Mírgha (cf. Sec. A.4). If you accept either one, roll a **D10**: 1-5 = you enjoy yourself: Ha'ára is a skillful but obviously fickle lover, while Chtésa is surprisingly gentle and affectionate. She'd like a longer-term arrangement. Continue in this Section; 6-8 = neither gladiator is really interested in sex; they want status: i.e. to be seen with you as the daughter of a high clan. Continue in this Section; 9-10 = both gladiators are too rough for your tastes. You make excuses and leave. Go to Sec. A. If you do not accept, continue in this Section.



You find your servants and have them adjust your costume, coiffure, and cosmetics. Then you go back past the gladiatorial room, to the little theatre at the end of the hall where the puppets are performing. Only two small and very specialised clans in the Five Empires know the secret of their operation: the Society of the Hands Which are Not Seen, and the Clan of the Striding Incantation. Both hire assassin clans to ensure the continuance of their monopoly. The puppets are six-inch-tall mannikins which are worked not by strings but by magical power from the Planes Beyond. They act out plays, fight duels, sing, dance, declaim epic poetry, and even do acrobatics. They are made of wood, bone, metals, and cloth, and the puppeteers claim that they have wills of their own. You have heard tales of puppets who pursued and slew people who had ridiculed them. Those are fables, of course.

The room is almost empty except for a group of soldiers in the uniforms of the Legion of the Ruby Hand (15th Imperial Heavy Infantry), two or three pairs of lovers, a priest sitting in the darkness by one rear wall, and several children up front by the stage, which is no more than the top of a large, circular table. Two puppets are alone there, under a many-branched candelabra. One, attired in a miniature suit of armour, has just finished a lengthy solo from the epic "Hymn to Mü'ükané," and the other, the "Princess Zhéu Dái," one of the traditional heroines of the puppet plays, is paying rapt attention. Behind, in the shadows, the puppeteer himself squats crosslegged on a mat, eyes closed and hands folded in his lap. It is said that operating puppets is really just a sort of long-held magical spell.

"Ohé!" warbles the little warrior, "Sweet Princess, grieve for those who love the Prince of the Blue Room!"

"Nay, my Lord, grieve instead for those who love good singing!" The princess takes a turn around the stage and tilts her tiny head at the audience. "Were the God served by his armies as ill as you serve his music, he would be a badly served God indeed! Indeed, some other God might serve him — as a sacrifice!"

The male puppet turns to stare at her as though surprised. You marvel. The action seems very real. "Why — ? What — ?"

"Let me tell you!" the Princess Zhéu Dái cries. Music wells up from somewhere, and she steps forward into the light. You notice that the puppeteer's eyes are wide open; he is staring at his actors with something between bemusement and apprehension.

"There comes a god," the princess sings, "who rises from the east like the sun and who travels ever westward." You recognise this as a line from the "Hymn to Mü'ükané." The next words do not belong, however: "A God who halts in the wind-caressed city, the place of sweet chimes, the place of skulls! A God whose sword is a brand of fire, whose armour is of flame, whose eyes flash lightning!"

The puppeteer is getting to his feet now. You know the city the little princess has mentioned: Fasiltum, the City of the Chiming Skulls, which lies in the Eyági Desert in the northeastern part of the Empire! This is not part of the epic!

"The God stands beside his beloved, the dear one of his youth, the Princess of the Flame, whose light had been snuffed by those of darkness! Whose sweet limbs had known the shame of chains, whose brave heart had known sorrow, who had lain long in the darkness of the dungeons of those whose foe she was! Now she stands free, free before the multitude, leaning upon the arm of her God-lover!"

The puppeteer reaches out and claps a hand over his creation's diminutive mouth. The children shriek with delight, thinking it part of the act, but several of the couples are paying rapt attention, the soldiers are sitting bolt upright, and the priest at the back has risen. You see that he wears the deep purple robe and amethyst-set pectoral of the temple of Lord Hrü'ü.

"Not correct — not your lines — !" the puppeteer snarls. The little princess bites his thumb, and he drops her, cursing.

She scrambles up and dashes to the front of the stage. "The God and the Princess free! Free to do battle against the Power of the Worm!" she sings. "Join them, rejoice in them, love them! They are your proper lords, O Tsolyánu!"

The priest's angular features are a study in fury. He raises one hand, and cold fire flickers at the end of his fingers. Both puppets squeak and flee. You feel a frigid numbness in the air, then the male puppet trips, skids, slides, and crashes to the floor in a tinkle of what sounds like ice. The female puppet is gone, off the stage into the darkness behind the tapestries. The puppeteer gapes openmouthed at the priest, then slowly topples forward. His head breaks off entirely, his limbs clash like shards of glass upon the marble floor, and his body jerks and is then still. An icy mist rises from his still form. You have heard of the spell of Congelation: one of the special

conjurations of the adepts of Lord Hrú'ü. It freezes its target into ice so cold that it shatters at a touch.

"Traitor!" the priest hisses. "Traitor ! Traitor !" He whirls and strides off, calling loudly for Lord Srüqu's soldiers.

For a moment the tableau holds, then one of the soldiers, a squat, scarred *Dritlán* ["Colonel"] in the uniform of the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation turns to his comrades and says, "It's true! It's true! Prince Mirusíya's in Fasíltum! He's back to lead us against the Worm in Avanthár!"

"But who's the Princess of the Flame, then?" one of his companions puzzles. "What was that about?"

"It can be only one," answers a proud-looking *Molkár* [roughly "Major"] who wears the livery of the Legion of the Sweet Singers of Nakomé, a unit based in Fasíltum. "Can't you guess? Why, the Lady Elára hiVríddi, of course!"

"She who was prisoner of the Imperium for so long?" another cries. "In the dungeons under Avanthár? How can that be? How could she escape from there?" His comrades break into a babble of dispute.

"The same. She who led the revolt in Fasíltum so many years ago, then was imprisoned for it. She's free. I've heard whispers elsewhere as well."

The *Molkár* gets to his feet. He hitches up his sword-belt and addresses the *Dritlán* in measured tones. "Time to be going, my friend. Back to Fasíltum. There's a worm that needs squashing."

Lord Srüqu's household guards and a score of chamberlains and servants arrive. The priest is there, too, with several colleagues. He says, "There must be an inquiry into this. If you would come with me, please." He's looking at the soldiers, leaving you free to join them or to slip out of the room unnoticed.

Instruction: if you are curious — and willing to take a risk — you may follow the soldiers. Go to Sec. A.22. If not, go to Sec. A.

A.10. BEHIND THE BLACK DOOR

You wander up a narrow stairway, glass in hand (which you are carefully not drinking: the stuff is a purply-blue colour, and it seems to glow in certain lights). The passage is narrow and winding, the walls draped with velvety black *Zhío*-cloth, figured with deceptive little arabesques in dark silver. Lord Srüqu has built his mansion to resemble the temple of his

God, Lord Grugánu: labyrinthine and mysterious. You hear laughter, eldritch music, the throb of drums, whispers, and muffled murmurings; there are doors here somewhere, but the tapestries hide them. There are undoubtedly spyholes also: your host will be interested in every liaison, every chance meeting, and every word. You meet people on the stair, masked and attired in bizarre costumes. They are intent upon their own business and do not speak to you.

Someone nearby is singing a passage from "The Touch " by the modern poet Esué hiNánbu of Thráya. The words have been altered, however, to give double entendres and curious meanings. A slender woman emerges from a concealed doorway. She giggles and slips past you, her face hidden beneath a bland silver mask. You seize the opportunity and enter the door before it closes.

The chamber is illumined only by three rush lights, a place of bulking shapes and shifting shadows. There are obstructions, furniture, partitions, cushions, thick-piled carpets, and prostrate, intertwined bodies everywhere. Incense fills the air, and you smell another pungent, acrid odour mingled with it. The drum beats out a monotonous, sensuous rhythm. A flute joins in. Ahead, at the end of what you sense is a corridor, ruddy candlelight splashes the limbs of a dancer who twists, sways, and undulates languorously before an audience of tangled shapes.

A hand touches you, and a voice urges, "Down! Down here, with me!" Another hand caresses your thigh, but it has a strange, alien feel to it, and you jerk away. A third hand rises before your face holding a thimble full of something that smells like dead flowers. "Drink! Enjoy! The life of the body is the only life!"

You disengage yourself, laugh, and make some lame excuse. It is not that you are prudish — Tsolyánu's sexual mores are quite liberal, and you wouldn't be at this party if you were really such a goody-two-shoes — but you do not want to become involved in something that may lead you into danger or some stupid imbroglio.

"Here," a new voice says in your ear.

You turn and see one of your own fellow-clansmen, a youth who had come with your group to the party tonight. You can't think of his name. After a moment you remember: "Usún? Usún hiKarisáyu?"

"The same!" He is lying at full length on the carpet beside a girl. "This is Alén hiNokór. She's from

Sokátis, I think." The young lady is dressed appropriately for this party: a headdress of gilded *Chlén*-hide and *Khéshchal*-plumes, bracelets and anklets of massy gold, some strategically-placed ribbons and bits of fabric, and a smile. She extends a small, delicate goblet to you. It contains a fragrant yellowish liquid: brandy made from the *Másh*-fruit.

Usún sits up abruptly. "Damn! Spilled my drink all over my — !" He fumbles for his kilt, which is hanging from a bronze statue nearby.

"Don't wipe it with that!" the girl, Alén, says. "You'll get all sticky!"

"Then I'd best go and ask a favour from one of Lady Dlamélis' priestesses, hadn't I?" Usún licks his lips and chuckles. He gets up and moves away in the darkness. "Right back."

You make small talk with Alén. She is in Bény Sü on a visit to one of her clan-mothers, she tells you, and is planning to go on up to Avanthár in a few days. She asks you similar questions, and you find that you share various hobbies and interests. She suggests that the two of you wander around and see more of the party.

"But what of Usún?" you ask. "He said he was coming back."



"By now he'll be too busy with his priestesses of Dlamélis to remember us — or care!"

Instruction: if you are a man and have a Comeliness of 60-100 and a Charisma of 71-100 (Secs. 6.7 and 6.8), you are attractive to Alén. She herself has a Comeliness of 83 and a Charisma of 80: nothing wonderful, but cute in a petite, lively way and well packaged. Go to Sec. A.23. If you are not so cute, go to Sec. A.1. If you are a woman, you can go with Alén, too, but not quite for the same purpose. She is looking for company in this strange city. She suggests that the two of you go find a pair of handsome soldiers from one of the Bény Sü Legions and see how they stack up against the talent she's used to. If you accompany her, you wander around for awhile, find nobody of interest, and go back to the main hall. Go to Sec. A.1. If you don't want to go with her, stay here until Usún comes back, have a few drinks, and then go to Sec. A. Usún himself is as average as a mud fence, but he'll be happy to be your escort.

A.11. HRÁ FOR OUR SIDE!

You stumble along the path leading around to the rear of the tomb over fallen stones and through thistles, and underbrush. A policeman points, and you see that a slab of black basalt has been pried away, and the platform's rubble core has been dug out to leave a narrow tunnel.

You descend through an aperture so small you must crawl head first. It is as dark as the Night Before the World, and your hands are soon raw from the jagged rock. A hand grasps your shoulder and pulls you up. There is room to stand now, but the air smells dead and breathless. You hear nothing but a slow drip of water far away.

"Hói" the Captain pants. "Getting too old for this sort of thing! By the way, I'm Jímu hiTukkolén of the Black Stone Tomb clan." You introduce yourself.

There are torches here, clustered around a man who is kneeling on the uneven paving blocks of the corridor. He is strange-looking, nude except for an earring and a twisted loincloth, and at the moment has his nose literally pressed against the ground.

"Sniffer," the Captain says laconically. "Comes from some tribe in Rannálu, way out east by Salarvyá."

The man raises his long, narrow head and purses his lips.

"That's how they point," the Captain explains. "Stick out their lips like a virgin gettin' her first kiss. Sivusé's off that way."

You follow, tramping along a cylindrical passage not much taller than your head. There are ten Tomb Police, plus the Captain and the Sniffer. As you walk, you see doorways, arches, and branching tunnels off to the side. There are also pits, barred gratings in the floor, and holes in the ceiling. The torches shed little light: you can see no more than ten or fifteen feet. Indeed, you'd be lucky to see a *Chlén*-beast before it walked right over you!

A policeman gestures to the right, toward a deep-shadowed portal opening into a staircase down. "That leads to the Sepulchre of Kadlán Gekkúdlá. Sniffer says they didn't go in here." You are just as happy; there is an air of menace about that doorway that you cannot explain.

"Something comes," the Sniffer mutters in funny-sounding Tsolyáni. Your comrades form up across the corridor: short spears and swords in the front rank, and missile weapons behind. One man, who has kept silent until now, loosens his robe and flexes his fingers: probably a magic-user.

Someone is coming. He lurches toward you, moving very fast. He has both hands clutched to his face and doesn't see your party until he is right on top of you. Then two Tomb Police reach out and grab him.

"Ugh!" one gasps and jerks his hands away. The other policeman grapples with the newcomer and pulls him down. There is much confused yelling, waving of torches, and scrambling about. When things calm down, three Tomb Police are holding the limp and unresisting prisoner, while everybody else stands nervously watching in all directions at once.

"Look at this, Sir!" one of the guardsmen calls. "Half his face clawed-like." A second policeman, a man named Chémyal, adds portentously, "He's dead, Jímu!"

You wish fervently that you had remained up above. The dead man is a hideous sight. You sense death all around you.

Captain Jímu kneels beside you. "Shouldn't have brought you along. Didn't think things'd get ugly so close to the surface! I wish I could send you back, but I can't spare the men to escort you."

"That's all right," you reply shakily. "What now?"

The Captain summons the Sniffer. "Whither?"

The tribesman points, and your group plunges off down a new passage. This descends at a steep angle, winds, twists, goes around a deep pit, and debouches into a precipitous little staircase. You clamber down, clutching at the damp-slick walls. At the bottom you enter a larger hall. Slender pillars rise up into the darkness. In the opposite wall, your torches pick out the dim outline of a ragged hole, piles of rubble and broken stone beside it.

"Pyramid of Jánjolu III," Captain Jímu pants. "Minor Engsvanyáli Governor. Looted a thousand years ago. Empty now. Damned tomb-robbers!"

Something rough and fibrous brushes your cheek. You look wildly around: nothing. Imagination? It caresses the back of your neck, and you curse, jump aside, and look up. The columns rise through impenetrable darkness toward the invisible roof high above. Nothing.

Suddenly one of the Tomb Police squeals, leaps, and tugs at his throat. You see what looks like a ragged net of cords draping down over his helmet. Another man squalls, rolls, and slashes with his short sword at something you cannot see in the quivering torch light. There is chaos around you.

The Captain bellows, "*Káyi*!" He waves his torch crazily over his head. "Burn 'em! Burn!"

Something sizzles, and there is violent movement high up in the darkness. One of your comrades hurls his short thrusting spear; you hear a hiss, and something that resembles a huge, naked human brain comes tumbling down. The *Káyi*'s body-sac has been punctured, and its one slit-pupilled eye glares at you with malevolent fury. Beneath the sac, ichor dribbles from its hole of a mouth, and the surrounding circle of rope-like tentacles lash and twitch violently. A policeman plunges his spear into the staring eye, and the *Káyi* goes limp. The sac exudes a cloud of ill-smelling gas.

The fight is soon over. There were only two of the monsters, but one of the Tomb Police lies huddled on the ancient stones. His body looks curiously small and weakened.

"*Káyi* suck out blood, internal organs, flesh," Captain Jímu says. He murmurs to the sorcerer-priest, who makes a few brief gestures and recites a prayer. Your party leaves the dead man lying where he fell and moves on.

A new tunnel appears to your left: a slanted oval hole that somehow looks new. A pick and a mattock lie discarded on top of the rubble. You pick up the former to use as a weapon. Too bad you didn't think to ask Captain Jímu for the dead policeman's short sword.

You negotiate the narrow tunnel carefully. Then you halt in utter amazement: the sight before you is incredible. Everywhere you see gold, winking gems, tall statues of unknown gods and demons, collars, pendants, tall standards that must once have held drooping Khéshchal-plumes, carved furniture, enigmatic chests and caskets. You stumble upon leather bags that have rotted, burst, and spewed thousands of coins upon the mosaic floor. You stand rooted to the spot with awe.

"The tomb of Tigán Mssá, the Governor of Béy Sü during the Twelfth Interregnum," the Captain breathes. "Lost for millennia...!"

At the far end of the long, barrel-vaulted chamber you see movement. Your comrades' weapons go up, and your sorcerer steps forward, one hand raised.

It is Sivusé. He walks slowly toward you and lifts one hand beseechingly. He opens his mouth to speak, but blood gushes out instead. He falls flat on his face.

Behind him is the reason. The creature that stands there is a thing of nightmare: squat, mottled grey, covered with pendulous excrescences, vaguely two-legged, although it is hard to be sure, two-armed, with round, mad eyes that peer at you from a face set in the middle of its chest! It utters a crooning, gulping sound.

Captain Jímu actually moans. "*Hrá!* This tomb is guarded by *Hrá!*"

The sorcerer-priest says nothing. He fumbles in his belt pouch and produces a small, round, nut-sized object: an "Eye." The *Hrá* stumps forward. A policeman hurls his spear, but it brushes the weapon aside with one many-fingered hand. The stench of something long dead hits you like a wave.

The priest's hand goes up. A thin beam of amber light plays over the *Hrá* for a moment. The monster halts, then tramps forward again. The priest mumbles a canticle and gestures. The *Hrá* lifts its strange, many-jointed arms above its torso and charges. It is surprisingly fast. The priest has no time for further spells. A crepitating, drooling maw opens in the lower part of the thing's body, and the long arms stuff the shrieking priest into this as daintily as

a maiden eats a pastry! Captain Jímu shouts unintelligible commands, and his men rush forward into battle. Torches scatter sparks hither and yon about the tomb chamber, and some of the dust-dry draperies catch fire and smoulder.

With no weapon except the pick, you choose the better part of valour and dive into an alcove filled with wooden chests. For a moment you feel them beneath you, then they disintegrate in clouds of decayed wood and fabric. You lie amidst the dusty wrack, dazed and bleeding from a small abrasion to your cheek. The sounds of combat grow more awful, then fade, and at last cease entirely. You hear great, padded feet plodding to and fro among the ruin. The stench of blood and entrails assails your nostrils. You hear crackling sounds also, but it is best not to think on these.

You wait. The last torch dies down to a spark. There is silence.

You crawl out of your refuge. As you do so, your exploring fingers encounter something lying on the blood-slick floor. It is a hand, still warm to the touch. You jerk away, and something oval rolls across the stones toward you. You feel for it and find the priest's magical weapon, the "Eye." A lot of good that did him, you think. But it is something, and you pick it up. The chamber is night-dark, and utterly silent. In a sudden onslaught of terror, you begin to crawl backward across the floor to where you remember the thieves' entrance tunnel lies. You feel round objects under your hands: jewels? Beads? You grab up some of these and stuff them into your mouth for lack of anywhere else to put them now.

Instruction: roll a **D10**: **1-4** = you escape with 1-10 jewels (worth 1,000-10,000 *Káitars* apiece; roll a **D10**), plus the "Eye of Ruling as a King Over the Undead" (range: 30 feet; a **D10** of charges). Go to Sec. A: **5-8** = you wander in utter blackness for days, starving, licking water from the damp walls, and gibbering with terror. Eventually a party of Tomb Police finds you and returns you to your clan. You gain nothing, recuperate for months, and only feel well enough to adventure again the following year. Go to Sec. 10; **9** = you are picked up by a gang of tomb-robbers. Go to Sec. 11 and fight. The tomb-robbers are a Type 2 opponent. If you win, you escape with nothing except the "Eye." If you lose, they do not kill you but sell you to a slaver who is travelling to Mu'ugalavyá. You escape and return home after several years. Go to Sec. 10. **10** = the *Hrá* returns just in time for lunch. You must fight: go to Sec. 11. The monster is a Type 7 opponent, even when you use the "Eye!" If you lose then woe! If you win, you grab up a handful of gems and jewellery (worth 5,000-50,000

Káitars; roll a D10 x 5,000). and flee as though pursued by demons from hell (which you are). Go to Sec. A.

A.12. THE RAG BUSINESS.

Sríma hiVaskóbu will take you to the fanciest clothing establishments in Béy Sü. Tékká hiVisóðla prefers cheaper shops where the bargains are better.

Most of what you see in the markets is already yours: kilts, tunics, shoes, belts, travelling gear, jewellery, and accessories. Unique items and possibly the special costumes for the "Twenty-Four Forms" (Sec. A.1) interest you, however, and your guide tries to please you.

Tsolyáni shops are usually long, open halls, with steps leading up from the street in front, a carpeted area where customers sit crosslegged while looking at goods, and storerooms, workrooms, etc. in back.

Sríma takes you to the Happy Hall of Chaggársha of Chame'él, Béy Sü's "King of Fashion." You are met by a shop-boy who provides you with cushions. Chaggársha himself then hurries out to welcome you. He is a Salarvyáni, pleasantly obese, luxuriantly bearded, and jolly. He offers you a cup of *Chuméti* (salted *Hmélu*-buttermilk), and a platter of deep-fried white grubs. The last is a Salarvyáni delicacy; if you pass, he won't mind. He has the following items for sale. The listed prices are in *Káitars*; they are what you pay after hours of patient bargaining. Many items are available for both sexes, but men's articles

are marked with "m" while women's garments are marked with "f".

Tékká can get you similar garments for 10% less. Hers are not quite as fashionable as those Sríma chooses, however.

Instruction: when you finish shopping, go to Sec. A.

A.13. BAUBLES AND BEADS

For jewellery, Sríma prefers the Ivory Dome of Húqesh hiTatolén the Khirgári. This is true elegance: mosaic floors, marble columns, rich cushions and tapestries, slaves who play musical instruments and sing for you, little boys with trays of goodies, fanbearers, chamberlains, and silent-footed girls who serve the finest brandies and wines. It doesn't get much better. Húqesh does not appear unless the transaction is worth more than half a million *Káitars*. If you chance to see him, he is a gaunt, ascetic-looking man in his late fifties, bald except for a fringe of white hair around his ears, clean-shaven, rather prim and unbending — a typical Khirgári. His steward bows, ushers you to a private room floored with thick red carpets, calls for food and drink, and commands the dancing and the music to begin. He claps his hands, and a procession of young children enter, each with one item of jewellery reposing upon a velvet pillow. In this place, Sríma whispers, there is no bargaining: you take it or leave it. Details are as for Sec. A.12. Other items must be arranged with the gamesmaster.

TABLE A.12.1: AVAILABLE GARMENTS

ITEM	PRICE	ITEM	PRICE
1 Embroidered tunic of fine Gúdrú-cloth m,f	250	12 Belt with plaques of ivory, gold, etc. m,f	900
2 Beautiful overtunic of finest Thésun-gauze m,f	750	13 Pectoral of beaten gold with gems and clan symbols m	1,600
3 Sandals of soft Vringálu-hide m,f	150	14 Ornate collar of gold, gems, and beadwork m,f	650
4 Gown or over-kilt of Thésun-gauze m,f	500	15 Heavy travelling cloak of Hmá-wool m,f	250
5 Travelling boots of tooled Vringálu-hide m,f	450	16 Priest's costume: any sect, Circles 1-10 m	300
6 Kilt of Gúdrú-cloth with embroidered border m,f	75	17 Priestess' costume: any sect. Circles 1-10 f	400
7 Western-style Hnelésh, a poncho-like garment f	125	18 Priest or priestess' costume, any sect; Circles 11-up m,f	1,500
8 Shawl of softest Hmélu-wool f	500	19 Male ceremonial costume for Form 1* m	2,000
9 Elegant gilded headdress m,f	500	20 Female ceremonial costume for Form 1* f	2,500
10 Brocaded mantle sewn with small gems m,f	1,500	*Add 2,000 <i>Káitars</i> to these base prices for each higher form. Thus, a costume of Form 24 costs 50,000 <i>Káitars</i> , and that for a woman 50,500! One's clan can usually provide "used" costumes to members who need them urgently for short periods.	
11 Ceremonial shoulder-pieces of gilded Chlén-hide m	750		

TABLE A.13.1: AVAILABLE JEWELLRY

ITEM	PRICE
1 Narrow bracelet of gold m,f	100
2 Broad bracelet of gold m,f	500
3 Gold ring with stone or intaglio m,f	500
4 Gold anklet of chain or linked pieces f	400
5 Heavy gold armlet m,f	700
6 Necklace set with gems m,f	1,200
7 Belt plaque (5 or more are needed for a belt) m,f	250
8 Brooch, amulet, or hairpin set with gems m,f	500
9 Headdress of gold, with gems m,f	2,500
10 Collar of gold, chased, inlaid, or set with stones m,f	1,500
11 Tiara, fillet, of gold f	750
12 Golden statue (5 inches high with gems for eyes)	3,000

Tékka knows where almost identical items can be found: the Premises of Methudánu of Gorulú. Being from Háida Pakála, however, this genial, courteous man must be watched constantly; otherwise his gold tends to be alloyed with base metals, his gems turn out to be poor quality, and his craftsmanship is not the same as his display pieces.

Instruction: if you go to Methudánu's shop, roll a D10: 1-6 = you get what you paid for; 7-10 = you are cheated, but you can't figure out how he did it. Methudánu offers to return your money, but you never get it back. At least the phony pieces look good enough to give as gifts to your least-favourite concubine.

Instruction: when you finish shopping, go to Sec. A.

A.14. THE MEAT MARKET

The slave markets are located just beyond the Gate of Blackness in the western part of the city. Here you see pens, sheds, caffles of unhappy-looking "merchandise," and overseers from a dozen races. The auction blocks loom high in the midst of this confusion, surrounded by offices where papers are registered, private sales are arranged, etc. The stench is terrible. The legal systems of the Five Empires make slavery a frequent punishment for crime or debt, and the economic system demands a constant supply of labourers. A slave has few legal rights and remains a slave unless freed by his/her owner. Some of the deities also demand human sacrifices. Most slavers belong to the despised Collar of Bronze clan,

which keeps records and submits them to the Palace of the Realm in each city. Clans thus have some chance of finding and freeing a member who has been wrongfully enslaved.

Neither Sríma nor Tékka wants to accompany you to this dreadful place, but Hémeth will go along. You must decide what you need: palanquin-bearers, craftsmen, personal servants, cooks, a major domo to oversee your household, concubines of either sex, nonhumans to add to your prestige at parties, or "fancies." The last term he does not explain.

You can not buy guards or soldiers: it is strictly forbidden to arm slaves! There is good reason for this: slaves have no reason to be loyal, and there have been slave revolts in which owners were robbed or slain. You also can not buy priests or sorcerers; if

TABLE A.14.1: AVAILABLE SLAVES

DESCRIPTION	PRICE
1 Untrained boy or girl	50
2 Untrained labourer (male or female) in mediocre condition	100
3 Untrained labourer (male or female) in excellent condition	200
4 Trained house-servant: butler, lackey, housemaid, children's nurse	300
5 Artisan trained in an easy skill: e.g. farmer, baker, barber, cook, weaver, tailor, tanner, brewer, hunter	400
6 Artisan trained in a medium skill: e.g. smith, sailor, locksmith, mason, glassblower, carpenter, miner, fancy cook	700
7 Slave trained in a complex skill: e.g. armourer, falconer, architect, apothecary, accountant, scribe, perfumer	1,000
8 Major domo, steward, chief accountant	1,500
9 Slave trained in a difficult skill: historian, poet, interpreter, physician	3,000
10 Untrained youth or maiden with a Comeliness of 85-100	4,000
11 Trained entertainer: acrobat, juggler, dancer, mime, singer	6,000
12 Nonhuman of the common species: Shén, Ahoggyá, Pé Chói, Tinalíya, Hláka, Páchi Léi, Swamp Folk	15,000
13 Trained courtesan or dancer with a Comeliness of 85-100; epic singer, puppeteer, gambling master for Tsahltn; gladiator, or wrestler	20,000
14 "Fancies": dwarves, giants, albinos, women with eyes of different colours, uncommon nonhuman species, etc.	30,000



such persons fall into debt or commit crimes, they are disciplined by their temples. Guards, priests, and magic users may sometimes be hired at the Palace of the Realm, of course.

Śríma will take you to the pet bazaar, a small, enclosed plaza close to the main slave market. You can buy a small dog or cat for half a *Káitar*, a large guard dog for 2 *Káitars*, or a trained hunting dog for 5. Pedigreed animals or special breeds cost double, triple, or even more. An untrained *Rényu* is priced at 2,000 *Káitars*, and wild animals are even more expensive: a *Zrné*, for example, may cost as much as 5,000 *Káitars*, and still rarer species may run as high as 20,000. Untrained *Küni*-birds are priced at about 100 *Káitars*, while a bird trained to speak and hunt will run as high as 5,000. A *Khëshchal*-bird with long, beautiful tail-plumes costs about 500 *Káitars*, while pretty, little songbirds can be had for a *Hlásh* or two apiece.

Instruction: when you finish shopping, go to Sec. A.

A.15. TAKE ARMS AGAINST A SEA OF TROUBLES

Both men and women may be warriors and/or soldiers in the Five Empires. Hémeth enjoys a number of soldierly hobbies. He is fair at wrestling, good at fencing, and almost an expert with the Sa'á

Allaqiyáni quarterstaff (*Kichána*). He happily escorts you to the narrow, twisted streets just south of the *Hirilákte* Arena where the armourers have their workshops. From morning until night you can hear the tap-tap of chaising mallets, the clangor of the smiths' hammers upon bronze, the clack and clatter of sheets of *Chlén*-hide being unloaded, and the rumble of the great beasts themselves as artisans pry sheets of fresh hide from their thickly armoured flanks. The smells are fascinating: hot metal, polishing oil, leather, the acrid odour of fresh *Chlén*-hide, and the awful stench of the tanners' baths. Hémeth picks his way carefully around bales of leather, bronze and copper ingots, and mounds of *Chlén*-hide.

"In here," he says, applying a pomander to his nose. "The House of Inimitable Defence of Mazhék hiFershéna of Tumíssa." He climbs the short flight of worn wooden stairs, waves one of the shopboys off to find the master, and sits down upon a not-too-clean mat. A velvet-covered box lies on the floor by the wall, and Hémeth opens it without asking. It contains an elegant *Chlén*-hide poniard with a gold-washed hilt carved into little serpent faces, and a pommel consisting of one large, red, rock-crystal. "Tasteless," Hémeth opines disdainfully. "But don't bother asking for iron or steel. The army took everything Mazhék had— for the war, you know."

"Not even a hope...?" you ask. A suit of steel armour would be beyond the means of a Prince these days, but there still ought to be smaller items around. You had your heart set on finding at least a steel sword or dagger here in mighty Bý Sü.

Hémeth shrugs sadly. At that moment a spare, stern-looking man comes in from the rear of the shop. He is in his middle fifties, wiry, thin-faced, with tightly curled, grizzled black hair. He blinks at you with both eyes at once, an odd mannerism.

" — Get that hand-and-a-half sword out to Lord Džélün today," he calls back over his shoulder, "or you dine on scraps of boiled *Chlén*-hide!" He grins apologetically, showing uneven, broken teeth. "Help, these days! Cha!"

You cannot resist. "Any — ah — chance of steel items?" Hémeth throws you a disgusted look.

Mazhék cackles, "Ohé, aye, for the right price!" He sobers. "A few turn up now and again — usually loot from tombs that the Imperium wants back. Occasionally some poor sod who's fallen on bad times has an heirloom to offer. Rare, though. My

cousin, Féshmu hiFershéna in Tumíssa, came across a fine steel sword a month ago. The Governor bought it as a gift for Prince Mirusiya. He has the idea that the High Prince will be marching into Tumíssa at the head of an army soon."

It is dangerous to discuss politics with strangers. "Yes...What have you now?"

"La! What is it you want? And how much are you prepared to spend?" Mazhék utters a piercing whistle through the gap in his front teeth. "Hói in there! Bring out some nice items for these folk!" All of the items listed in Table A.15.1. are made of *Chlén*-hide unless stated otherwise.

Instruction: roll a D10 for any five items on table A.15.1 that could be made of steel. On a score of **10** the article is indeed steel. A second roll of **9-10** = excellent steel, which gives added defence. You may make these rolls only once. The prices are horrendous: 200 times those listed above!

You may have any of these items engraved or chased for an additional 50% of the listed cost. Inlay and gilding requires double the listed amounts, and setting them with gems and brilliants costs triple. Generals and high-ranking staff officers usually own two or three sets of field armour and another, much more elaborate harness for feasts and court functions. The latter can cost 10 times the amounts quoted here.

TABLE A.15.1: ARMS AND ARMOUR

ITEM	PRICE	ITEM	PRICE
1 Dagger, knife	15	25 Gorget collar and shoulder defences: Tsolyáni Tsukéhlmri	75
2 Short sword	30	26 Breastplate	250
3 One-handed long sword, scimitar	50	27 Backplate	150
4 One-handed bronze mace, flail, club, morning star	70	28 Simple pectoral breastplate fastened with straps	75
5 Hand-and-a-half sword, longer mace or lail, heavier axe	100	29 Set of 2 vambraces for the forearms	50
6 Two-handed sword, mace, or flail	200	30 Set of 2 greaves for the calves	70
7 Halberd, poleaxe, glaive, or other pole weapon	250	31 Mail kilt to protect the abdomen and upper legs	100
8 Bronze-tipped javelin, dart	15	32 Set of tassels or pteruges to protect the abdomen and the thighs	150
9 Short spear, quarterstaff	20	33 Pair of plate-shod boots or sabatons	100
10 Long spear, pike	30	34 Shirt or tunic of mail, chainmail, or hardened leather (cuir bouilli)	175
11 Short self-bow	15	35 Shirt or tunic of leather, brigandine with metal studs	75
12 Short composite bow. These are of complex manufacture	125	36 Small targe or buckler	15
13 Longbow	100	37 Medium shield	25
14 Light or medium crossbow	130	38 Large shield	50
15 Heavy crossbow	250	39 Baldric of leather	10
16 Leather quiver	15	40 Sword-clip: Tsolyáni Sarélqe used instead of scabbard	15
17 20 Arrows	40	41 Military travelling cloak	100
18 30 crossbow quarrels	50	42 Common soldier's uniform (the cloth non-armour portions)	25
19 Bolas	10	43 Non-commissioned officer's uniform (as above)	45
20 Leather sling	5	44 High officer's uniform (as above)	150
21 Lead sling pellets	10		
22 Light helmet	25		
23 Medium helmet	50		
24 Heavy helmet with neck protection	100		



Each Legion in the Tsolyáni army is differently uniformed, armed, and armoured.

A "light" harness consists of anything from nothing at all to a light helmet, pectoral breastplate, vambraces, a leather tunic, and a kilt. "Medium" armour includes a medium helmet, gorget collar, breastplate, backplate, vambraces, greaves, and a leather tunic. "Heavy" equipment comprises a heavy helmet, gorget collar, shoulderpieces, breastplate, backplate, vambraces, greaves, mail kilt, tassels, and sabatons. Shields and weapons depend upon the Legion. No one in the Tsolyáni army wears full plate armour — the heat and the weight make this unbearable. Mazhék tells you about a Legion in Yán Kór, however, that does wear full metal harness: the *Gurék* [Legion] of Hekékka Nná. He shakes his head at the folly of those ponderous soldiers.

Mazhék next introduces you to one Nírunel hiQolsúna of the Golden Bough clan, who is a renowned fencing master. This man runs a school called "The House of Blades" here in Báy Sü. Nírunel offers to teach you the weapon of your choice for 1,500 *Káitars* per month, with a guaranteed advancement of one skill level every two months.

Later, after you have left the marketplace, Hémeth tells you that there is a second school in the city, "The House Which Knows No Fear," operated by Qálu hiChánkodel, where you can get the same instruction for 1,000 *Káitars* per month. You are left to wonder which one is better.

Instruction: when you finish shopping, go to Sec. A.

A.16. THE PEN MAY BE MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD, BUT COLD CASH BUYS THEM BOTH

Za'és hiSetkáya is skeletally thin, quick and bird-like even at the age of 80, and as arrogant as the Demon Tkél in the myth. He is reluctant to take you to visit his collector friends: perhaps you are too young? Too uneducated? Perhaps you will annoy them or make some ridiculous gaffe? A few words from your clan-master cause him to relent. You do come from an influential lineage, after all.

Lord Sírukel hiTuritláno lives in a genteel, quietly decaying neighbourhood by the Gate of Old Bones just inside Patyél's Wall. His house is set back inside a garden of tall, black *Túu*-trees: a rambling mansion that needs paint, roof tiles, and plaster. Za'és inquires from the one decrepit servant who comes to the door, then slips inside. After a minute he reappears and beckons you to join him.

Your host is short, thick, rather than fat, and bubbling with nervous energy. He sketches a bow to Za'és, inspects you with an eye as quick as a swordsman's thrust, shoos the servant off to bring porcelain cups of *Chumétl* spiced with blazing hot *Hlíng*-seed, and marches to and fro cracking his knuckles. Za'és tactfully puts your request to see books and coins to him.

"Nothing good these days," Lord Sírukel replies grumpily. "What Avanthár hasn't bought up isn't worth owning, and prices have risen like birds in flight!" Still, he claps his hands, and the aged servitor brings in a succession of objects for sale. These, Sírukel displays one at a time. If you don't buy, he sends the article back without bargaining or comment. He shows you the items listed in table A.16.1.

The old servitor enters and whispers to Lord Sírukel. He rises and says, "Others have come. I must excuse myself." As you leave, you hear your host's voice in the next room saying: "...if the price is satisfactory, you may tell your masters at Gij and Sons that the Lightning Bringer will be in their hands within a month." Za'és hurries you on by without speaking.

TABLE A.16.1: MISCELLANEOUS ARCANES ITEMS

ITEM	PRICE	ITEM	PRICE
1 A gold coin: an Engsvanyáli Suór. You can sell it for 250 Káitars, but its value may improve	350	10 The Eye of the Creeping Fog of Doom: this produces a gas that is usually poisonous (50% chance of a nerve gas, 40% chance of a contact gas, and a 10% chance of some harmless gas, such as oxygen). The gas emerges at a rate of 15 feet per minute to fill an area 100 feet square. It then lasts four minutes. The Eye must not be used in a confined space, nor when the wind is blowing the wrong way! The counter (in Tsolyáni) shows 17 charges	3,000
2 A broken pipe (6 inches long) of some kind of very light metal, from the before the Time of Darkness. No idea what it is	450	11 The Eye of Incomparable Understanding; see Sec. 14. The counter (in Duruób) indicates 45 charges	4,000
3 A steatite statuette of some unknown god from the Latter Times, perhaps the Goddess of the Pale Bone herself. Ugh!	900	12 The book "Zrú Hsún Tì Ch'à" ["The Excellent Travelling Volume"], written in ancient Tsáqw; it transports the reader and up to 10 companions to any destination on Tékumel, provided that the user has physically been there before. It can be used only once.	5,000
4 A square "coin" of electrum set with a single small diamond, from the Mihállí ruins in northern Salarvyá	1,000	13 The Eye of Aerial Excellence: see Sec. 14. The Eye has 37 charges	7,500
5 A piece of stone (8 inches square) incised with angular symbols, from before the Time of Darkness. In the middle is an incised circle with a central dot	1,200	14 The book "Korúnkoi hiChanmismongédáli" ["The Book of Great High Cartography"], written in modern Tsolyáni; it teaches the reading of the carven, magical stones of the cartographers of the Latter Times. These stones are maps to lost cities, etc.	10,000
6 The Amulet of Finding Treasure in the Underworld: a small obsidian beetle that infallibly guides the user to the nearest treasure hoard. It can be used only once, after which it crumbles to dust	1,500	15 The Magical Chest of the Topaz God: this common-looking bronze chest holds any amount of treasure, weapons, etc. (though not living beings!), provided that the object is not connected to a floor, wall, etc., and one edge, corner, or protuberance is small enough to fit into the chest's 6-inch square mouth. It never requires charging. Anyone who gains possession of it can take out objects	20,000
7 The Amulet of the Good God: a sparkling blue stone in the shape of the symbol of Lord Hnálla; it has a 90% chance of repelling the monstrous Hrá. It cannot be used by devotees of the Lords of Change	3,000		
8 The Amulet of Power Over the Undead: a small, mummy-like statuette of blue faience inscribed in ancient Salarvyáni; it repels undead beings within a 30 foot range. It can be employed only once against the same group of undead, however. It is only usable by one who can cast both ritual and psychic spells	2,300		
9 The Amulet of Warding Off Thúnru'u: a little copper cone inscribed in ancient Mihállí. It repels up to 5 of the horrid "Eaters of Eyes" within a 30 foot range	2,500		

When you are out in the street again, he turns and snaps, "Forget what you heard! There are things it is best not to know." Puzzled and a little apprehensive, you return to your clanhouse.

Instruction: if you have the money, you may buy any three of the items listed in table A.16.1. When you finish shopping, go to Sec. A.

A.17. GONE FISHING

The library of your temple occupies a single long wing in the topmost storey of the main building. The walls are perhaps fifteen feet thick, and the windows are deep, narrow slits. Small lamps of clay

or bronze hang here and there amidst the crowded shelves, piles of manuscripts, and racks of dusty scrolls. There is no arrangement and no order: the librarian and his assistants know the location of each book by heart. Some scholars have set up their own little tables, lamps, and sleeping mats near their favourite works in the stacks, and you can inquire from these if you get lost.

The priestess, Dhéya, shows you some of the library's "prize" volumes: "The Pandects of Pavár" written in luminous blue ink upon a scroll of gold foil; an Engsvanyáli "picture book," in which the miniatures on the page actually move by magic when you put your finger on them; a bejewelled copy of a Llyáni

work called “Mó’om Té’ep Srásü ,” (“The Exquisite Codicil of Srá “), which is said to have magical powers; an album of portraits of the Engsvanyáli Priestkings from the First Period; and a dozen more.

The Librarian is a courteous, scholarly little man named Pokúl hijánja, of the Victorious Globe clan. He offers you the usual clay cup of *Chumétl* and asks your interests. If you have skill levels in Collecting (Sec. 9.3.2) or in Science and Knowledge (Sec. 9.3.9), he warms to you and leads you to the areas in the library where books of your interest may be found. If you have no skill levels in these subjects, you look around, then return to Sec. A.

If you are scholarly-minded, you discover innumerable texts on history, theology, geography, medicine, philology, astronomy, mathematics, astrology, literature, poetry, etc. You can’t possibly look at them all. There are many curiosities as well: a book on politically important prostitutes of the Reign of Ssirandár IX, a thick tome on cooking *Húbat* embryos among the tribes of M’mórcha, a slim treatise written on plates of polished slate that deals with the headgear of the court ladies of the time of the Fishermen Kings, a ball of what looks like ivory inscribed all over with tiny characters no one can read, and many more. You are not allowed into the restricted area where magical volumes are kept, nor may you borrow or buy books. Common religious works of your sect are sold in the lobby of the school downstairs. You may have books copied, however.

Instruction: you may hire a scribe to copy a text of 150-200 pages for 30 Káitars. He will complete this work within one month. If you leave Bény Sü, the book can be forwarded to you for about 10 Káitars

Several hours later, Pokúl brings you a cake of *Dná*-bread, a clay pot of stew, and a bottle of *Héngka*-beer. You are astounded to find time has passed so quickly. He leaves, and you squat crosslegged on one of the resident scholars’ mats to eat. Your eye falls upon a manuscript on the scholar’s desk. A partial Tsolyáni translation lies beside it. The title is transcribed from ancient Mihállí: “Mi’ibá Gré Hádžqü Yoshúm ,” which means “The Periplus of Farther Voyaging ,” and the author is given as somebody named Wába. A later hand has added “Wába’s Almanac “ in Engsvanyáli below the title. You examine the translation and find that it is a compendium of directions and advice for interplanar travel. Fascinated, you trace one of the diagrammes with your forefinger and mouth the words of the accompanying spell. A small, greyish oval appears on the table beside your fingertip. You glance around, see no one, and recite the spell in a louder



voice. The oval grows larger, turns a deeper grey, and starts to swirl.

Without warning, the oval expands and sucks you in! You struggle, but the whirling maelstrom overpowers you, and you feel your familiar world crumble away beneath you and disappear. Your cries for help are lost in the soundless void. You shut your eyes and wait for death.

You open them again to find your cheeks bathed in bright sunlight. Trees — *Gapúl* and *Miché*, by the look of them — arch high over your head; you smell mud and rotting vegetation nearby; and your fingers sink deep into damp humus beneath you. Somewhere a *Sahulén*-bird warbles prettily. You are lying on a river bank, one foot in the turgid, grey-brown current.

You rise and gaze wildly around. You see no one, no houses, no roads, no Bény Sü. Far off, like a blue shadow looming up out of the river, you see a high precipice. Perhaps you can see where you are from there. You start off along the river bank.

Around a bend a little boat comes into view. A single man stands in the stern, holding what looks like a fishing pole. You hail him: “*Hói! Ohé!*”

The boat drifts over towards you. Its occupant is short, darkly tanned, and bony, with curly black hair that is greying at the temples. He peers at you a bit nearsightedly.

"*Ohé*, there, on the shore! Who are you?" The old fellow looks to be about sixty.

You tell him and ask him the same question. He only laughs and says, "I am the Fisherman. That's what folk call me." He points: "Up there, inside the caverns, is the College. We'd best take you up there. They can help."

"The College?" You've never heard of it.

"Oh, aye." He helps you into the boat, where you see three silvery fish on a string. He sits down and leisurely rows back upstream to the mighty cliff in the distance. You note that the river seems to divide there: the cliff is the apex of a sharp triangle, with broad streams running down toward you along both sides. At the very point of the triangle you discern a black hole in the cliff that must be the entrance to the caverns the Fisherman spoke of. There is something familiar about this place.

He steers right into the cave. There are wharves here and green-crustled mooring rings. Worse, there are people, and they are not in the least human: tall, slim monsters that look like insects plated with glass. You can see right through the thinner portions of their limbs. It's almost as if they are transparent! Horrified, you contemplate leaping overboard, but the Fisherman steadies you. "No fear," he says quietly. "We're all friends."

A staircase leads up from the docks. It is lit at intervals by amazing little globes of light. Strange creatures abound: many of the nonhuman races you have seen, and many more you never dreamt of. Humans live here as well: a radiantly beautiful woman sweeps down the steps, followed by something that is black and wet-looking; an old man with a bald head and a fuzz of white beard strolls along, together with another oldster in a stained robe and squeaking straw sandals; a youngish man in glittering armour walks arm in arm with a slim, vivacious lady in the vestments of a priestess of Lord Vimúhla — you lose track. You look back at the Fisherman in confusion.

"Here's the main hall," he says. "Some food? A sip of wine? I'll be right back with somebody who can aid you." The place is huge, high-vaulted, with columns and ribbing so delicate they look like lacework rising

up to clerestory windows high above. Tables are spread with glittering golden vessels, platters, and baskets of fruits and vegetables, and odd-shaped servants carry ewers of wine and other beverages to the hundred or more assembled diners. You nibble. You're in the wrong place, and you know it.

A graceful, black Pé Chóí approaches you, the Fisherman right behind. "This is the person I mentioned," the latter announces. "Lost in time, I think." The Pé Chóí nods his long head. The lighter colour of his ears shows that he is very old.

The two of them lead you through a maze of corridors to a circular chamber. In the middle of this there is a platform upon which stands a huge globe twice as tall as a man. It must be glass, since you can see sparks of light and cloudy wave-like stuff floating inside it. The Pé Chóí goes to stand beside a box nearby covered with little glass discs, levers, and round, red protuberances. He twists certain things and pushes others.

The sparks within the globe swirl and dance and make odd, eye-hurting patterns. "Trouble," the Pé Chóí wheezes. "Out beyond the Pylons. Celestial Quadrant Three."

"Let the others take care of it," the Fisherman responds tartly. "I'll miss the sunset if I go, and that's when the fish bite best! Here, send this young one home!" The creature shrugs and beckons you to climb up onto the platform.

You can stand it no longer. "Who?" you cry. "Who are you? Where am I? What is all this?"

The elderly Fisherman chuckles. "This is Avanthár, but not your Avanthár. This is Avanthár at the very end of time and space, across the Planes. This is so far in your future that the very names of your nations have been forgotten. This is the College, young one, the College where we Undying Wizards strive to hold back the Dark, the visitations of She Who Cannot Be Named, the nullity of the One Other — things of which you know not. Relax. We're sending you home." He reaches into the air; his hand vanishes and reappears with a silvery fish on a cord — nice trick! "Something for your dinner! Eat it and remember me!"

"But who — who — are you?"

The Pé Chóí whistles up a laugh. "Don't you know this man, young human? Why, this is Subadím the Sorcerer!"

"Nonsense! Subadím — Thómar — Hagárr of Paránta — they're all just legends!"

"Of course," answers the Pé Chói affably. He pushes the last button.

You wake sitting on the scholar's mat in the darkness of the temple library. It is the middle of the night, and you think it must have been a dream. You see no one. There is no fish. You rise, blow the little lamp back to life, and look around. What is that silvery speck on the floor, there? Could it be a fish scale? No, of course not! You are a modern person who does not hold with ancient superstitions and legends!

Instruction: whether you believe it or not, you now have a chance at a great power, even if you can cast no other magic at all. Roll a **D10**: 1-3 = you gain nothing, but your fingers smell like fish for six days; 4-7 = you find that you can detect secret doors and traps within a 10 foot radius; you do this by concentrating. The expenditure of mental and psychic energy limits your use of this spell to 3 times per day; 8-10 = you now have the spell called "Visitations of the Planes": you can see floating nexus points that lead to other Planes on a D10 score of 1-7; you can create nexus points of your own on a D10 score of 1-6; you can see what lies on the other side of a nexus point and ascertain whether it is dangerous or not on a D10 score of 1-5. Again, you can use this spell 3 times per day.

Instruction: bemused and bewildered, go to Sec. A.

A.18. TAKE ME TO YOUR READER

Dhéya escorts you to one of the side buildings. "This is the school," she says, "Everything from pre-school kindergarten all the way up to advanced scholarly research. Ten years of schooling, then about six years in the Academy, then another six or eight years studying under particular scholars in your chosen field." She gives you a sidelong glance. "If you're interested, I can speak to the *Kusijáktodali* — the Ranking Scholar."

You know a recruiter's pitch when you hear it. "Um — I'll think on it," you say.

On the ground floor, children are chanting the Five Hymns to the Seal Emperor, which reminds you of your own school days. Upstairs, the building is divided into long halls where senior teachers sit at the bases of the pillars surrounded by groups of students. Most have slates or parchments, and aside from the teacher's droning voice, all you hear is the scritch-scratch of quill pens. Dhéya leads you up yet another staircase to the third storey. The single,

central corridor here has closed doors on both sides. You smell chemicals, melted wax, perfume, smoke, something dead, and other odours you cannot name. A thin, young man with a large Adam's apple and a nose to match goes loping past, documents fluttering in both arms. "Late," he pants, "I'm late. I'm late!"

Dhéya smiles. "Ritónmel hiMésqur, a philosopher whose specialty is the 'Encomium of Inner Essence,' by the Mu'ugalavyáni sage, Nárish Timéya of Pagús."

It is your turn to smile, and Dhéya adds, "Useless to talk to him. He never speaks to anyone who is not at least a senior student. He doesn't even talk to his wives any more." She looks a bit flustered. "Which creates problems with the rest of his colleagues — ah— ahem..."

Instruction: you may now name one of your major scholarly interests: i.e. one field from Secs. 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.5, 9.3.9, and 9.3.10 in which you already have at least one skill level. (Sec. 9.3.11 is also available to devotees of Ladies Dlamélis or Hrihayál.) Roll a **D10**: 1-6 = a specialist in this field is present in the temple. He or she (or "it" if a member of a nonhuman species that has neuters, such as the Tinalíya, the Pé Chói, or the Shén!) will chat with you about your interests and encourage you to come and study in this temple; 7-10 = no one is currently



available who shares your interest. Go to Sec. A. (You cannot return to try again!)

Instruction: if a relevant scholar is found, you may try to enroll as a student in this temple. Roll a **D10: 1-2** = you succeed and spend a year under this scholar's tutelage. Go to the following paragraph; **3-4** = you cannot get financial support from your clan. If you personally do not have 5,000 Káitars to pay for tuition and expenses, you cannot enroll. If you do have this sum, you may treat this as a score of 1 or 2. Otherwise go to Sec. D; **5-6** = you come to the temple but soon fall prey to drink, sex, and other blandishments of the big city. You lose 1-10 (a D10 roll) points from your Height-Build-Strength number (Sec. 6.4) and 1,000-10,000 Káitars (another D10 roll). If this puts you into debt, your clan will rescue you, but they then send you to a remote monastery-like temple to dry out; **7-8** = after getting to know this scholar, you find you cannot stand him/her/it and return home in disgust. Go to Sec. 15. or to Sec. 10, as you choose; **9-10** = the scholar gently lets you know that he/she/it expects a large bribe — 3,000 Káitars per year — in addition to the 5,000 Káitars of tuition and expenses charged by the temple. If you agree to pay, you may treat this as a score of 1 or 2; otherwise go to Sec. 15. Instead of money you can offer sex, if your Comeliness is at least 80 (Sec. 6.7) and your Charisma is 76 or above (Sec. 6.8)! Roll a **D10: 1-7** = the scholar takes you up on your offer; **8-9** = he/she/it refuses and insists upon the money; **10** = he/she/it angrily rejects your offer and has you thrown out of the temple. You suffer minor bruises. Limp back to Sec. 15.

Instruction: on a score of 1-2 in the preceding paragraph, you gain 1-3 skill levels in the field you have chosen: roll a **D10: 1-3** = 1 level; **4-8** = 2 levels; **9-10** = 3 levels. If you are a priest, you are promoted to the Third Circle, and you may stay on in the temple: go to Sec. 17., ff. If you have the psychic abilities to study "sorcery" (Sec. 6.6), you may invest your skill levels in new spells in Sec. 8.5. You can not return for a second year of further study but may go to Sec. 15. and try other adventures in Bény Sü, or you may return to Sec. 10.

A.19. ONE FOR THE WORM LORD

You climb stairs, wander through halls filled with chattering guests, cross a roof garden, and enter a small, elegantly decorated sitting room. There are soft floor cushions, deep-piled carpets, and many-branched bronze lamps that stand as tall as you. You smell perfume, heady brandies (*Tsuhóridu*), and the rich fragrance of tiny *Wekúna*-fish fried in spices and oil. In the semi-darkness you see perhaps five or six shadowy figures sprawled upon the carpets, couches, and divans.

"You a guest?" someone growls. A hulking guardsman stands beside you.

Before you can reply, a dry, whispery voice says, "It is well, Fájja. Leave be. This is the messenger sent by the temple of the Worm Lord." You can't see the face of the speaker, but you smell something dead. Bad breath?

Another, deeper voice grates, "On with it, then. Do we or don't we?"

"An alliance with Lord Sárku's people seems the only way," a woman interjects. All you can see is the gleam of her jewelled collar, but she sounds rather young. "If we refuse, our temples and our clans will lose by it: no more Imperial preference, more taxes assessed upon our lands, restrictions on our temples..."

"As you say, Sitláya —"

"Don't use my name, idiot!" You hear rustling of garments in the darkness and guess that the woman has turned around angrily.

"Cha! As if your presence here were unknown! Are the Emperor's agents blind? You might as well stand upon the highest dais in the great hall with a sign about your neck!"

"Let her be," a new voice commands: a man, whose sharp, crisp tones remind you of soldiers. "Lord Thúmis' interests in the Emperor's cause are not yet widely known. There are many at this feast who have little love for the Worm! We need not announce our plans to them."

The first speaker murmurs, "Indeed, and one so young and pretty. One who can open the gates of Páya Gupá and trap a certain High Prince inside!" You hear more rustling, then violent movement.

"Touch me not, my Lord!" the woman snaps. "You already have toys aplenty." She rises, a silhouette in the red-lit darkness. "Let mighty Prince Eselné but sniff inside our gates, and he is yours! I bear no love for the 'Chlén-beast in a blue robe.' There are others in my temple who agree with me."

"But your master, Lord Gámalu hiBeshyéne, may not. What thinks he of your — ah — predilection for Emperor Dhich'uné?"

"Why do you think he had me 'promoted' and sent off to that stinking, rustic village of Usenánu? La! He even commanded me to marry the chief of the

Scholarly Division there: somebody named Sánjesh hiKirisáya! Fortunately for me, Lord Sánjesh had the grace to have departed by the time I arrived to take up my post."

"Your political — and religious — views are well known," purrs another, more languorous woman's voice. She sounds older than the first. "Lord Thúmis values the intellect, as does Lord Sáрку. Both seek wisdom —"

"One is dead, while the other lives!" somebody chortles.

" — If you can call endless, sweet sacrifices of flowers and fruit living!" the first speaker whispers. "I prefer more — activity."

"Our dear host has become a sports addict!" the woman exclaims archly. "Always at exercises in the practice-yard he has in his bedroom — with some very lovely opponents, one hears! Come, come, do we throw our support to our divine Emperor or not?"

The crisper-voiced man replies, "What choice have we? It is as Sit- — ah, this lady — says. We cannot champion the Vriddi in Fasíltum! Their mad-dog Prince Mirusíya has neither army nor backing among the great clans of the central Empire! Fifteen thousand Vriddi troops cannot take Avanthár even if they all bat their stupid, arrogant heads against its ramparts in unison like a squad of shaven-headed priests striking a *Tunkúl-gong!*"

"What of Prince Rereshqála?" says a new speaker, a man with a light and almost lisping voice. "Will he not move to aid Eselné, especially if our charming Thúmis priestess, here, lures the poor dolt into a trap?"

"Rereshqála wallows in luxury on his estate near Jakállá. He won't move, even if the Gods destroy the world!"

"What answer, then?" the woman insists. "What do I tell my comrades?"

You hear muttering, the clink of glasses, and the jingle of heavy bracelets. The older woman speaks: "We go along with the Seal. We can do naught else. We prefer Princess Ma'in Krüthái, but we are realists: she has no more chance than a *Chrí-fly* in an oven!"

Light-voice giggles. "Besides, once all is done, your Princess can marry mighty Emperor Dhich'uné and give birth to a brood of crawling little white grubs!" The others snigger.

"For our part," the man who sounds like a soldier says, "We remain neutral. There are too many of us who cannot stomach worms. We will not oppose you, however."

"And us?" the man with the deep, grating voice grumbles. "We go along with the Emperor. Our temple has always done so, whoever sits on the Petal Throne."

"As have we," the first speaker murmurs, a trifle smugly. "I speak for the Inner Temples of both our God and his Cohort."

"We are decided, then? Good!" the first speaker's shadow lurches up. "Ohé, Féjja! Take Lord Sáрку's young wormlet back to the main hall! Pass on our message: we are not unanimous, but we join the God Emperor in putting down both Prince Eselné in the west and Prince Mirusíya in the east!"

As you turn to leave, a voluptuous feminine figure blocks your way. "A little Mind-Bar, first, friends! So that our young messenger may not go blabbing to our foes — who are doubtless waiting eagerly for news below."

Instruction: roll a D10: 1-6 = you are mind-barred: the only persons to whom you may reveal what you have just heard and seen are Jayárgo or Su'unkáda. Go to Sec. A.1; 7-8 = as for a score of 1-6, but the woman adds a command of her own: you become part of her stable of "devotees" for the rest of the evening. The next morning you can't remember what you did, but you wake at home in your clanhouse, safe and sound, with a backache and muscle pains as though you had been performing gymnastics all night. Go to Sec. A.1; 9-10 = you successfully resist the Mind-Bar. If you do not favour Lord Sáрку and the Emperor's cause, you want to tell someone else in hopes of getting a message through to the Prince and his followers. Go to Sec. A.24. If you follow the Worm Lord's faction, go and tell Jayárgo as for a score of 1-6. Go to Sec. A.1.

A.20. THERE ARE SA'Á ALLAQIYÁNI IN OUR GARDEN

The speaker is a woman. She wears a poncho-like garment similar to the Hnelësh preferred by women

in the west. This is cut differently, however: it is laced down the sides, embroidered in sharp, geometric patterns with bright-hued threads, and set with tiny brilliants. The wearer is also slightly stockier than the Tsolyáni ideal; her complexion is a shade lighter, and her hair is done up in braided “wheels” over each ear.

“I am Tsái Sédla Nréku,” she says. “I am an *Anchiüró* — what you call a *Heréksa* in the army of Sa’á Allaquí.” She sticks out her lower lip in the direction of a group of officers in the orange livery of that northern nation. “I am on General Bádz Klé’s staff.”

You feel a trifle uneasy. After all, it wasn’t so many months ago that the Empire was fighting these northerners.”

She looks you up and down. “You are god-serving?”

“What?” The Sa’á Allaquíyáni language doesn’t even belong to the same linguistic family as your Tsolyáni. It is an Aóm tongue, while yours is a member of the Khíshan stock. “Excuse me?”

“God you serve?” She frowns, rather prettily. The candlelight softens the sharp planes of her face. She is attractive in an odd, foreign sort of way.

Instruction: tell her which God you follow. If you serve Lord Sárku or his Cohort, Lord Durritlámish, she bows politely and turns away. If you serve Lord Vimúhla or his Cohort, Lord Chiténg, her bow is sharper, more correct, and clearly hostile; it was the fanatic Vimúhla-worshipper General Kárin Missúm who devastated her land and sacked the city of Grái. Go to Sec. A.1. If you serve any of the others, she is more friendly, and you may continue in this Section, or return to Sec. A.1, if you prefer.

She strikes up a conversation, offers to share a plate of hors d’oeuvres, which you refuse since she is a foreigner, after all, and her social level is probably different from yours, and leads you up onto the roof garden. There are many people here: couples in the shadows, children playing tag, older folk sitting on mats to enjoy the red and green moons, and others who have come up for air after the heavy meal.

“You like him, our Baron Áld?” She smiles at you.

What should you say? Baron Áld was originally a Sa’á Allaquíyáni mercenary, who became a general in the Tsolyáni army but later claimed that he was betrayed on Káidrach Field. He resigned and went to Yán Kór where he made himself the ruler of a coalition of city-states. These he forged into a single

nation. War broke out between Yán Kór and Tsolyánu in 2,356 A.S. and only ended this year, in 2,363, when the old Emperor, Hirkáne Tlakotáni, died and his youngest son, Prince Dhich’uné, seized the Petal Throne. The new Emperor speedily made peace and reinstated Baron Áld as First General of the Empire, ousting General Kéttukal hiMraktiné in the process. The Baron hates Kéttukal for slaying his beloved mistress, Yilrána, while he was off on campaign. Kéttukal is now with Prince Eselné near Páya Gupá in the northeast. Prince Eselné — and his half brother Mirusíya and half-sister Ma’ín Krüthái — were cheated out of a chance at the throne themselves because of Dhich’uné’s speed in grabbing power after the old Emperor (and another brother, Prince Mridóbu) mysteriously perished at Avanthár. A fourth brother, Prince Rereshqála, is apparently unwilling to compete for the throne; he lives in luxury near the city of Jakálla on the southern coast of Tsolyánu. Not only is Tsái’s question particularly difficult, thus, but anything you say may be reported to one faction or the other with unlooked-for consequences.

The Sa’á Allaquíyáni woman is waiting. You mutter, “Um—”

She bursts into laughter. “Come,” she says, “to quiet place.” She indicates a small marble kiosk at one



corner of the roof. It seems she desires a brief furlough from her military duties.

You lean on the carved stone railing and gaze down over a jumble of terraces and flat roofs into the lantern-lit gardens below. Music drifts up from the main hall, and you hear laughter, the thump of drums, and ribald shouts. The woman, Tsái, presses against your shoulder. The fragrance of her northern perfume is alien to your nostrils, yet pleasing. You move to take her into your arms.

"Wait!" she hisses. There is tension in her stance. You follow her eyes, down to the terrace just below your kiosk.

Something is happening there. A shadow crouches beside the shoulder-height parapet wall, apparently listening to voices coming from an adjoining, inner room. Two more figures are slinking along the wall, approaching from a blind corner where the first cannot see. There is a swirl of capes, the shuffle of feet, and a flurry of blows. One of the shadows goes sprawling and lies still, the second backs away, and the third — the listener — staggers back against the coping, one hand clutching at the folds of his cape. The remaining attacker moves in again, a slender sword glittering like a wand of light. The whole incident occurs in eerie silence.

Tsái does something completely unexpected: before you can so much as blink, she is up onto the railing of your kiosk, then over and down, her open-sided poncho-skirt billowing up around her thighs. She lands, then moves as lithely as a charging *Zrné* to join the figure by the wall. She raises a glittering dagger over her head. Where did that come from? You see a flicker in the air, and the dagger's hilt protrudes from the breast of the second attacker! She threw it as accurately as any professional assassin! The man crumples. Tsái helps the listener to his feet: he appears only lightly wounded. She glances up at you, teeth shining in the darkness, and sketches a wave. The two of them drop over the edge of the terrace and down into the gardens. Then she is gone.

"Hold right there!" a voice snarls in back of you. You whirl to see a pair of armoured soldiers in the livery of Lord *Srüqu's* household. A third man stands behind them: elderly, pale, and wispy-looking, with a balding pate from which hang ringlets of shoulder-length grey hair.

A gruff voice from below calls, "They're gone, master! Over the wall into the city!"

The old man clicks his tongue. "Give orders to find

them." He peers at you. "Now I must deal with their accomplice here."

"Accomplice? Me?" you protest. "A casual meeting — a rendezvous, that's all."

"And *Káika*-birds lay diamonds instead of eggs!" snorts one of the soldiers.

"Come, come." The oldster shakes his head impatiently. "The truth! I act upon Imperial authority."

Instruction: you have three choices: (1) if you surrender and go with these people, go to Sec. A.25; (2) if you decide to fight, go to Sec. A.26; (3) if you prefer to jump over the parapet and follow Tsái and her companion, go to Sec. A.27.

A.21. ANOTHER VIEW FROM THE KIOSK

The speaker is a rather artlessly pretty girl in northern costume. Although she does not wear armour or any visible weapons, her bearing hints at the military. Several bearded *Sa'á Allaqiyáni* officers stand nearby, and you guess that she is one of them.

"New, to *Béy Sü*," she says. "Not before see it, this place."

The woman doesn't even speak correct *Tsolyáni*! Your social standing could suffer if you are seen talking to such a rude foreigner! On the other hand, she is engaging in a naive sort of way. You decide to be hospitable.

"Food?" you inquire. "Drink?" She shakes her head so that the ornate hairpins — long enough to be stilettos — in the braided wheels of her hair over her ears shimmer in the lamplight.

She takes your hand, a social faux pas. "Come. Air, it is needed. Up to rooftops!" She grins. "Many too nice men here, this night."

With nothing better to do, you go along. She meanders hither and yon, looks into this room and that, smiles at lowly slaves, snubs high nobles, and stops to sample tidbits everywhere. You learn that her name is Tsái something, and that she is some sort of liaison officer in the *Sa'á Allaqiyáni* army. Her people served as unwilling allies of *Yán Kór* during the recent war, so you don't really hate them. Now she has come with Baron *Áld's* retinue to set up a unified defence against the Red-Hats of *Mu'ugalavyá*, who are attacking both *Tsolyánu* and *Yán Kór* from the west.

"Here!" she says breathlessly. Nice to see moons place, yes?" She pirouettes around a delicate marble kiosk that adorns one corner of the upper roof of the palace. The many-hued paper lanterns below make a pretty scene. You kick off your gilded sandals, wiggle sore toes, and relax.

"Onnú jé! " Tsái exclaims suddenly. You follow her gaze and see some sort of brawl occurring on the terrace below your kiosk. Three men are locked in melee down there. Drunk, doubtless!

You are astounded at what happens next: the Sa'á Allaqiyáni girl leaps up onto the parapet, and before you can utter a word, vaults over and down! She must either be mad or addled with drugs!

By the time you reach the railing, she is on her feet and embroiled in the melee herself! In a moment one man lies sprawled on the stone floor. A second twists and falls, an ornate, jewelled dagger-hilt sticking out of his chest. You recognise one of Tsái's long hairpins! In the names of all the Gods — !

You hear footsteps in back of you. An old man stands there, two brawny soldiers trailing him. Below, on the terrace, several men and women emerge from an inner room, and you hear a gabble of excited voices. Someone in the dark gardens below calls up, "They're gone, master! Over the wall into the city!"

The old man clicks his tongue. "Give orders to find them." He fixes you with a fierce eye. "As for you, Lady, please come with me."

Instruction: you can tell that this man is likely to be a powerful magic-user. His two guards appear equally formidable, physically. It would be a mistake to fight, and it would be equally idiotic to run since the guards block your way. As for jumping off the roof after Tsái and her companion, forget it! Your costume and jewellery are cumbersome enough to sink a trireme! No, meekness is the better part of valour. The old gentleman does look as though he could be beguiled by a pretty smile and a few sweet words, so all is not lost. Go to Sec. A.28.

A.22. WOODEN IT BE LOVELY!

Servants shut the bronze-banded *Tiu*-wood doors, and guards take up positions along the walls. You sit down crosslegged on a mat in the rear of the room, as inconspicuous as possible. The priest of Lord Hrü'ü stands by the tall candelabra near the windows, glaring at the semicircle of flushed faces before him.

"We tolerate no more!" he says at last. "Oh, we

permit a certain amount of disinclination, a bit of raillery, a joke or two, even a few wistful remarks from those fool enough to have supported other candidates for the Petal Throne! But to utter treason against the God-Emperor through the mouth of a puppet! Cha! That is too much!"

"Aye," remarks one of the officers with an ironic grin. "Those puppets can be dangerous foes, eh?"

The priest clenches his bony hands and strives for composure. "We are not unreasonable. We ask no instant allegiance but rather a chance to prove that our Emperor is best fitted to rule. After all, it was he who won the *Kólumèjalim*."

The children of a Tsolyáni Emperor are not all revealed to the public when they are born; some are secretly given over to the great clans, to the temples, or to other patrons to be educated, trained, and prepared to "accept the Gold" — the challenge to appear at the *Kólumèjalim*. This is a series of public contests of strength, sorcery, wisdom, and plain low cunning in which only Imperial heirs may participate. An heir may also "reject the Gold" and not compete, but he or she is never again eligible for the Petal Throne. A competitor may use almost any means to win, including a fixed number of surrogate "champions." The winner is conveyed to Avanthár,



where he or she dwells in god-like seclusion in the Golden Tower for the rest of his or her life. In this way, the Tsolyáni believe, the strongest, wisest, and most cunning candidate will become Emperor. This is a good thing for the Empire, since these are precisely the qualities that make for political success! The problem with Prince Dhich'uné's *Kólumèjalim* was that he was a little too clever: all of the other candidates had either vanished, died, or were too far away to attend within the required period. Dhich'uné therefore claimed victory by default. Prince Rereshqála, the oldest, "rejected the Gold" and made no protest, but Princes Eselné and Mirusiya and Princess Ma'in Krúthái have indicated that they will fight for their rights. Other, hidden heirs to the Petal Throne may exist as well, preparing to come forth when they deem the time to be ripe.

One of the *Molkárs* looks as though he wants to spit. "Hear me, priest," he rasps, "you cannot detain us. You were the one who turned that puppeteer into an ice sculpture! For that alone, the Society of the Hands Which Are Not Seen should send an Assassin to repay you in your own coin! We had nothing to do with your little wooden traitor! How dare you interrogate us!"

The priest glowers, but the officer is right. The impasse holds for a long moment; then the priest turns to his colleagues. "Come, we pursue our inquest elsewhere." He strides out, followed by his staff.

You wait until the soldiers also depart, still arguing the matter vociferously. As you get up to leave, you feel something wiggling underneath your garments. An insect? A deadly *Epéng*? You reach inside violently, prepared to snatch and throw!

Your fingers touch what feels like smooth wood, polished bone, and metal. It squirms! You open your tunic and look. It is the puppet, the Princess Zhéu Dái! "What?" you mumble, "How did you get here?"

"Hush, human! I need your help!" She crawls out to stand before you, a doll perhaps five inches tall, beautifully sculpted, and attired in a costume of cloth and gold foil, perfect in every detail.

"But who — ? Your master is dead! How do you — ah — live?"

The little princess tilts her head to one side. "Through energies sucked from the Planes Beyond. And look: I stole my master's Life-Stone! With it, I live; without it I am as inert as a lump of *Chlén-dung*!" She holds up what appears to be a pebble of black rock.

You are not too surprised. Magic is magic. "Why — ? Who put you up to the song about — about — the Flame Prince?"

"Many of us — on many Planes — agree that Prince Mirusiya Tlakotáni is the best ruler for this land," she replies evasively. "And remember what worms do to wood!" She holds up a tiny, shapely arm. "Ugh!"

You forbear mentioning what flame does to wood as well. It is time you were gone. You can worry about the identities of the "many of us on many Planes" later. "What do you want me to do?"

"Get me to my master's clanhouse in Jakálla," Zhéu Dái pleads. "My Life-Stone will expire soon, and I must go there so that the puppeteers can make another one. I lack aught to pay you now, but I do know some secrets — and I can discover more. I will serve you loyally until you deliver me home."

Instruction: if you take the puppet princess, go to Sec. A. She will act as a miniature spy and aid you, but you must take her to Jakálla at your first opportunity. If you do not want to accept this responsibility, you can turn her over to the Hrü'ü priest for a reward of 700 Káitars, or you can tell her to go find another patsy — er, hero. Go to Sec. A.1 or to Sec. A., as you prefer.

A.23. A FAMILY OUTING!

The main hall is emptying by the time you and Alén arrive. Lord Srüiqu and his entourage are nowhere in sight, and many of the great lords and prelates of Béy Sü are yawning, tipsy, or just bored. Some carry their ceremonial headgear, others have stripped off their heavy chains and pectorals, and not a few are being assiduously carried out by squads of perspiring slaves.

You look at Alén. She understands.

"No plans," she says easily. "There are still some very — lively — groups upstairs."

A more private locale is what you desire. As for lively, well, if she is willing, you are about to demonstrate what "lively" means!

Staircases and corridors never seemed so long before. She takes your hand and utters a throaty laugh. "Hasten," she says, all out of breath. "Here — no, there. That door!" She opens it to reveal warm, incense-fragrant darkness. One candle sheds a feeble yellow glow upon a golden tray of empty goblets and picks out dim highlights of tables, ewers, statuary,

and furniture. You sense other people here, too, but they are busy and in no mood to bother you.

Alén is better than her word. Better than most words.

You look up to find two young men standing over you. Instead of passing by, as is polite, they are observing you with critical interest.

"Your pardon, my Lords," you remark with what you hope is the right mixture of etiquette and genteel disdain.

"Oh, granted," smirks the one on the left. He looks like an aristocrat. He is attired in a foppish green kilt, gilded buskins, and many chains and pendants.

"As he says," the man on the right grins. "I, too, pardon you." He wears chaised and blued armour of what can only be steel. His tunic is white with silver trim, and a jewel-hilted long sword hangs in a dark green *Sarélqe*-clip at his belt.

You wait, but they do not go away. Do they intend to stand and watch all night? You and Alén are not a show for voyeurs! This is insufferable! You prepare to spring to your feet. Who knows what these oafs intend? You glance over at Alén.

She rises to a sitting position, pulls a soft, velvet cushion around, and leans her elbows on it. "La!" she says to you. "Be not offended, love. These are two of my husbands." She jabs a thumb at the man on the left, then at the one on the right. "Lord Mishuél hiTishkólun of the Clan of the Jade Diadem, and Kási ["Captain"] Huén hiMrachiyáku of the Legion of Káikama of Béy Sü. He is of the same clan as Mishuél."

You were warned about these noble girls from Béy Sü! Most declare themselves *Aridáni*: as independent of clan and family strictures as a wild *Küni*-bird! (See Part One, Sec. S.8.2.) No respect for parents, religion, or society! This girl cannot be much older than eighteen, and already she has two great, strapping husbands. All three are obviously followers of Lady Dlamélish or Lady Hrihayál, whose predilection is for as much pleasure as one can cram into one short lifetime!

Lord Mishuél sits down on one side of you, while the Captain squats crosslegged on the other. "Dear friend," Lord Mishuél begins companionably, "will you be joining our little family, too? Or are you one of Alén's 'feast night specials'?"

"La! I haven't even asked him to marry me yet," the girl giggles. "but it's not a bad idea. We'll make a delightful foursome."

Before you can frame a suitable retort, the Captain says, "Let me suggest a few things Alén enjoys." He whispers various suggestions to you. "Now please continue!"

Instruction: if you are a devotee of Lady Dlamélish or her Cohort, Lady Hrihayál, you may wish to follow Huén's advice. You attract an audience. People go and get their friends from other rooms, call for wine, and settle down around you to enjoy the show. Alén is indeed spectacular. Your audience applauds, cheers, tosses flowers and coins, and issues invitations to attend their parties in the coming weeks. As dawn is breaking, you bid Alén farewell and stagger away, utterly exhausted. Go to Sec. A.

Instruction: if you are not an adherent of the Emerald Ladies, the situation is clearly distasteful, but if you are willing to participate, return to the preceding paragraph. You recall what your mentor, Tétkoru hiSashán, said about the followers of these Goddesses (Sec. A.1), however. If you do not want to engage in Alén's little family outing, you get up, bow stiffly, and continue in this Section.

Lord Mishuél stands before you. "Here," he says, "let us share a tidbit before you go, dear friend." He holds out something to you, and the flickering candlelight reveals a flat cracker spread with fish-paste from a nearby salver.

"I think not," you reply evenly. "I am not hungry."

"Would you then refuse hospitality?" the Captain inquires silkily. "Why, dearest Alén would surely be offended!"

Instruction: you have two choices: (1) fight: go to Sec. 11. If you do not have a sword, somebody will loan you one. Captain Huén is an accomplished duellist: a Type 5 opponent. If you win, Lord Mishuél picks up the Captain's sword and hands it to you: "It is yours, fairly won," he says. Do not loot the Captain's prone body; that would be tacky! Go to Sec. A. If you lose, go to Sec. 13. If you still live, the Captain forces the cracker between your teeth and leaves with Mishuél. Go to the following paragraph. (2) If you choose to accept the cracker, the Captain jerks it away. "No," he sneers, "not even you deserve this!" He takes Alén by the arm, and they depart, followed by Lord Mishuél.

If you are compelled to eat the cracker, you find it oddly bitter. You spit it out. A voice says, "Let me see that!" and you turn to find Tétkoru hiSashán beside you. He looks, sniffs, and says, "As I thought: *Zu'úr*!" He dashes the cracker to the floor and calls for a physician.

Instruction: roll a D10: 1-2 = you have already ingested the drug. Go to the following paragraphs; 3-10 = you spit it out in time. You feel dizzy and sick for a day or so, but you recover. Go to Sec. A.

One who has taken even so much as a fingernail-sized amount of *Zu'úr* is hopelessly and incurably addicted. The green powder brings on strange fantasies and passions, and you lose control of your body. Within a month or so you sink into a coma from which only more of the terrible drug can awaken you to commit still greater excesses. Within three months you are dead. (Best wishes for a happier Afterlife!)

Instruction: only if you are a worshipper of wise Lord *Thúmis* or his Cohort, Lord *Keténgku*, is there a chance of a cure. You must travel to the city of *Páya Gupá* at once, where the High Adept of your temple, Lord *Gámalu hiBeshyéne*, possesses a secret remedy for the addiction. If you are too far away and cannot get there in time, you can always have yourself shot with an Excellent Ruby Eye (Sec. 14) and delivered by *Chlén-cart* to Lord *Gámalu*. You will be an immobile, untouchable statue, so be sure and attach a note — plus a writ for upwards of 10,000 *Káitars* to cover packing and shipping! Your clan may loan you the money: roll a **D10: 1-7 = they will; 8-10 = they won't**. (Sorry!). If you do recover, go to Sec. 10. It takes a year before you are well again and ready to adventure.

A.24. SO WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?

Under these circumstances, whom are you going to tell? Your clan-brother and mentor in *Béy Sü*, *Tétkoru hiSashán*, is a possibility. You can also go to your clan-master, or you can go directly to the offices of the Omnipotent Azure Legion in the Palace of the Realm and report the incident.

After some thought, you realise that any one of these is dangerous. The stakes are too high for one such as you; yet you feel that something must be done. The Omnipotent Azure Legion has already been infiltrated by the priesthood of Lord *Sáрку* and the Emperor's allies. You can write an anonymous letter, but no one would ever read it. Telling your clan-relatives might lay you open to rivals or to blackmail. You might just as well walk up to some stranger and say, "Hello, I know an Imperial secret!" They do not have rubber rooms on *Tékumel*, but a good, deep dungeon serves just as well.

Instruction: the best choice seems to be *Tétkoru*, who has always behaved as a loyal friend. If you decide to tell him, roll a **D10: 1-7 = you have made a good choice**. He claps a hand over your mouth and hisses, "Keep silent! In the names of all the Gods, say no more!" A day later he comes to you and says, "As for that matter, I have passed it on to those who need to know." You never learn what happens. Go to Sec. 15 or to Sec. 10, as you wish; **8-10 = Tétkoru is too much of a craven to keep your secret**. Within days you are arrested, interrogated, and then thoroughly and

permanently mind-barred. You are not executed — your clan and lineage are too prominent for such a crude fate — but you recall nothing whatsoever of the incident. Indeed, you remember spending that evening with some popsy watching the moons rise. Go to Sec. 10. *Tétkoru* is not so lucky; he is of your clan but of a low lineage. One day he mysteriously falls into a vat of tanning liquid while in the marketplace, and now he is known as *Tétkoru the Pliable*! Like a good pair of shoes, he doesn't even squeak.

A.25. OUT OF THE SPYING PAN —

You are escorted to an inner room. The old man seats himself on a mat piled high with files and documents: an office of Lord *Srúqu's* clan. He rubs his balding skull and sighs. "Well? Well?"

You tell him your story. You add your name, clan, and lineage, guessing correctly that this may save you from an untimely disappearance.

One of the guardsmen politely offers to break your arms or legs, but the old gentleman waves him away. "Too high, *Bákسا*. Too fancy a clan! We'd be paying half the national budget in *Shámtila*! If need be, I can mind-bar him — cheaper and more effective anyway."

"My Lord —" you say.

"My name is *Vridékka*," your interrogator injects sharply. "*Vridékka hiTlélsu*. A humble servant of the Imperium." He plucks at his lower lip and blinks at you.

"As you prefer, Sir. But let me say that you can have any information known to me freely and without need of either arm-breaking or mind-barring! I do not know the *Sa'á Allaqiyáni* girl. I met her by chance, and my intentions were very different from spying, believe me! I bear the *Sa'á Allaqiyáni* no particular love, moreover —"

"Hmph. Yes. Well, the girl is no more a *Sa'á Allaqiyáni* than you are. She is a *Tsolyáni*, her accent was faked, and her presence at the feast had nothing to do with Baron *Áld's* staff. She acted as back-up for their primary agent — the one she helped escape over the wall."

You are dumbfounded. "Primary agent —?"

"Of course. Certain — ah, conversations occur at these functions. There are always those who feel left out and strive to attend, even if only on the other side of a wall." He emits a dry cackle. "Ohé, *Bákسا*, escort this young fellow back to the party. He is of no use to us. — And no violence, eh!" The monstrous guardsman scowls but does as he is told.

Instruction: you are not told what the affair was about, and all you learn is that it involves an important Imperial secret. You are happy to be out of old Vridékka's clutches; he impresses you as one nasty customer. Go to Sec. A.1, Sec. A., or to Sec. 10, as you prefer.

A.26. — INTO THE FIRE —

If you choose to fight, the old man and his two henchmen together count as a Type 10 opponent! Go to Sec. 11. If you win — by some fantastic fluke! — you scarf up an Eye of Raging Power (Sec. 14) from the oldster's grasp, and a heavy Chlén-hide sword from one of the soldiers. You then scamper out of there like a *Jakkóhl* with its tail on fire! You leave Béy Sü the same night and head for the farthest outpost of the Empire. Go to the next paragraph. If you lose, you are quickly dispatched, and your body is returned to your clanhouse with the statement "victim of a duel over some woman." (We regret to inform you...) Your clansmen are too smart to ask further questions. Your relatives will pay for a spell of Revivification on a D10 score of 1-6; otherwise you are permanently croaked (woe!).

Instruction: roll a D10: 1-3 = you are caught and summarily executed (O, dolor!); 4-6 = you are caught and not-so-summarily executed, with more panache, drum-rolls, speeches, flag-waving, and peddlars selling food and drink; 7-10 = you make your way to Jakálla and take ship for the Nyémesel Isles in the far southwestern ocean. You serve as a sailor, a sea-clam harvester, and a pirate there for 1 or 2 years (a random roll). You gain 3 skill levels of "sailing and seamanship" (Sec. 7.2), 9 levels of clam-harvesting (!), 2 levels in "fisticuffs and brawling," 2 levels in "dagger/knife-fighting," and 1 skill level in "short sword" (Sec. 8.6). You also save up 12,000 Káitars worth of beautifully carved Nhâ and Chet'ú-shells. You then deem it safe to return home. Roll a D10: 1-5 = you were wrong; the Imperium's agents catch you and summarily execute you (as above!); 6-10 = you quietly slip back into your old life; nobody bothers you. Your relatives are glad to have you home. Go to Sec. 10.

A.27. — OR INTO THE GARDEN

The parapet is about twelve feet off the ground. You land in the middle of a patch of thick-leaved flowers, roll, and are up and off into the night.

Instruction: roll a D10: 1-2 = you twist your ankle, and Lord Srüqu's household guards apprehend you. The old man and his guards interrogate you, mind-bar you, and return you to your clanhouse as a mindless vegetable. Spreading your limbs to catch the sunlight each day is a great intellectual adventure for you. After a year you are able to eat without help; another year sees you talking

again; and after five years you have recovered most of your functions. If you prefer, you may roll up a new character; otherwise you enter the game five years older, with little education or experience. You also have a facial tick and a lurch to starboard when you walk; 3-5 = you are caught and must fight. The household guards are a Type 3 opponent. Go to Sec. 11. If you win, you escape over the wall. Go to Sec. A. If you lose, the soldiers convey you to the old man: as for a score of 1-2; 6-10 = you escape over the wall without a problem. Go to Sec. A. You do not see the Sa'á Allaqiyáni girl again. She, however, watches you covertly for some days thereafter to make sure that you do not know anything worth reporting to her enemies.

A.28. HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

The guards escort you courteously into a cluttered office of some sort. The old man enters and introduces himself as Vridékka hiTlélsu of the Black Stone clan. He makes a steeple of his fingers and looks at you. You look back, as innocent as plaster on a wall.

"My Lord?" you inquire.

"Um. Yes. Debating." He scratches one ear. "Well, tell me what you know of this 'Sa'á Allaqiyáni' wench."

His tone hints that the girl was not what she seemed. You say your piece, emphasising how strange, uncouth, and alien the woman was.

He seems satisfied. "So you had never seen her before?"

"Never. Why? What was she? A sneak-thief?"

He laughs. "Hardly! Nor was she Sa'á Allaqiyáni. No, she's a paid spy, an agent for a certain — faction." He leans over and pats your hand. His fingers are oddly dry and cool. "Not to worry, my dear. No danger. We're all friends here."

You repress a little tremor of something akin to revulsion. You hope that he does not have anything more "friendly" in mind!

You get up quickly and say, "I must go! My clansmen will be leaving, and I don't want to go home by myself!"

He looks disappointed, but bows and lets you depart.

Instruction: go to Sec. A.1 or to Sec. A., as you prefer. You may also return to Sec. 10.

16. THE ARMY

B. I DIDN'T RAISE MY CHILD TO BE A SOLDIER!

The Tsolyáni Empire is rich and populous. It fields one of the largest armies in the Five Empires: over 86 Legions, each of which is supposed to consist of 20 Cohorts of 400 troops, plus 25 officers. In fact, only the best Legions have 20 full Cohorts, plus others in training. Less-famous Legions are usually under-enlisted. Besides true “army” units (the “navy” and “marines” that patrol the coasts and rivers are included), there are other types of soldiers as well: *Sákbe*-road guards, city guards, necropolis police, temple guards, and the infamous Legion of Kétl, which is composed solely of prison guards and warders and has more than 20 Cohorts. All of these are organised on the army model.

All Tsolyáni Legions are structured alike: a soldier is called a *Changadésha*; a member of one the elite heavy infantry Legions is a *Kuruthúni*; a *Semétl* [“squad”] contains 20 troops officered by a *Tirrikámu* [“Sergeant”]; five squads make up a *Karéng* [“Company”] of 100 under a *Heréksa* [“Lieutenant”]; four *Karéng* are a *Tsurúm* [“Cohort”] commanded by a *Kási* [“Captain”], and twenty Cohorts make up a *Niqómi* [“Legion”]. Each Legion has two *Molkár* [roughly “Major”], who command the left and right wings respectively, two more general-staff officers called *Dritlán* [“Colonel”], and a *Kérdu* [“General”]. In addition, there are multitudes of support staff: liaison officers, carters, suttlers, smiths, slaves, etc. Each Legion also has a contingent of “military sorcerers,” who provide “battle magic” in the field, care for the wounded, and minister to the religious needs of the rank and file.

Both men and women serve in the same units, and there is no restriction on women in combat. A few special “women-only” Legions exist, as well as temple guard units devoted to Lady Dilinála. Nonhumans rarely belong to temple guard units, and in the army they tend to be grouped into Legions composed solely of their own species. One does occasionally find Pé Chói or Páchi Léi in human Legions, however, but not Ahoggyá, Shén, or Hláka: human troops do not like to serve with these alien creatures, and the feeling is mutual.

A Legion tends to recruit from the same city and area in which that Legion’s headquarters is located. It is also common practice to prefer members of the same religious sect (or at least of the same general alignment), and to respect the class-divisions of the

society: certain Legions are known for recruiting from the high clans, while others obtain their personnel from middle-class or lower-class clans. This correlates to some extent with a division along the lines of “troop-types”: “heavy infantry” (troops having full body-armour, some steel weapons, elaborate shields, sometimes bows or crossbows, and fancy uniforms), “medium infantry” (those with less of these advantages), and “light infantry” (who may have little more than a helmet, a javelin, a short sword or dagger, and a targe shield). There are also specialty units: crossbowmen, archers, artillerymen, and unique contingents of Hláka, Páchi Léi, Pé Chói, Shén, Ahoggyá, and the tall human barbarians from the N’lüss mountains in the far northwest. Of the remaining Five Empires, Livyánu and Mu’ugalavyá organise their forces in this way; Salarvyá and Yán Kór prefer regionally based Legions, each of which includes heavy, medium, light, and specialty troops all in one.

“Honourable” weapons of the soldier include: the pike, the long spear, the short sword or short axe, the long sword, the mace or flail, the two-handed sword (or axe, mace, or flail), the longbow, the composite bow, and the crossbow. Polearms are also “noble” for specific Legions. Other weapons are considered either “ignoble” or minor. As a high clan person, you will want to learn the long sword, pike or long spear, and perhaps the composite bow. Your armour depends on the Legion you join: from almost full plate to nothing at all (see the Legion list below).

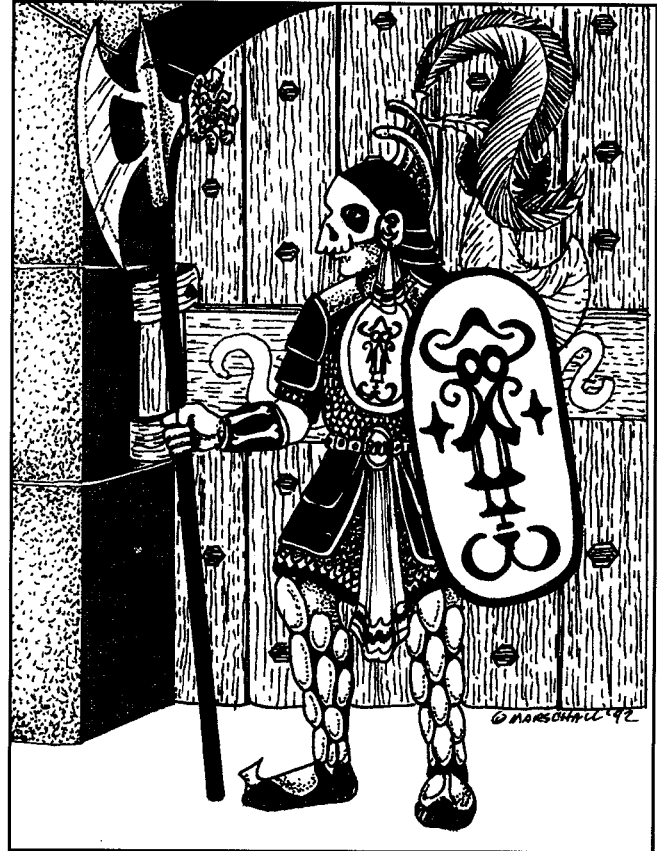
Joining a Legion is easy. Boys may enlist at age 14 or so, while girls (*Aridáni* of course) tend to adopt this career by age 16. Army service is viewed positively in all of the Five Empires, as are government office and the priesthoods. As noted in Sec. 7.3, craftsman/artisan skills have little social prestige in these societies. The clans thus encourage their junior members to join a military unit, at least for one enlistment, which may run 4, 6, 8, or 12 years, depending upon the Legion’s and the enlistee’s preferences.

Warfare on Tékumel is formalised and ceremonial. Every Legion has its “sacred precincts”: a headquarters in a major clanhouse, temple, or stronghold; each has its *Káing*, a tall standard of gold, precious stones, *Khéshchal*-plumes, and fabrics; each may hold secret military rituals; and each possesses its own societies and traditions. Legions “live” when they are activated by the Seal Emperor in Avanthár; they “die” when they are disbanded, disgraced, or

fall below viable strength. When a Legion “dies,” thus, its *Káing* is sheathed in lead and interred in the Hall of Domes in Avanthár with the ceremony due a deceased emperor. If it is later revived and re-entered in the “Golden Book,” its *Káing* is brought forth and ritually “revivified.”

Battles (*Qadárdàli*) are surrounded with ritual. Surprise attacks are historically plentiful but are not considered truly “noble.” Open field battles thus consist of making a formal declaration — an agreement between the two sides — to fight at a certain place and time, setting up a “command stand” (either on a hillock or an actual wooden construction) for the *Kérdu* and his staff, and arraying the troops. Discipline in these ancient, martial societies is very good, and manoeuvring a Tsolyáni army is thus easier than in other periods of history. Before a battle the leaders give speeches and take omens. Then the great wardrums (*Korángkorèng*) thunder; the soldiers begin to stamp their feet and beat their weapons on their shields in unison; and several men step out of line and offer themselves as “champions” against similar heroes from the opposing army. These personal combats have some effect (the amount varies) on morale. There are also smaller, ritual battles (*Qadárnì*) in which only an agreed-upon number of troops is permitted to fight. Amounts of money and treasure are wagered by the two sides, and prisoners are taken for ceremonial sacrifice.

The army offers considerable prestige, thus, but not much money (unless you happen to be present when some city is handed over to plundering). A soldier’s life is hard and dangerous, more from exhaustion, heat, disease, and alcohol than from honourable battle wounds, and discipline is brutal. You will find yourself obeying silly orders from men who haven’t the wit to find their noses with their fingers; you will be restricted to a dismal barracks someplace on the frontier; you will obey every command and perform every miserable job carefully because otherwise you will be impaled on a stake, disgracing yourself, your lineage, and your clan; you will fight in wretched conditions in battles the purposes of which you may never know; and at higher levels you will be so swamped with paperwork that you will wish you had taken that job as a dock stevedore in Penóm instead! It may seem rather glorious to be a soldier, a member of the Omnipotent Azure Legion, or even a member of an Assassin clan, but these are among the most restrictive and difficult professions in the Empire. Chances are that you will either end up dead in some grubby little intrigue somewhere, or that you will become a glorified paper-shuffler and spend



your days filing documents without even a gorgeous secretary to shred them for you. Still, it’s your choice...

Instruction: the following adventures are for warriors only; sorcerers and noncombatants may get themselves killed if they attempt them! You can be a noncombatant in the army in the rôle-playing game, but this is not feasible here. It is also better for your rôle-playing character if you do not join the magical contingent of a Legion. Military sorcerers require much training to work in “offensive” and “defensive” teams and have little time to practice personal spells. They thus tend to be quite restricted.

Instruction: go to Sec. B.1.

B.1. YOU’RE IN THE ARMY NOW!

The Recruiting Hall in the Palace of Ever-Glorious War is almost empty. The war with Yán Kór has seriously depleted the labour force, and most clans are now keeping their young members at home. The concept of a military draft has never occurred to the peoples of Tékmel. You wander from table to table, chatting with the recruiters (mostly retired officers) for this Legion and that. Your clan and city affiliations have much to do with your choice: you

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HEAVY INFANTRY

LEGION NAME	NO./TYPE	GENERAL AND PARTICULARS
1 Omnipotent Azure Legion	None HI	Lord Qorúma hiRi'inyússa. This is the military wing of this body and not the intelligence arm. Mostly consisted of Hnálla and Stability worshippers, but Emperor Dhich'uné wishes to change this; based at Avanthár
2 Legion of Ever-Present Glory	None HI	General Kéttukal hiMraktiné; followers of Hnálla and Karakán; loyal to Prince Eselné; based at Sokátis but now at Chéne Hó
3 Legion of Potent Destiny	2nd HI	General Mirúsaya hiSsánmirin of the Clan of Sea Blue; mostly Hnálla worshippers; based at Béy Sü
4 Legion of Hnálla, Master of Light	4th HI	General Girigáshna hiVu'úrtesh of Béy Sü; old and traditional Hnálla Legion
5 Legion of the Mighty Prince	5th HI	Prince Eselné himself; loyal to the Prince and to Hnálla and Karakán; based at Béy Sü but now at Chéne Hó
6 Legion of the Portals of Death	6th HI	Lord Méshmuel hiVu'úrtesh; tends toward Ksáru and Hrü'ü; based at Béy Sü
7 Legion of Mirkitáni, Hero of Victories	7th HI	Lord Mirkitáni vuMakkocháqu, Prince of Vrá; no religious affiliation; based on the Island of Vrá; now with Prince Eselné
8 Legion of the Givers of Sorrow	8th HI	<i>Tsémel</i> [Temple Patriarch] Korikáda hiKurúshma; based at Butrús; loyal to Chiténg
9 Legion of the Scales of Brown	9th HI	<i>Mriyán</i> [Temple Preceptor] Sikún hiKhanúma of Mekú; loyal to Sáru and Durritlámish
10 Legion of Searing Flame	10th HI	General Kánbe hiTuplángte; based at Fasíltum and composed of Vriddi clansmen loyal to Vimúhla; now near Sunráya
11 Legion of the Sweet Singers of Nakomé	12th HI	<i>Glántü</i> [Clan Patriarch] Shrüka hiVravodáya; based at Fasíltum; loyal to Hrü'ü and Wurú; desert fighters
12 Legion of Sérqu, Sword of the Empire	14th HI	Lord Sérqu hiChaishyáni of Jakálla, no special religious affiliation, though mostly Stability
13 Legion of the Ruby Hand	15th HI	Lord Bushu'un hiSsánmirin of the Clan of Sea Blue; based at Béy Sü, now at Chéne Hó; loyal to Hnálla and Prince Eselné
14 Legion of the Deep Purple Dark	16th HI	Lord Késhu hiVírídun, High Priest of Hrü'ü at Mekú; loyal to Hrü'ü and Wurú
15 Legion of Héket of Púrdimal	17th HI	General Héket hiBurusá of Púrdimal; loyal to Ksáru and Grugánu
16 Legion of the Lord of Wisdom	22nd HI	<i>Tsémel</i> Gámalu hiBeshyéne of Páya Gupá; devoted to Thúmis
17 Legion of Kurukáa	25th HI	Lord Girigá hiBeshmülu, brother of Lord Ge'eltigáne hiBeshmülu, the Governor of Úrmish; no religious affiliation

18 Legion of the Blue Peak	26th HI	General Aruónmu hiSsánmirin of the Clan of Sea Blue; based at Jakállá; the General is the brother of the General of the Legion of the Ruby Hand; mostly followers of Avánthe and Dlamélish
19 Phalanx of Heretlékka of Sokátis	34th HI	Lord Nirénu hiKhanúma of Sokátis, clan-brother of previous General, now deceased; mostly Hrü'ü, Ksárul, and some Sárku troops, but no love for Emperor Dhich'uné
20 Legion of the All-Consuming Flame	24th HI	General Chidónu hiSráisha of Hekéllu; devoted to Vimúhla; from Hekéllu, now at Sunráya

MEDIUM INFANTRY

LEGION NAME	NO./TYPE	GENERAL AND PARTICULARS
21 Phalanx of Lord Durritlámish of the Rotted Face	6th MI	<i>Mriyán</i> Fashránu hiNokór of Sokátis; loyal to Sárku and his Cohort; supporters of Emperor Dhich'uné
22 Legion of Gúsha the Khirgári	7th MI	Lord Gúsha hiVordésa of Khirgár; no religious affiliation, though largely Karakán
23 Legion of Lord Lángsha of Jaikalór	8th MI	Lord Dridákku hiTukkolén, descendant of Lord Lángsha; loyal to Prince Eselné; no religious affiliation
24 Battalions of the Seal of the Worm	9th MI	<i>Mriyán</i> Qurrúmu hiKhanúma; based at the City of Sárku; fanatics for the Worm-Lord!
25 Legion of Mnáshu of Thri'íl	10th MI	General Korúnme Mnáshu hiChaisyáni of Thri'íl; mostly followers of the Lords of Stability
26 Legion of the Golden Sunburst	11th MI	General Znayáshu hiVrazhímü of Tumíssa; devoted to Karakán; old and wealthy high-clan Legion
27 Cohorts of Chegárta, the Hero-King	12th MI	<i>Mriyán</i> Burusháya hiKáikune of Thráya; devoted to Chegárta, with some worshippers also of Karakán
28 Legion of the Clan of the Golden Sphere	13th MI	<i>Dlántü</i> [Clan Patriarch] Changékte hiAmiyála of Thráya; devoted to Belkhánu and Qón
29 Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation	18th MI	General Kárin Missúm; two-handed swordsmen fanatically loyal to Vimúhla; based at Tumíssa
30 Legion of Lady Mríssa	19th MI	Lady Mríssa hiChagotlékka of Chéne Hó; Aridáni women devoted to Avánthe and Dilinála
31 Legion of the Many-Legged Serpent	20th MI	General Yamáshsha hiKorokól of Hekéllu; loyal to Wurú; now based at Ferinára
32 Legion of the Storm of Fire	21st MI	General Kutumé hiTánkolel; devoted to Vimúhla; based at Hekéllu, but now at Thri'íl
33 Forces of Ga'ánish of Katalál	23rd MI	Lord Réru hiSu'únmra, grandson of Lord Ga'ánish; based at Katalál, now at Sunráya; no religious affiliation;
34 Legion of the Helm of Night	24th MI	Lord Ashékkü hiMrigéna of Tsurú; loyal to Ksárul and Sárku; a new Legion founded by Emperor Dhich'uné
35 Regiment of Noble Ssiyór of Mrelú	25th MI	Lord Ssiyór hiNaqúma of Mrelú; no religious affiliation; Lord Ssiyór is a crackpot but has good troops

36	Legion of Defence Against Evil	27th MI	<i>Mriyán</i> Verússa hiNakolél of the Isle of Gánga; devoted to Qón
37	Legion of the Armoured Vision of Death	29th MI	<i>Mriyán</i> Árkutu hiKúrodu of Penóm; devoted to Sárku; recently founded by Emperor Dhich'uné; said to have some secret Cohorts of Undead
38	Legion of the Prince of the Blue Room	35th MI	<i>Tsémel</i> Saku'ú hiFershéna of Púrdimal; devoted to Ksáru and Grugánu
39	Legion of Káikama of Béy Sü	36th MI	General Káikama hiMrachiyáku of Béy Sü, devoted to Dlamélish and Hrihayál; enrolls both men and women; their barracks parties are said to be fun!

ARCHERS

LEGION NAME	NO./TYPE	GENERAL AND PARTICULARS
40 Legion of the Peaks of Kraá	12th AR	General Háikon hiVórudu; from the City of Sárku; fanatic followers of Sárku; uses poisoned arrows!
41 Legion of the Clan of the Broken Bough	19th AR	<i>Dlántü</i> [Clan Patriarch] Jugár hiFa'ásu of Fasíltum; famous archers fanatically devoted to Vimúhla and Chiténg
42 Legion of Giriktéshmu	23rd AR	Lord Giriktéshmu hiKoyúga of Jakállá; no religious affiliation
43 Legion of Eléchu of Usenánu	30th AR	Lord Eléchu hiChakkéna of Usenánu; archers devoted to Avánthe

CROSSBOWMEN

LEGION NAME	NO./TYPE	GENERAL AND PARTICULARS
44 Regiment of the Knower of Spells	5th XB	Lord Mriggadáshu hiTekkú'une of Mekú; devoted to Grugánu
45 Legion of Glorious Destiny	9th XB	Lord Sangár hiVu'unávu of Fasíltum; frontier unit devoted to Vimúhla
46 Legion of the Wind of Iron	10th XB	General Kálmuru hiKharsáma of Aukésha; devoted to Chegárra
47 Legion of the Citadel of Glory	13th XB	Lord Tsúmikel hiTengetláku, Governor of Tumíssa; dedicated to Vimúhla and Chiténg
48 Legion of Lord Khariháya	14th XB	Lord Ekuné hiBosúga, nephew of Lord Khariháya of Tumíssa; no religious affiliation but more than half devoted to Vimúhla and Chiténg

SLINGERS

LEGION NAME	NO./TYPE	GENERAL AND PARTICULARS
49 Legion of the Clan of the Standing Stone	2nd SL	<i>Dlántü</i> Charikása hiChuyón of Úrmish; dependable missile troops; no religious affiliation
50 Legion of the Joyful Clan of Noble Vrayáni	3rd SL	Lord Miruéne vuChráyú of Vrá; special unit of famous Vrayáni slingers; non-Vrayáni are not allowed to enlist
51 Legion of the Twelve Paths of Avánthe	9th SL	<i>Qusínchu</i> [High Priestess] Séa hiVáishu; Aridáni women dedicated to Avánthe; based at Pétris Layóda on the Isle of Gánga

LIGHT INFANTRY

LEGION NAME	NO./TYPE	GENERAL AND PARTICULARS
52 Legion of the Sapphire Kirtle	12th LI	<i>Qusúnychu</i> Dijáya hiQurrulúma of Tu'unmrá; fanatic Aridáni javelin-women of the temple of Dilinála
53 Legion of the Clan of the Inverted Hand	27th LI	General Ka'á hiSrügáshchene of the Kúrt Hills; famous scouts; mostly tribesmen loyal to Karakán

ARTILLERYMEN, SAPPERS, AND MARINES

LEGION NAME	NO./TYPE	GENERAL AND PARTICULARS
54 Legion of Káingmra of Béy Sü	8th AT	Lord Káingmra hiZhnáyu; onagers, ballistae, and trebuchets; based at Béy Sú but Cohorts scattered all over the Empire to other Legions; no religious affiliation;
55 Legion of Mengáno the Jakállan	12th AT	General Mengáno hiHarisáyu; based at Jakállá, but mostly at Khirgár; no religious affiliation
56 Legion of Gagársha of Mmilláka	14th AT	Lord Gagársha hiChurgúshsha of Mmilláka; based at Thráya, now at Sokátis; worshipper of Qón
57 Battalions of Vrishtára the Mole	2nd SA	General Vrishtára hiAuvéso of Rü; now based at Khirgár; mostly Sáрку, Hrü'ü, and Ksárul
58 Legion of the Slayers of Cities	5th SA	General Kakagánu hiBeshúdla; based at Katalál; mostly Hrü'ü and Wurú; some Chiténg worshippers as well
59 Flotilla of Hagárr of Paránta	1st MA	Lord Hagárr hiChunmíyel of Penóm; a traditional marine Legion; armed as medium infantry; no religious affiliation
60 Squadrons of Tlanéno the Steersman	3rd MA	Admiral Tlanéno hiVorodláya; armed as medium infantry; no religious affiliation



seek a unit that is compatible with your clan, religion, region, and social class. You can thus safely ignore not only the nonhuman Legions but also those made up of middle- and lower-class recruits. The Legion of Kétl, which contains prison guards, is also not a usual choice, although you may join it if you wish.

Only a selection of Legions are listed here in order to give you an idea of your choices. If the Legion favours a particular deity, this is indicated, as is the Legion's number in the "Golden Book" in Avanthár. Abbreviations are: "HI" = "heavy infantry," "MI" = "medium infantry," "AR" = "archers," "SL" = "slingers," "LI" = "light infantry," "AT" = "artillerymen," "SA" = "sappers," and "MA" = "marines." Various minor Legions, foreign mercenaries, and nonhumans are omitted.

Instruction: to join the first three Legions of heavy infantry in the above list, roll a **D10**: 1-7 = you are accepted; 8-10 = you are rejected. (The great Legions of the Empire must try to maintain some standards! You can still get in, however, if you donate 10,000 Káitars to the recruiting officer's favourite charity: his personal retirement fund.) The other Legions will accept you as long as you are still breathing, vaguely healthy, and more or less sentient. You sign on and depart for the training camp in the city listed as the Legion's home town. Go to Sec. B.2.

B.2. DEAR MOM, COULD YOU SEND ME MY SPARE KILT?

The first months of "basic training" are much the same for all Legions. You never dreamed there were so many foul-mouthed, red-faced, sweaty, brutal, and *Chlén*-assed ugly drill-masters in the Empire, and you seem to have found them all! You also thought you had learned the fundamental skills of "soldier" and "warrior" in school (Secs. 8.4 and 8.6), but now you must unlearn these and start over. These people want it their way, and they want it now. Drilling, marching, counter-marching, handling the weapons of your Legion (manoeuvring an 18-foot pike in massed formation is not as easy as it looks!), and trying to stay out of the drill-master's way become the salient goals of your miserable existence. The food is edible but not the elegant clanhouse cuisine you were used to; the barracks are crowded, noisy, and uncomfortable; and you must overcome loneliness and homesickness while still putting up a brave front and pretending to be wise to the world. You grit your teeth and make do.

Your clan-relatives come to see you. They bring news of home, food packages, fresh undergarments, and sweets. Your clansmen hint that they might be willing to pay for

a large "inducement" to get you an officer's commission. You are expected to pay this money back from loot and "inducements" you will later receive yourself.

Instruction: roll a **D10**: 1-3 = after watching you drill, your clansmen shake their heads and decide not to give you any money after all; 4-7 = they give you 10,000 Káitars, which gets you a promotion to Tirrikámu; 8-9 = you receive 15,000 Káitars, which buys you promotion to Heréksa; 10 = they go for the big one and give you 25,000 Káitars for an immediate promotion to Kási! Your relatives are happy to see you in your fancy uniform! Your erstwhile comrades in the barracks are not so overjoyed, however.

Instruction: the highest rank to which you may be promoted in this book is that of Kási ["Captain"]. Ignore any instruction that would take you higher.

Instruction: the war with Yán Kór began in 2,356 A.S. and ended in the last month of 2,363 with the accession of Emperor Dhich'uné to the Petal Throne. The events described in the following Sections mostly occurred during this time period. Depending upon when you joined the army, and which Legion you joined, you will have had quite different experiences during these years. Most of the adventures below require a minimum of two years or so to complete. Unless you yearn for some very restrictive and dangerous military exploits, you had better be out of the army before you enter the rôle-playing game! You can return home for any of a variety of reasons: your enlistment is over, you are wounded, you suffer from chronic ill health, you are detached for liaison duties, you are psychologically unsuitable, you are released because of a large "inducement" from your clan, or you go A.W.O.L. (in which case you are always just one step — literally — ahead of the impaling stake!). While in the army, you have three choices: (1) if you join a Legion loyal to Prince Eselné, go to Sec. B.3. (2) if you follow Prince Mirusiya, go to Sec. B.4. (3) if you join a Legion devoted to Prince (now Emperor) Dhich'uné, or one neutral to him but not especially loyal to the other two candidates, go to Sec. B.5.

B.3. I LOVE THE SMELL OF DOOM-KILL IN THE MORNING!

The Atkolél Heights stand like a hollow tooth in the northwestern corner of Tsolyánu. From the north, towards Pijéna and Yán Kór, the ascent is easy; from the south, where you are, it is vertiginous. General Sérqu has ordered an assault up a path so steep that it is called Júmre's Ladder. The cliffs on both sides of this narrow gorge are vertical sheets of stone, with little more than cracks here and there to use as handholds. The Yán Koryáni are waiting for you at Lake Tiré in the Valley of Tnáhla on top of the Heights. Some of your comrades think the attack is

madness: why not bypass the Heights either to the west past Chéne Hó, or to the east north of Khirgár and leave the Baron's green-armoured lackeys up on the Heights to starve? Others reply that an enemy in your rear is stronger than two enemies in front of you. They can descend any time to cut supply lines and harass you.

Over to your left, you see a Cohort of the Legion of Lady Mrissa preparing to scale the precipices west of Júmre's Ladder. They are stripped to the buff and carry only short swords, axes, ropes, and pitons. Lady Mrissa herself is with them, steadying her girls and surveying the awful terrain. She lost almost half a Cohort in the previous assault, and you still have nightmares of those women plummeting down and down, their long hair like banners twisting in the wind. Luckily, you were not part of the detail that had to retrieve the bodies.

"Ohé!" your officer shouts. "Fourth Cohort! Ready!" The *Kási* snaps off a salute, fist to breast, and your comrades shoulder their weapons and tramp away. You, too, have cast off much of your armour and now carry only a light shield, a short thrusting spear, and a sword. You still have your helmet as well: rocks thrown down from above can ruin a soldier's day. You squat down and prod mud out of your boot-cleats with a stick. Waiting is what soldiers do most — and best.

The sun crawls up into the powder-blue bowl of the sky. You shade your eyes but cannot see your troops, so distant are they. At noon a runner comes panting up to your commander, but you cannot hear the message he brings. Somebody shouts, "Hói! Fifth Cohort! Ready!" Either the Fourth didn't make it, or else they are up there and need reinforcements. In any case, it's your turn. You pick up your spear and a coil of rope somebody hands you; then you're on your way.

The first part is easy: hot and sunny, bright green trees and grass, little red birds calling "Áinh Áng! Áinh Áng!" (the locals say that is the name of an ancient Demon these birds serve) and there is just enough breeze to keep your tunic from sticking to you. The Heights loom ever closer, but you try not to think about them. You watch for more messengers — or stretcher-bearers laden with casualties — but you see no one.

Two hours of marching bring you to the base of Júmre's Ladder. The steps are actually crazily tilted terraces about fifty paces long, ten wide, and a man-height high. Several of your magical contingent are

here, and you see priests of Lord Keténgku, litters on which still bodies lie, and grim-faced soldiers from several Legions. Some of the priests' grey and white robes show smears of red.

Orders echo back and forth between the crags, and your Cohort begins the ascent. By early afternoon you see your first body: a nude girl sprawled among the sharp-fanged boulders. She actually looks peaceful, but you don't turn her over.

It becomes hotter, and you start to pant. Sweat dribbles down into your eyes, and you feel like throwing away your helmet. The rope chafes your shoulder, and your spear is a lead weight in your hand. A *Tirrikámu* comes by and hands you a shield — whose it was you do not ask. You will need it, he says. The passage between the cliffs grows narrower and narrower, the terraces steeper and higher.

Suddenly a fist-sized rock comes bouncing down past you. In front, what you thought was another terrace is actually a barricade of rocks and tree-trunks stretching from one side of the gorge to the other. Several of Lady Mrissa's women have taken shelter behind logs in front of it, and about a score of your archers have clambered up onto the cliff-face on both sides and are firing down at the defenders behind the wall.

A bright blossom of flame explodes over your head: the foe have a magic-user, and he has just cast a Doomkill spell! Another blast reverberates up and down the canyon. They have at least two sorcerers up there. A man steps out on your side and makes ritual gestures. Ah, so you have mages on your side, too. You cannot see what results the man achieves, but there is no more magical artillery for awhile.

You form up in a "tortoise," close-order, with your shields over your heads. You don't hear the order to charge, but you find your feet moving, stumbling in the loose rocks, scrambling, nearly falling, and stepping on your comrades' feet. Breath whistles in and out of your lungs, and by the time you reach the barricade, you realise you are yelling. You are almost surprised to see the man next to you go down under a huge, oblong stone. Your fingers scrabble at the chinks in the rough-laid boulders and logs of the barricade, somebody boosts you up from behind, and you hear arrows whickering over your head. You feel a sudden weight upon your back: one of Lady Mrissa's women uses you as a stepping-stone and climbs up and over you to gain the parapet. In a moment she comes tumbling back down again, her eyes wide with horror at the ghastly slash across her

breast. You hear screaming and smell the hot stench of blood and dying.

A face appears in front of you, eyes bulging and mouth working in a soundless rictus of hate. His helmet is shaped like an inverted basket made of pretty, green plaques of *Chlén*-hide: a Yán Koryáni! The first one you have seen! You jolt into action, as your months of training take over. Strike, parry, block, strike, lunge, and the man goes down. Another, bigger foeman takes his place. He goes over backward, an arrow protruding from his chest. The chaos is incredible: like being crowded into a tiny cell with a score of screaming, struggling madmen!

A blow catches you on the shoulder, but there is no room to react. You get your spear up but cannot wield it in the press. Somebody is crawling between your legs, and somebody else is shrieking in your ear. A sword-blade flickers toward you, but a hooked dagger appears magically from your left and deflects it away. You glance in that direction and see one of Lady Mríssa's women. White teeth flash over at you, and you grin back. A new opponent comes leaping in, and you concentrate on him. He slashes, and his jagged blade cuts clean through the woman's unshielded right biceps. She stares at her arm in stunned shock.

Suddenly the man before you opens his mouth and spews red blood. The face of one of your comrades appears behind him. You want to shout your thanks, but you're too busy. The footing improves, and you are aware that you are standing on top of the enemy barricade. The foe is fleeing! Tsolyáni pour past you, whooping and cheering. Green-clad enemy soldiers are clambering up to the next terrace behind their wall with your fellows in hot pursuit. You find yourself sitting down, next to the woman who saved your life. She is bleeding badly and will never make it down to the medical tents. She knows this and gives you a resigned smile. "Here," she says, pulling at something around her neck with her left hand. "Lady Avánthe's amulet. Didn't save me, did it? Seek out Telésa hiChaisyáni — Lady Mríssa will know who she is. Give it to her, eh?"

You grin back encouragingly and take the little gold pendant. If you live, you'll deliver it. You stagger up to your feet; your officer is calling everybody to the assault on the next-higher fortified position. You look back as you leave. The woman has slumped over, her head against one of the logs of the barricade. You want to wave good-bye, but it's too late. Some other life, perhaps.

Instruction: do you survive the assault? Roll a **D10**: 1-2 = you die in a briarpatch in a nameless woods in Pijéna before the end of the first year of the war. As you lie sprawled in the bloody underbrush, you wonder what the war was all about anyway. Nobody answers. Nobody ever answers this question. (Fare-thee-well, brave hero!) 3-5 = you are seriously wounded and sent home. You recover but will always have a slight limp; you lose 1-10 (a D10 roll) from your Height-Built-Strength number in Sec. 6.4. This may affect your Body Damage Point total. You can go on other adventures or join the rôle-playing game. Go to Sec. 10; 6-10 = you suffer no injury. Go to the next paragraph.

Instruction: you may earn a promotion; roll a **D10**: 1-3 = you are not promoted; 4-8 = you are promoted to the next higher rank (cf. Secs. B. and B.2); 9-10 = you are promoted and also get a nice medal: "The Seal of Valour," a minor award but one which looks nice on your uniform. Go to Sec. B.6.

B.4. IN BY THE BACK DOOR

The Desert of Sighs occupies most of the western part of the "nation" of Milumanayá for almost 2,000 *Tsán*, east to west; the southern third consists of jumbled mountains in which hardly a blade of grass grows; mighty Thénu Thendráya Peak towers above the clouds in the southwest; and only in the southeastern corner is there any greenery at all. This is the most fertile region of Milumanayá, a land that should not be a nation at all. It is no more than a convenient geographical buffer between Yán Kór to the north, little Pijéna to the west, Tsolyánu to the south, and Sa'á Allaquí in the east.

Sunráya is the capital of the southeast, just as the oasis of Pelesár is the lair of the nomads of the northwestern desert of Milumanayá. Lord Akurghá, who styles himself the "Lord Protector" of Pelesár, has only a passing interest in the affairs of Lord Firáz Zhavénu of Sunráya, whose worst fear is a Tsolyáni hegemony over his miserable domain. Lord Firáz has a son, named Firáz Mmulávu Zhavénu, who hates his father most fervently, and who prefers to work for the Tsolyáni rather than fend off the Sa'á Allaqiányi, who believe his country truly belongs to them.

Prince Mirusíya Tlakotáni was not named a Prince at birth but was handed over to the Vríddi clan of Fasíltum, to be raised as a hidden candidate for the *Kólumèjalim* [the contests called the "Choosing of Emperors"], as is the Tsolyáni custom (cf. Sec. A.22). The Vríddi handled their responsibility well: young Mirusíya went into the army and rose to become a *Dritlán* of the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation under the name "Tórisu hiVríddi." When he learned

of his heritage, he travelled to Avanthár to “accept the Gold,” and shortly thereafter his father, the Seal Emperor Hirkáne Tlakotáni, gave him command of a large military force, particularly troops who worshipped the Flame, and sent him to attack Yán Kór from the east, while Prince Eselné’s army was fighting past the Atkolél Heights in the west. This army moved north through the Pass of Skulls and fought two battles at the “Hill of the Stone Sérudla,” followed by another pitched battle at the village of Már. The Prince won these battles and pushed on to besiege Sunráya, where a combination of Milumana-yáni, Yán Koryáni, and Sa’á Allaqi-yáni troops awaited him. (Baron Áld had persuaded Sa’á Allaquí to join the war on Yán Kór’s side. The Sa’á Allaqi-yáni were recalcitrant at best, however, and the *Ssáo* [“King”] of Sa’á Allaquí sent one of his daughters, Princess Vrísá Vishétu, to sue for a secret peace, but her mission eventually proved unsuccessful.)

Sieges tend to be tense and boring at the same time. You sit for long periods between assaults, and when you do fight, the result is usually inconclusive, bloody, and ugly. You become used to sleeping in tents, digging latrines in the sand, and fighting off the hordes of Milumanayáni camp-followers, nomads, thieves, whores, and peddlars who beset you like stinging *Epéng*-insects. You see the Prince

and his officers almost daily: General Kárin Missúm, General Kádársha hiTlekólmü, who was in charge of the Legion of Searing Flame in those days, Tsémel Korikáda hiKurúshma, General Kutumé hiTánkolel, and the mad Livyáni wizard, Eylóa Tláshte, who served as physician to the Prince. Nothing comes easily. The sappers argue and draw plans in the sand before the Prince’s camp-stool; the artillerymen squabble over ranges and stone-weights and tension versus torsion; the pikemen sit on their hands, happy to have nothing to do but eat, sleep, and gamble — Milumanayáni girls are unappealing; and you are happy when the sand-fleas find somebody else to bite.

This morning the wardrums rumble, and another assault-force prepares to head for the fray. You have heard rumours of subterranean parties, too: the sappers have discovered ancient aqueducts and sewers leading under the city walls, and one of the younger officers, Kánbe hiTuplángte, General Kádársha’s aide-de-camp, is readying his troops to go down into the Underworld and effect a breach from within. You do not envy him the honour.

“Ohé! You!” Your officer snaps his fingers at you and gestures. “You’ve just volunteered for a special job! To the Prince’s tent!”



With some trepidation, you tramp over to the headquarters tent. You see a *Karéng* of a hundred soldiers formed up and waiting. You recognise many of them: the best and most daring of your Legion. In a moment, Tsémel Korikáda pushes aside the tent-flap and emerges. He is a hard, stern, taciturn man but a good commander.

He begins without preamble. "Traitor inside the city," he says. "A woman. She'll open a postern for you. You'll be near the northern marketplace. Go to the city gates there and open them. We attack simultaneously from this side, while our underground party makes for the big market in the southern quarter."

Sunráya is geographically lopsided: the citadel sits atop a steep, walled hill on the eastern side; inside the city walls, the southern section is crammed with shops and houses; and the northern and western parts are occupied by residences, temples, and clanhouses. The city is old and dilapidated but still a formidable defensive position.

General Kárin Missúm joins General Korikáda and goes down the ranks, handing each trooper a little golden symbol of Lord Vimúhla and muttering prayers and encouragements. Tomorrow he will lead the frontal assault in person, and you are imbued with his spirit. The Prince himself is busy inside his tent, but you catch a glimpse of his tall, angular, muscular figure as he rises to retrieve a document that has blown off his table.

Night is slow in coming. At last the two moons set, and the desert becomes a blot of inky darkness. The leader of the party, a *Kási* you do not know, sees that you are properly coated with soot mixed with mud. This strikes you as ignoble, but he insists. You form up and trot through the shadows toward the lowering bastions. The *Kási* tells you that he belongs to the Legion of Searing Flame, his name is Chargésh hiVriddi, and he has every intention of winning either glory or an honourable death in the service of Lord Vimúhla. Many of your companions grunt approval: Prince Mirusiya is popular.

You pretend to be a normal patrol, hoping to fool the accursed Milumanayáni tribesmen who cluster around the siege lines to beg for handouts — and to kill and rob stragglers. At last the mighty ramparts of Sunráya lean back toward the sky above your heads, and the *Kási* orders you to be silent and tread softly. You stumble, curse under your breath, and try to keep your sword from clattering.

"Here!" a voice whispers in Tsolyáni. A blacker opening yawns in the black wall. You sense rather than see an archway no wider than a big man's shoulders. "In. Quickly." The speaker sounds like an old woman, a Milumanayáni judging by her accent, but well-versed in your tongue. You follow a winding passage, up some stairs, and into a chamber lit by a brazier of coals. Two men await you there: a slender, delicate-looking man with a pointed goatee, and a bigger, stouter, older officer in the dun-hued livery of Milumanayá. The smaller man has quick, feral eyes that you dislike instantly.

"Tsolyáni!" this person says in a high, nasal, tenor voice. "Know that I am Firáz Mmulávu Zhavéndu." He pauses. Does he expect you to kneel and kiss his dainty, red-embroidered bootie? Your *Kási* has the presence of mind to sketch a grudging salute. Lord Firáz continues: "Tonight you are heroes! Tonight you will perform great deeds! All Milumanayá will hail your valour!"

A likely story. This pretty popinjay will either slaughter his father and inherit a puppet-kingdom, or else you will be dead, victims of battle or treachery.

The woman who brought you pulls her shawl back over her head. For all you know, she is Firáz' mother — though his mother ought to have four legs and a tail! "Come!" she says, and leads your party through a second door, down a flight of steps, and out into the night. You are in a large market plaza fitfully illuminated by cressets. Jumbled, dark shapes lie scattered here and there: boxes, stores, abandoned carts, and rubbish. The buildings around the square are dark, including the hulking gatehouse to your right. To your left, beside the archway leading to other parts of the city, the light of a small fire picks out gleams from the accoutrements of two or three guards lounging on sleeping mats.

Your guide hisses, "There, the North Gate!"

Your *Kási* detaches five soldiers to take care of the guards by the fire and orders the rest of you into the shadows. A covered portico — a sort of raised, pillared porch — runs the length of the street on your side; it will hide you until you are almost to the corner. Then you'll be out in the open until you reach the guardroom entrance next to the gate.

Unfortunately, *Kási* Chargésh hiVriddi does not reckon with people sleeping in front of their shops under the portico. One of your comrades stumbles over a figure huddled under a ragged sheet. The man

utters a querulous exclamation, which breaks off in mid-syllable. A baby begins to squall, and other figures sit up amidst the cluttered boxes and bundles. There is nothing to do but descend into the square and make a diagonal dash for the gate tower. You hear shouts, screams, and rising commotion behind you.

The stones of the gate tower scrape against your backplate as you halt to look back. Your five comrades have killed the sentries by the fire, and they rejoin you. Most of your troops are with your group, although you still hear fighting and screams from the portico. A gate-guard's head pops out from inside the short passageway leading into the tower; he is quickly silenced, and you enter in a rush. You glimpse surprised faces, clay mugs rolling off a table, the embers of a fire scattering under booted feet, and then it is strike and slash and parry. The guards are no match for you. In moments they are dead. You dare not take prisoners.

"They're coming," one of your woman soldiers pants. "Across the square — fanning out — half a Cohort of the bastards!"

"Can we get to the gate?" Chargésh asks. He sends somebody up the ladder to the next storey above.

"No way, Sir," the man calls down. "Built so attackers who seize the gate can't get into the guardroom directly. There're doors out onto the wall-walks, though a lot of good those'll do us. Marján says he can see soldiers coming at us there from both directions."

"Twenty of you, back out into the square," the Kási snaps. "Round the tower and open the thrice-damned gate!" He jerks a thumb at one of the *Heréksas*, "You're in command, Tháron!"

You remain with the group in the tower. You climb to the battlements and see that some of your fellows have already found a store of crossbows, bows, and missiles there. Those who know how are exchanging fire with Milumanayáni archers advancing along the narrow wall-walks.

The gate party is not so fortunate: they are caught by a swarm of Milumanayáni troops as they try to remove the monstrous barks of timber that bar the gates. You can hear fighting, and a few of you can shoot down from arrow-slits and murder-holes into the melee, but you're just as likely to hit your comrades as the enemy. Chargésh gives orders to cease shooting. The noise outside increases as more Milumanayáni arrive to join the fight. The enemy

block the narrow door, and you can't get outside to help. You are trapped.

The sounds of battle finally die away, and you know with a sinking feeling that your gate-party must be dead. You wait. Dawn comes, and the square outside empties. All that you can see are casualties, theirs and yours, sprawled among the barrels and boxes on the paving stones. A few still scream or call for water, but most are silent.

After awhile you hear a voice from the portico: "Tsolyáni! Surrender! We guarantee you honourable sacrifice to the Gods! We will not defile your bodies. Come forth! It is over, Tsolyáni!"

"Sing your death-songs," Chargésh hiVriddi commands. "We go out to do battle, not to surrender like cravens!" He raises his sword and makes the three-fingers-on-forearm sign of the Flame. "Otuléngba! Otuléngba! Now we die, O Purifying Blaze! O Conflagration of the Universe! O All-Consuming of the Gods!" He begins to sway to and fro, and others join him.

The death-rituals take nearly three *Kirén*. Then you are ready. You see the enemy grimly awaiting you across the square. They have dun-hued helmets and shields, and their swords and halberds glitter in the sun. These are mostly urban Milumanayáni, but there are desert tribesmen, too: men in grey cloaks with long bone-tipped spears. This will be a good death, you think. You smile at your comrades, and they smile back. This is true friendship. It will be like this for all eternity in Lord Vimúhla's Blazing Heaven.

The earth moves under your feet: one sudden slam, as though you had jumped down a full man-height onto stone flagging! Then the sound of an explosion comes booming and echoing between the buildings. You smell dust and hear the roar of falling masonry.

"What in the Flame-Lord's name was that?" Chargésh bawls. "You — get up to the roof — what's going on?" Your comrades tumble over one other to obey.

"Smoke, Sir!" one yells down. "Or dust? From the south — from the big marketplace!"

One of your more nimble comrades climbs up onto the tower's peaked roof. He shouts, "There's fighting at the southern gates, too! People running every which way — archers — crossbowmen — siege engines —" He can no longer be heard above the

racket. You see no enemy troops facing you now across the plaza.

"Now we go out!" Chargésh exults. "Now we sing no death-songs! We sing of victory instead! We take the filth-eaters in the rear!" He leads the way.

Later, after the city has surrendered, and the looting and pillaging are over, you learn that your assault is a diversion. The party that enters Sunráya through the underground passages finds its way to a great hall below the main marketplace, where, for reasons you never learn, they set off a magical explosion that ignites the sewer gases and brings several square blocks of the city crashing down into the Underworld! The Tsolyáni main force then assaults the south gate, and the Prince's Livyáni wizard, Eylóa Tláshste, accidentally enchants himself with too powerful a spell of bravery and charges the defenders singlehanded, followed by most of the officers and generals from the Tsolyáni camp! Even Prince Mirusíya himself cannot resist and joins the melee. So amazed are the Milumanayáni that they lose heart and flee. The city falls soon afterward.

Instruction: roll a **D10**: 1-2 = you collect 500 Káitars and a string of 30 Milumanayáni captives. These make miserable slaves, and you can't sell them even for sacrifice. You can kill them or let them go; it's your choice; 3-5 = you find a chest belonging to the city accountant. It contains 2,000 Káitars in gold (almost too heavy for one person to carry), an "Eye" (go to Sec. 14 and roll to find out which it is), and several documents in Milumanayáni which turn out to be love-letters from the man's mistress. They prove to be worthless; 6-8 = the chest holds 5,000 Káitars, plus an "Eye," but no letters; 9 = you capture the treasury of the entire temple of Sárku in Milumanayá: 19,576,603 Káitars, 13 Hlásh, and 9 Qirgáls! Unfortunately, this is a bit unwieldy. When the Sárku priests with your army learn that you are standing guard over this loot, they politely request that you hand it over. You obey, but you retain one casket of amber gems worth 8,000 Káitars, a tiara of yellow sapphires worth 12,000 Káitars, and 5 funny little clay coins with Lord Sárku's five-headed worm stamped on both sides. Do not tell anybody you have these last, and do not try breaking one in half! They contain "Worms of Death": hideous, dormant creatures that bore into a victim's body and kill him! You do not know how to activate them, but maybe they'll come in handy. 10 = you capture 4 of Lord Firáz Zhavédu's concubines. These are beautiful, cultured women. One is Tsolyáni, the second is from Yán Kór, the third is Milumanayáni, and the fourth is a Livyáni girl, tattooed from head to foot. In the impromptu slave market of your camp you can get from 1,000 to 10,000 Káitars for each. Roll a **D10** x 1,000 four

times. If you want to keep one or more of these ladies, decide which before going to the next paragraph.

Instruction: (1) The Tsolyáni woman is spoiled and petulant. She despises being owned by a lowly soldier like you, and she escapes after two days. You never see her again. (2) The Yán Koryáni girl is rather sweet and gentle, but you are her nation's enemy, and she bravely attempts to stab you as you sleep: roll a **D10**: 1-2 = she kills you (pity!); 4-5 = she wounds you and escapes; you spend a month recovering in the infirmary; 6-10 = you wake up in time to stop her. Sell her for 2,000 Káitars — all you can get in a hurry. (3) The Milumanayáni woman is even more treacherous: she tries to pour Alásh-snake venom into your ear while you sleep. Make the same **D10** roll as just above. You can't sell her at all: kill her or turn her loose in the desert! (4) The Livyáni woman is the nicest. She turns out to be a clan-cousin of the wizard Eylóa, who offers to buy her for 15,000 Káitars and send her home. He can arrange a Kási-ship in General Kadársha's Legion if you'd rather have that instead.

Instruction: if you are a common soldier, a Kuruthúni, a Tirrikámu, or a Heréksa, you are promoted to the next higher rank (cf. Secs. B. and B.2): If you are already a Kási or better, you should never have been ordered to go along in the first place! You may gain some experience, however: roll a **D10**: 1-4 = you learn nothing; 5-9 = you acquire one skill level of short sword, long sword, mace, or two-handed sword (but not of any other weapon!); 10 = you gain two skill levels of one of these weapons.

Instruction: go to Sec. B.7.

B.5. DEAD RIGHT

Under the old Emperor the Legions were obliged to work together in spite of sectarian differences. Thus, the armies of both Prince Eselné and Prince Mirusíya have units devoted to most of the 20 Gods and Cohorts. The Legion of the Scales of Brown, for example, does creditably in Milumanayá, as do the Battalions of the Seal of the Worm. This is in accord with the Concordat and hence nothing unusual. Later, however, cracks begin to appear. There are private "understandings" between Prince Mirusíya's Vimúhla-worshipping Generals; these offend the followers of other Gods. The same is true of the devotees of Lord Karakán on Prince Eselné's staff. Prince Dhich'uné is not slow to exploit these rifts. Most people put patriotism first, but a mood of pessimism starts to spread. Neither Tsolyáni army makes much progress during the next years of the campaign. At home, the clans grumble about the shrinkage of the labour force, the highhanded methods of the army's supply officers, corruption, taxes, and the possibility of a stalemate. The Petal Throne promises

victory and the return of Yán Koryáni lands and estates lost for hundreds of years, but these words ring hollow and many remain sceptical.

In the field you hear little of this, although you do know that your officers are uneasy. If you are a devotee of Lord Sárku, you are particularly worried: either of the two martial Princes on the Petal Throne can lead to the virtual eclipse of your faith. The Worm Lord may go the way of the One Other and the Goddess of the Pale Bone, whose shrines, it is said, once existed all across the land. The Legions of the Lords of Stability look lovingly upon Prince Eselné but fearfully upon his rival, while the Flame Legions are similarly fond of Prince Mirusíya and apprehensive of "the Chlén-beast in Blue Robes." Lord Ksárul's advocates say little but seem unusually cozy with the followers of Lord Hrü'ü and Lady Dlamélish and their Cohorts. The only one unconcerned is Lord Drá, Lord Hnálla's mysterious Cohort, who has no Legions — and cares less.

In the east, Prince Mirusíya's Legions struggle north along the Sákbe-road toward the city of Tléku Miriyá fighting as they go. Your Legion is part of this force, although you have little in common with the temple of the Flame-God. Your current task is to patrol along the flank of your army as it advances through the barrens of western Sa'á Allaquí. Around you, the

landscape is one of sand and rock, tan and brown and grey, unrelieved by grass or greenery, save for thornbushes and fleshy cacti. How the nomads survive is a mystery, although you have seen their desert cloaks that keep in perspiration and conserve water. They find moisture where all you see is sere, white sand, they eat insects that any civilised person would stamp on, and they know where to dig for deep-buried tubers nobody else would dream were there. They are a despicable people, you think: careless of courtesy, quick to rob and betray, hopeless in matters of honour. The sooner you reach Yán Kór the better, even though it means hard fighting.

"Hói!" cries your *Kási*, Darkán hiFershéna. "Stop dreaming and watch the damned road! Thought I saw somebody behind that rock."

You wake with a start. Seeing somebody is nothing new! Even though the desert appears as empty as a slave's belly, there is always someone watching. The Milumanayáni are hard to see since they lie flat under their dun and tan desert cloaks for hours on end, as still as corpses. Then when you least expect it...

"There he is!" your friend, Béshmu hiSsánkolen, yelps. One of your archers looses an arrow, but now there is no target to hit.

"House, Sir!" a scout calls in from the left flank. "Nobody home."

"We need a place for the night," Darkán mutters. "Reconnoitre!"

"Already done, Sir. Good defensive position: one door, clear view down over a slope, a well that's not been poisoned. Roof leaks, but it ain't going to rain much anyway." Teeth flash in dust-caked faces, and laughter ripples up and down the line. After old Gashékka died yesterday, you have eighteen troopers left, plus two officers. You need all the morale you can muster.

You slog through deep sand between bluffs of jagged red sandstone to reach the little house. Béshmu says that it must belong to a wealthy Milumanayáni: after all it does have four walls, a roof, and a mud floor!

"Thornbushes — for a fire," Darkán commands. Two soldiers trot off.

You look around. A stone hearth occupies the centre of the one windowless room. Worn, sleeping daises made of stone and clay run along the two side walls. In the rubbish by the back wall, you find a grinding



stone, a couple of broken pots, and bins for food. These last are empty.

You dig into your knapsack. *Hmá*-meat jerky, hard *Dná*-grain biscuits, and a few greasy *Nbé*-nuts are standard rations in Milumanayá. One of the scouts has caught a *Syúsyu*-lizard and is selling portions of its meat for a *Káitar* apiece. Darkán frowns at this but says nothing. You eat, drink muddy water from the well, and try to relax. Night falls. You wander over to see what Béshmu is doing beside the fireplace.

"Ohé! Look here!" Béshmu has upended the hearth-stone, a standard Milumanayáni hiding place. There is a hole underneath. He is already scraping dirt off a little square box. You see the gleam of metal.

"Bastard must've stolen this," Béshmu says. "Or looted it from some tomb." He taps corrosion from the lid with the hilt of his dagger.

A couple of your comrades drift over to see. Tsolyáni military custom demands that loot be shared equally among soldiers of equal rank. Officers get double or triple portions. The box comes open in a shower of dirt. Half a dozen gold discs tumble out upon the floor.

"Coins!" Béshmu exults. He picks one up: a wafer-thin disc about a palm's breadth in diameter. Darkán hears and joins you.

"Ain't coins!" brutal Rachán hiArsúru growls. "Too big 'n too thin. Little writing all over 'em." Darkán inspects one, too, but nobody knows what they are.

"Well, here's real money!" Béshmu scrabbles in the bottom of the box. He extracts a small coin or medallion of gold. He holds it up to the light from the door, and you see an incised circle with a boss or dot in the middle. There is script around the circumference, too, but none of you can read it.

Rachán says, "Them big discs are gold, too. Here, I'll just take mine now." In a moment everybody is grabbing at the box. Those who do not get a disc are left to glare at their luckier comrades. You and Béshmu each have one, and Béshmu has pocketed the coin.

Darkán slaps his sword-hilt. "Put them all back! All! We'll divide the loot later." It is Rachán's turn to scowl, but he and the others acquiesce. You can be killed for disobeying orders, and so you give up your disc too.

A scout's face appears at the door. "Hó! Somebody's out here!"

Darkán hisses for silence. Everybody knows what to do, and you move smoothly to take up positions. A second scout comes up, points silently, and disappears again. You wait.

You hear footsteps. Many footsteps. No, not exactly footsteps: more like a dragging shuffle. You've heard of the *Feshénga*, a giant, lizard-like animal that has sixty legs that all work in unison. Surely, not in this thirsty wasteland?

The noise grows louder, and you tighten your grip on your sword. Suddenly you hear a different sound: a snort and a whispered curse. The words are in Tsolyáni, your own tongue. These must be friends! You glance over at your *Kási* and start to get up, but he motions you back down. There's something wrong here.

Now you see a black mass moving along at the bottom of the slope in front of the house. Weapons gleam in *Káshi*'s red glow, but you hear no voices, no words, no laughter or breathing. Those are troops down there: several hundred of them, judging by the length of the column. Again, you look over toward Darkán. His silhouetted face shows an odd, strained expression.

Three figures flow out from the shadowy mass and climb the slope to the house. Darkán rises and signals to you and Béshmu to follow.

Details of weapons and armour become clear: two of the newcomers carry oval shields. All have swords and high-crested helmets, the metal of which gleams orange-gold in the moonlight.

"Tsolyáni?" the man in front calls. Darkán grunts a "yes," and the three of you go forward. The leader is an officer, probably of *Molkár* rank: tall, clean-shaven, and rather handsome. He wears a chaised breastplate and a helmet engraved with scenes of gods, demons, heroes, and lines of script. Darkán offers a brief report of your mission, and the other nods.

Béshmu gives one of the subalterns a companionable grin.. "Invite your folk to come on up," he says. "There's drinkable water here."

"Thank you, soldier, but I think not," the *Molkár* answers him. "We must reach the siege of Pu'ér by tomorrow afternoon." He starts to descend the hill.

Béshmu sniffs the air. "I smell death," he says. "Corpses? Carrion?"

The officer turns and stares. To Darkán he says, "I smell nothing, do you Kási?"

To his credit, Darkán replies, "This man is rarely wrong."

"Perhaps. In any case, we shall be on our way." The officer tramps back down the hill, toward the silent column trudging by below.

"Sir — They —" Béshmu looks as though he wants to follow.

"I know," Darkán hushes him. "Don't interfere. You'll live longer."

"They are — Undead, Sir! A breach of the Concordat! Our own troops won't stand for it!" He shuts his mouth with an audible snap as the impact of Darkán's last words hits home.

Darkán shakes his head. "We saw nothing. Heard nothing. Just one of our patrols going by. "Well-trained at that — marched in perfect silence. Too bad you lads aren't as quiet!"

"At least we're alive, Sir!" Béshmu glowers. Darkán hurries you both back up to the house, and the next day you move out again to complete your patrol.

Instruction: roll a D10: 1-2 = you gain nothing; 3-5 = you keep one of the golden discs; it is the control disc for one of the Great Ancients' underground tubeway cars, and you can keep it or sell it for 6,000 Káitars; 6-9 = you keep the disc and also win the odd coin from Béshmu at dice; it carries the emblem of the One Other. Somebody will buy it from you for 200 Káitars; 10 = you manage to keep two of the golden discs, plus the coin. Go to Sec. B.8.

B.6. DON'T KÁI FOR ME, CONSORT TI'INA!

On both fronts the war is being slowly won. Time and again the Baron of Yán Kór manages to rescue his smaller, weaker forces by skill, luck, and the will of the Gods. Prince Eselné fights his way past the Atkolél Heights and at last takes them from the rear. His First General, Kéttukal hiMraktiné, besieges the town of Akársha and captures it in one of the bloodiest sieges of the war. The Prince follows this victory with a lightning stab into Yán Kór's little western subject-state, Pijéna. The Tsolyáni quickly seize the town of Kái on the shores of the Tutáita Shallows, cutting off the Yán Koryáni garrison in the

capital of Pijnár. The Prince next plans to strike east at Aqéssha (which the Yán Koryáni perversely call Ashékka) but is injured in a skirmish. In spite of the ministrations of his physicians and sorcerers, the Prince's wound becomes infected, and the army lies inactive at Kái while he wavers between life and death. This gives the Baron time to bolster his forces at Pijnár by sea, and he also makes a treaty with the Mu'ugalavyáni that gives the Red-Hats all of western Pijéna in return for military assistance at Pijnár. A small contingent of Mu'ugalavyáni troops also joins the siege of Kái. The Yán Koryáni march west along the coast from Aqéssha, land marines at the towns of Aó-Milkél and Aó-Ta'ásh, west of Kái, and surround Eselné's army in the city. For months there is then little movement on either side.

Among the loot you seize from a library in Akársha is a copy of "The Military Formations of the Nations of the Universe," a compilation from the works of Ssamirén of Khéiris and Sa'alúr of Jakállá, who lived during Bednálljan times. This is the tactical manual usually employed in the Five Empires, although some of your comrades argue for the later writings of Liyuráin of Tsámra and Hirkkuluméshmrú the Dwarf, two Engsvanyáli theorists. Naval matters are covered in the texts of Khuoláz of Laigás and Mshúruish "the Killer of Akhó," who were admirals. in the Priestkings' fleets, while grand strategy and logistics are best studied from the "Scrolls of Ma'áz Khólu," a minister at the Engsvanyáli court. You while away the time reading your manual. You will need this information if you are to become an officer and rise to a post on the General Staff.

Instruction: if your Intelligence score in Sec. 6.3 is less than 75, you cannot comprehend the manual at all; if it is 70 or more, roll a D10. Add +1 if your Intelligence is 81-90, and +2 if it is 91-100: 1-3 = you gain nothing; 4-6 = you gain 1 skill level of "formations" in Sec. 8.4; 7-8 = you gain 1 level of "field tactics" in Sec. 8.4; 9 = you gain 2 levels of either of these two topics; 10 = you gain two skill levels of both of these subjects.

There is not much food in Kái, and the army's position worsens. You take to eating the local staple: an unpalatable, greenish porridge made from the dried, pounded, and boiled fruit of the Tsímer-tree. Fish from the bay are at first a welcome addition but soon become tiresome — and then scarce, as your troops exhaust the supply. Pijéna is a dank, foggy country, and many become ill with diarrhea and chills.

Instruction: roll a D10: 1 = you die from a combination of disease, exposure, and privation (your last will and testament will be sent home to your family!); 2-6 = you

become chronically ill and lose a D10 from your Height-Build-Strength number; you can regain this only after a prolonged rest of a year or more. If you get back to Tsolyánu, you must go home to Sec. 10; 7-9 = you stay well and healthy. Continue in this Section; 10 = you thrive on this climate and add a D10 to your Height-Build-Strength number. This may increase your Body Damage Points. Continue in this Section.

The fighting increases, and the Yán Koryáni assault the walls a dozen times but are driven back. Prince Eselné slowly recovers. It is wonderful to see him in his armour once again, striding along the parapets. You hope that the rumours you hear are correct: the Yán Koryáni are busy on the eastern front, and the Baron is withdrawing troops from Kái to meet the challenge there. You sit and wait.

In the meantime you study your manual, find quarters in a dilapidated Pijenáni house, and take a local girl named Ti'ína as a housekeeper/mistress (or as just a housekeeper, if you are a woman). Ti'ína is slatternly, stupid, and anything but pretty, but at least she doesn't steal your money or knife you while you sleep, as some of your comrades' consorts have done. Indeed, she is rather sweet, and, to tell the truth, you are going to be a little sorry to leave her behind, if and when you get out of Kái.

Instruction: go to Sec. B.9.

B.7. IT'S A LONG WAY TO TLEKU MIRIYA

It is almost 900 *Tsán* from Sunráya around the eastern end of the Desert of Sighs, then back northwest again to the city of Tléku Miriyá. You fight no more major battles, but you do engage in endless skirmishes with both Yán Koryáni and Sa'á Allaqiyáni units. Worse, the Milumanayáni nomads harass you from all sides, appearing and disappearing at will in the fastnesses of the awful desert. Prince Mirusiya separates a large force (mostly troops devoted to the Lords of Stability and to Lords Sárku, Ksáru, Hrü'ü, and their Cohorts) east along the *Sákbe*-road to capture the town of Anóhl. Later, he sends General Kárin Missúm to take the city of Grái. This is a horrendous propaganda error since the fanatic General proceeds to massacre the entire population and destroy Grái, "so that one stone does not remain upon another." The annihilation of Grái strengthens the Sa'á Allaqiyáni resolve to fight. While the Ssáo's emissary, Princess Vrísá Vishétu, makes her plea for a separate peace in Avanthár, the news of the extermination of Grái reaches her father, the Ssáo. He swears a great oath of revenge, and

Vrísá's brother, Mridán Vishétu vows to go and bring her home.

It is at this time that the Tsolyáni suffer the loss of General Kádársha hiTlekólmü, who is slain by magic at a dismal Milumanayáni village named Kankára, defending Prince Mirusiya. He is mourned for seven days, and seven thousand captives are sacrificed at his funeral. His senior *Dritlán*, Kánbe hiTuplángte, is promoted to *Kérdu* of the Legion of Searing Flame in his place.

Your Legion pushes north. The enemy tear great gaps in the *Sákbe*-road, but your engineers built the roadway back up again. The nomads poison the wells, and you learn to boil the water — and test it first on Milumanayáni prisoners. The Yán Koryáni attempt to destroy the food supply, and your leaders send out flying columns to seize granaries, markets, and household stores. Anyone who resists is summarily cut down, and long columns of men, women, and children wend their sad way back to Sunráya to become slaves of the Imperium. General Kárin Missúm urges that no captives be taken, but more moderate officers, such as Generals Kutumé hiTánkolel, Réru hiSu'únmra, and Kánbe hiTuplángte, argue that the Empire's labour force is so depleted that foreign slaves are the only way to bring in the harvests and keep Tsolyánu's commerce moving. Disaffection rises among those officers loyal to the Lords of Stability, and the Prince allows some of these to return home; other, fresh Legions arrive, and the war drags on.

It is near the end of 2,362 before you see the massif of the Jánnu Range looming up out of the dust ahead. The western anchor of this range is Borodún Head, as nasty a crag as anybody will see! It stands like a fortress' tower, 2,000 man-heights above its rugged foothills, looking down over the Desert of Sighs, which sweeps away to the west to mingle with the blues and purples of the horizon. Tléku Miriyá stands here, anchored on Borodún Head to the east and the Desert of Sighs to the west, blocking the way to the fertile lowlands of Yán Kór. You hear that the nonhuman Pygmy Folk live around behind the Jánnu Range to the northeast, and gossip has it, too, that the ancient, sealed cities of the horrid Shunned Ones are located somewhere in that direction as well. Folk say that no human can breathe inside those domes, and their inhabitants emerge only for short periods — which is an excellent thing since the monsters are said to stink beyond imagining, and are as vicious as a whole army of *Epéng*!

Tléku Miriyá rises upon an eminence to the southwest of Borodún Head. You see gates and towers, three concentric walls, and a central citadel with parapets three man-heights thick and fifteen high! The place is also defended by fresh, well-fed Yán Koryáni soldiers who look down from their impregnable battlements and hurl vegetables and fruit at you in disdain. Prince Mirusiya goes forward to demand surrender, but the enemy rejects his offer outright. General Kárin Missúm then urges an immediate assault, before the defenders have time to prepare for a siege. General Mengáno hiHarisáyu, the artilleryist, points out that the foe has known you were coming for months, and all necessary preparations are assuredly complete by now. He suggests waiting until your own siege engines come up.

They're somewhere on the road behind you. His counsel carries the day.

The Prince orders the building of siege lines and a wall of circumvallation. Earth embankments are erected from which your onagers and trebuchets can command the ramparts. Your military sorcerers set up positions, too, so that they can maintain protective spells and try an occasional offensive enchantment. Sorcery is ineffective against fortifications, of course: city walls and major buildings on Tékelmel are protected by special spells developed during the Latter Times. Anti-personnel magic is similarly useless: both armies have magical contingents, and each blocks the other. Military sorcery inhibits smaller, personal magic and magical devices as well. Warfare is thus reduced to simple, traditional technology.

Months pass, and one assault after another comes to naught. Sometimes your sappers take this tower or that enceinte; sometimes the Yán Koryáni retake them. Your leaders detach troops to force the local farmers to grow food, but most of your supplies arrive in huge *Chlén*-carts all the way from Sunráya. The long road becomes a highway to riches for the suttlers and for those generals who issue permits and passes. General Kutumé hiTánkolel is accused of profiteering but is not punished, which causes old soldiers to nod their heads and smile sagely. On the other hand, when the use of Undead troops at the siege of Pu'ér comes to light, it brings a swift response from the Petal Throne: the General of the Legion of the Scales of Brown is recalled, tried, and impaled in Avanthár. The other temples are thus appeased.

It is your Legion's turn to go up against the bastions of Tléku Miriyá. Lord Vimúhla's priests sacrifice two score Milumanayáni prisoners in the Flame; omens

are solemnly taken; the troops parade past the Prince in full panoply; the trumpets blare; and the wardrums thunder. You lay aside your long weapons — pikes and spears are less than useless in hand-to-hand melee — and don your thickest padding and stoutest armour.

The green pennants of Yán Kór mock you from the peak-roofed turrets. You advance to a position almost under the walls. The pitter-patter you hear around you is not rain! An arrow sticks in the earth between your feet, and a friend nearby stumbles, coughs, and falls with a crossbow quarrel in his breast. Boulders, bricks, and rocks clatter down, and ahead you hear shrieks and smell the acrid odours of hot oil and burning flesh. There are pavises and penthouses here, and you gratefully take shelter behind one of them. An officer of the Legion of Vrishtára the Mole comes by, a bloody sword in his hand, to order everybody out. His sappers wear heavy, leather siege coats and broad-brimmed helmets. One of them designates a half-squad of ten of you, points to a ladder, and indicates a low spot along the southeastern battlements. "There!" he bawls in your ear. "As easy as catchin' a crotch-louse! Try there!"

You and your comrades shoulder the ladder and pick a path between burned carts, smashed siege machines, and shattered beams. Ahead, you see a hillock at the base of the grey sandstone wall. Discarded helmets and broken equipment lie scattered around, attesting to the fact that others have come this way before. Some are still here, judging by the all-pervasive stench of death. You keep your shield over your head and do not look up.

Missiles hiss and clatter on all sides of you, but you ignore them: if they do not hit you, they are irrelevant. It is in the Flame Lord's hands. The ladder goes up smoothly: two of you hold the base, and several begin to climb. Numbly, you wait your turn. You have closed a sort of mental trapdoor over your terror; you are no more than a fighting machine. Then the blood-slippery rungs are under your fingers, and up you go.

The view of the battle is quite splendid from this altitude. You wonder what you would have done if you had been afraid of heights. A face appears behind an arrow-slit, and a crossbow quarrel strikes your shield obliquely with an audible thwack and ricochets away. One of your archers below puts a blue-feathered shaft into the aperture, and the face disappears. You climb on, past inlaid mosaics of Yán Koryáni script done in black and white marble, past

carven demon heads and scrollwork, and on up to the lip of the parapet itself.

A man in a green basket-helmet awaits you. He blinks at you from narrowed eyes, and his teeth are sunk in his lower lip. The poor bastard looks terrified. You are in no mood to feel sorry for him. You duck behind your shield, feint left, lean right, and lunge. He parries, you clamber on over the parapet, and the two of you square off. You have no idea what the rest of your companions are doing. This fight becomes your entire universe.

Instruction: go to Sec. 11 and fight. No magic can be used. You face several Yán Koryáni. These all add up to a Type 3 opponent. If you win, you find yourself in a cleared space and can rest. Go to the next paragraph. If at any time you lose, go to Sec. 13 and check on your status. Wounded, you can still crawl down the ladder and return to your own lines. If you die, the enemy toss your body from the walls. (Like a bottle of fine wine, you break easily. Sorry!) If you live, go to the next paragraph.

All along this section of the battlements the fighting is intense. As the sun sets, your trumpets signal recall, and your troops stagger back from the walls. You learn that you have lost a score of troopers, but one important corner turret is now in Tsolyáni hands. Tomorrow you will try again. The Flame commands!

Instruction: roll a D10: 1 = you perish in the siege, and your body is never recovered. (Grief!); 2-4 = you are wounded and sent home. After months on the road and in Sunráya, you return to your clanhouse. Go to Sec. 10; 5-7 = you thrive on sand-clams and lizard-meat. You find a nice Yán Koryáni steel sword worth 5,000 Káitars (if the market ever returns to normal); 8-9 = you find the steel sword and also are given a field promotion to the rank of Kási; cf. Secs. B and B.2. Your predecessor was barbecued in a blazing siege-tower; 10 = you find the sword, get your promotion, and join Prince Mirusíya's personal bodyguard under the command of Lord Zaklén hiVriddi. Behave nobly; the Prince demands no less.

Instruction: go to Sec. B.10.

B.8. FOR WANT OF ANÓHL, THE BATTLE WAS LOST

Your Legion is part of the force sent to take the town of Anóhl and ravage the southern region of Sa'á Allaqí. The capital, Sa'á Allaqiyár, is only about 400 Tsán away, and your comrades jest about using the Priests of Light as torches to light your victory parade. As your columns move down into the gentle valley of the Kúrlu River, your Hláka scouts return to

announce that there are "many, many, many" foemen ahead. (The Hláka are hopeless with numbers!) Your officers send out flankers and skirmishers to test the way, but the Sa'á Allaqiyáni are "honourable" fighters: you top the last rise and see their Legions drawn up in battle array waiting for you. It is a beautiful day, bright and cloudless, and the ramparts of the town of Anóhl glow a soft red-brown in the morning light. As General Kárin Missúm says, "It is a good day to die."

"Deploy!" shouts General Méshmuel hiVu'úrtesh, and his officers echo him up and down the ranks. His Legion of the Portals of Death is mainly composed of troops loyal to Lords Ksáru and Hró'ü, although the General himself worships Lord Hnálla. He is one of those who are unhappy with the idea of a Flame Prince on the Petal Throne, and he has been heard to wish he were in the west with Prince Eselné. He still does his best, nevertheless. The Legion's long spears clatter down to make a deadly hedgehog facing the foe, and the round shields go up as neatly as an architect's straight-edge ruler. The carpenters quickly put together the pre-cut planks of a wooden command stand from which your officers will observe the fray.

Lord Mirusáya hiSsánmirin puts his troops on Méshmuel's left, and archers and crossbowmen run to take up positions between and in front of these heavier units. Your Ahoggyá mercenaries, the Legion of the Dancer Without Eyes, scramble to form a "sword unit" (a powerful and fast-moving strike force) on your far right, and the Battalions of the Seal of the Worm tramp into place on your left. Hláka units, several Cohorts of Shén from the Legion of the City of Chrí, and more light infantry occupy your far left flank positions. It looks as though your commanders are opting for the formation called "The Two Mighty Gauntlets of Hrógga," in which each flank presents a "sword unit," between which two square blocks of heavy infantry stand on either side of a central phalanx of pikemen. Crossbowmen and archers shield your front, ready to run back through the gaps as you close, and light troops and skirmishers are sent to outflank the foe on either side.

Facing you, the Sa'á Allaqiyáni centre is occupied by the Legion of Glorious Krú. You see its Ochür ["General"], Gerkas Vishétru, the Ssáo's eldest son, striding back and forth before it. Another good Legion, the City of Trú, is posted at an oblique angle on their left, and the Legion of Karslán holds the right. A swarm of archers in red and black chequered livery is working its way across their frontage: probably the Red Horde of Kilálammu. The word is

passed that the foe is employing the formation called "The Mace of Karakán": a "sword unit" set obliquely on the left, a long central phalanx, and a square block of heavy troops on the right, with archers and crossbowmen screening the left and also all along the frontage in the centre. Your sorcerers and theirs are already laying down fields of magic. You hope your magic-users are at least evenly matched!

The clangour of the Sa'á Allaqiyáni gongs echoes across the field. Your own mighty *Koráŋkorèŋ* roar in answer, and your trumpets squall brazen insults across the open plain. Men sing their death-songs, and some start shuffling their feet in time with the wardrums' booming. Soon a soldier emerges from the ranks, bows to General Méshmuel, and strides out into the field between the two armies. His death-song and shouted taunts are lost in the racket. A Sa'á Allaqiyáni soldier resplendent in orange-enameled armour marches out to face him. The two place their weapons on the ground and offer them to one another with gestures. Your man picks up the enemy's sword and hefts it, and his opponent does the same. Then they fall into formal duelling stance and fight. In seconds, it seems, your champion goes down with a long slash in one thigh, and a great "aaah!" goes up from your watching troops. The Sa'á Allaqiyáni gongs boom victory. The Tsolyáni lurches to his feet, strikes an off-balance blow, and is brought down with a swift parry-and-slash by his foe. A groan escapes your lips. The victor cries words in his own tongue, and three men come forth from their array to drag your man back to captivity and eventual sacrifice in Sa'á Allaqí.

A second champion battle ensues. Your fighter wins this one, and it is the enemy's turn to groan. The drums now fall into standard battle rhythm, and General Méshmuel signals an end to the individual combats. Trumpets bawl all up and down the line, and your Legion advances, building momentum as it goes...

Arrows hiss down into your ranks, and bright bolts of magic explode above your head. A man falls, and his comrades swiftly shunt him aside, down between the files. Movement is slowed, but you are trained to expect this. The foe is doing the same. You can hear nothing above the yelling and the thunder of the drums and trumpets, but you see your comrades lowering their long weapons and steeling themselves for the impact.

Then it comes: a noise like a thousand smithies, a reeling shock as though you are struck with a carpenter's mallet. Ugly, sawtoothed blades poke

through between your companions' shields, seeking your troops' lives, and you hear the clatter of swords upon *Chlén*-hide armour ahead of you. The press is enough to crack bones. You can hardly breathe, much less manoeuvre. You grip your spear and try to find an unseen target in the chaos beyond the men in front of you. A soldier turns to face you, his eyes rolled up so that only the whites show; he is dead, but he cannot fall, so close is the fray. Another man shrieks and struggles to climb up on top of his comrades. Claustrophobia is a death-sentence for a pikeman, and an enemy arrow soon finds him and brings him crashing down upon the helmet-crests of his friends below.

An orange-plumed helm rises before you, and you duck behind your shield. The Sa'á Allaqiyáni is using a double-bladed axe, and you feel it bite deeply into your shield-boss. You let go of your spear and try to drag your sword out of its *Sarélqe* ["belt-clip"]. The upper edge of your shield splits in two as your opponent hits again. All you can do is stumble back into the man behind you. At last your sword comes free, and you wriggle it up into position. When you look, you find that your opponent has vanished: somebody else has cut him down. There are only Tsolyáni backplates in front of you now.

The push behind you becomes irresistible. You walk, then trot, straight ahead to avoid being trampled by those behind. The enemy is retreating! You move faster and faster, almost at a run, drawing breath in ragged gasps and striving to stay on your feet. Orange-clad figures lie crushed beneath your boots, and you stumble and pick your way over them. You pass a foeman kneeling on the bloodied earth, a half dozen Tsolyáni troopers gathered around him, hacking at him as farmers hack brush to clear a field. You hurry on past, unable to stop.

"Anóhl! Anóhl!" A deep-throated cry goes up in front of you. You peer over a forest of tossing crests, plumes, and weapons and see that you are almost underneath the gate towers of the city. The bronze-bound doors are open, and orange-armoured soldiers are streaming inside, fighting as they go. Some of your men fall into the dry fosse that surrounds the town, and those in front of you stagger to a kicking, threshing halt as those in back keep pressing forward. You can hardly breathe, and you twist, writhe, and smash one of your own men in the mouth with your sword-hilt to keep him from suffocating you. "Through! Into the city! Loot! Plunder!" yell voices on all sides. Your troops force their way through the narrow gates in a tangled, struggling, disordered mob.

You hear screams coming from the right. Behind you to the right! There is fighting back there! You try to turn but cannot. The mob carries you inexorably through the gates of Anóhl. Now you see that archers on the battlements above are taking a terrible toll of your troops. Those who have been pushed into the fosse are dying, too, as arrows, quarrels, rocks, and pots of boiling water find their mark. You exert all your strength to halt and turn aside.

Ahead, you see a phalanx of fresh troops in glittering orange armour and masked helmets. You recognise Sa'á Allaqí's best Legion: that of the Priests of Light! They were hidden in the city! The foe let you break through their formation! Those behind you to the right must be a "sword unit" concealed behind their frontage to catch your impetuous troops in the flank and rear and drive them into this trap! The yelling, the clatter, the screams, the clamour of battle are indescribable. You smell blood and excrement and sweat and death, as the heaving, struggling horde behind you carries you on to meet the curved billhooks and scythe-swords of the enemy.

Instruction: go to Sec. 11 and fight. No magic can be used. You combat a Type 4 opponent. If you win, you wait for an opportunity, then return to your own retreating army; go to Sec. B.11. If you lose, you are either dead (too bad!) or captured if you are wounded. In the latter case, roll a **D10**: 1-4 = you are sacrificed to the Lord of Light (go bravely, O hero!); 5-8 = you are ransomed for 11,000-20,000 Káitars (10,000 + a D10 roll x 1,000) and return to your unit. If you do not have the money, your clan will pay, but you must repay them later. Go to Sec. B.11; 9 = you are enslaved and spend 1-2 years (a random roll) in the gem mines of Iyánu, deep in the mountains east of Sa'á Allaqiyár. You finally escape and make your way home again. You gain 2 skill levels of "gems and jewellery" and 2 levels of "rocks and minerals" in Sec. 9.3.2. Go to Sec. 10; 10 = you escape from a dungeon in Anóhl and rejoin your unit after three months. Go to Sec. B.11.

B.9. A TI'ÍNA BIT PREGNANT!

Prince Eselné's recovery comes at a time when your army's morale is at its lowest. It also coincides with a coastal hurricane that turns the Yán Koryáni marines' ships into kindling and scatters them far inland. It is said that prolonged rains have also struck southern Mu'ugalavyá, making reinforcements to Pijéna and Yán Kór impossible. The Pijenáni Legion of the Inimitable Forces of Ancient Kái is assigned to block your escape from Kái, but it is such a miserable excuse for a military force that your troops go over the south wall of the city in a howling gale and catch the Pijenáni



unprepared. The slaughter is horrendous. On the east and west sides of Kái, both the Mu'ugalavyáni and the Baron's contingents sleep peacefully as Prince Eselné evacuates this army from the town and slips away into the darkness.

Shortly afterward, as the Prince's battered army regroups at Akársha, the news of the death of the Emperor arrives, together with Prince Dchich'uné's announcement of the *Kólumèjalim*. There are still powerful enemy forces south of you, particularly at the fortresses of Aó-Ükesh and Tí-Gurúè. To the west, Mu'ugalavyáni units are lodged in the old castle of Aó-Tkesh and in the Castle of Bruhayá. The Prince demands that the *Kólumèjalim* be postponed. Even if he fights his way through the foe and reaches Avanthár, he asks, how can Prince Mirusiya arrive in time? Where is Prince Mridóbu? What of Prince Rereshqála? Has he "given up the gold?" What of Princesses Ma'ín Krüthái and Arimála? What of other, undeclared heirs to the throne? The messenger, an elderly Hlaka who wears the blue and gold crossbelts of long Imperial service, only shrugs.

In a series of forced marches, Prince Eselné moves his army out of Akársha, gives battle once near the fortress of Tí-Gurúè, smashes his way through the Yán Koryáni defenders, and reaches the Tsolyáni enclave at Castle Jí-Ashá on the northeastern corner

of the Atkolél Heights. From there, he moves down the eastern flank of the Heights to Si'ís, where he has many supporters. It then becomes almost a triumphal procession westward to Chéne Hó, where he halts to rest and take stock.

You are tired and as skinny as a starved Qásu-bird, but now you are a seasoned veteran, a sun-bronzed, hardened, experienced fighter. You don't have much money: just a little loot left from Kái and Akársha, but you still have your tactical manual and you have your health. You ask for leave to go home, and Prince Eselné grants it on condition you return within a month or two. He is now ready to march on south to Páya Gupá, where he hopes to gain the support of the temple of Lord Thúmis and various clans devoted to the Lords of Stability.

***Instruction:** if you reach Chéne Hó alive, congratulations! Roll a D10 to determine what you have left of all the loot you acquired on campaign: 1-4 = you have 100-1,000 Káitars (a D10 roll x 100), a steel helmet, and a good steel sword taken from a fallen Pijenáni. Together, your sword and helmet are valued at 9,000 Káitars; 5-6 = you have gems worth 1,000-10,000 Káitars (a D10 roll), plus a steel sword and a steel breastplate together worth 12,000 Káitars; 7-8 = you have one beautiful ruby worth 16,000 Káitars; 9-10 = you have the ruby, an Eye (go to Sec. 14 and determine which it is, etc.), and your loving consort, Ti'ína. She doesn't speak much Tsolyáni, but she followed you all the way. If you are a man, Ti'ína is four months pregnant. (Go to Sec. 4.2 and determine the child's sex and possibilities of infant mortality — Daddy!) If you are a woman, all Ti'ína wants is to follow and serve you. She has no skills and can't cook, but she's breathtakingly loyal.*

***Instruction:** if you remain in the army with Prince Eselné, go to Sec. B.12. If you decide to quite the army, go to Sec. 10.*

B.10. THE FLAME BURNS BRIGHT IN MY OLD FASILTUM HOME!

On the eastern front, Prince Mirusíya and his army maintain the Imperium's tenuous hold in Yán Kór. Lord Kuruktáshmu hiKétkolel, the Tsolyáni Military Governor of Sunráya and a tough ex-General of the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation, sends a second expedition to take the town of Anóhl. It succeeds, but this is as far as the drive into Sa'á Allaqí goes. In the north, a different party captures the town of Krú Sékka, but again, this is the limit of Tsolyáni expansion.

The fighting at Tléku Miriyá intensifies, and at last the Prince's army breaks through into the city itself. The citadel holds out for a time but is also eventually taken.

Prince Mirusíya and his officers are overjoyed; it is but a short push northwestwards to Rüllá in the heart of Yán Kór. and thence across to Vánu on the coast of the Pentrútra Deeps to cut the country in half!

What happens next is a matter for scholars to debate. Somehow, Lord Fú Shi'í, the Baron's henchman, brings his Weapon Without Answer into play and switches the entire city of Tléku Miriyá, plus a circle of land around it about a *Tsán* wide, out of Tékumel's Plane and into a tiny "pocket dimension" in which it exists all alone in a sort of wan, perpetual twilight. The world ends in a shimmering grey mist just outside the city walls. On Tékumel, Tléku Miriyá is replaced by a "ghost copy" of itself: a lifeless, barren city from beyond the farthest Planes. Yán Koryáni troops and mages immediately occupy this "false Tléku Miriyá" and begin to make it habitable.

Reality, as any mage knows, consists of bundles of "filaments" (Planes) extending along the interplanar continuum from one end of time to the other. The more probable Planes resemble thick branches and trunks; the less probable are twigs, short branches that go nowhere, and shoots that grow away from their parent limb and then grow back into it again. Each of these contains an infinity of individual sub-Planes: a Plane where you rubbed your nose just now, and a Plane where you didn't, a Plane where Prince Mirusíya is Emperor and one where Princess Ma'in Krúthái has assumed the throne — etc. There are other features as well: time-loops and six-dimensional interrelationships impossible to describe in human terms. Small, isolated Planes are frequent: sprigs from the main tree that end in isolated nodules of semi-reality. One of these, discovered by the inimitable Fú Shi'í, is that of the "ghost copy" of Tléku Miriyá. He is willing to sacrifice the city, including thousands of its people, to destroy Prince Mirusíya.

The Prince's troops find themselves masters of a lost city. Most of the Yán Koryáni inhabitants, already weakened from the long siege, are either dead or starving, and the Tsolyáni must care for these helpless people in addition to their own troops. The city contains cisterns of water and bins of grain that will last for awhile yet, but the end is clearly in view: without sunlight to grow crops — and nowhere to grow them except inside the walls — both victors and vanquished are doomed.

Tléku Miriyá's pocket dimension has neither night nor day. The Prince sets up a waterclock in the great hall of the citadel to tell the hours. He sits brooding upon the high dais there, while his sorcerers debate

and wrangle and try useless experiments. You feel yourself growing pallid, less substantial, less real, as what must be days and weeks pass on Tékumel. Some of your comrades engage in revelry and drunkenness, while others sing their death-songs and take the path of suicide. Still others gamble, winning and losing fortunes worth empires; most just sit, staring at nothing.

The story of the quest for Prince Mirusiya is too long and complex to be told here. Suffice it to say that suddenly there is light and air, as Tléku Miriyá ripples and shifts back to its proper Plane. You hear that a group of the Prince's followers searched magically, high and low, from Plane to Plane, using means unknown to any modern wizard, until at last they found the gateway to this pocket dimension. All you know is that the sun is very warm and welcome!

"My Prince, we cannot remain here," says Lord Arumél hiChánkolel, one of those who found the city. "The accursed Fú Shi'í can easily shift us all back again — or to some worse place."

Prince Mirusiya frowns. "I have no intention of remaining. We are free! Let us march on and sack Yán Kór City! Why delay more?" General Kárin Missúm concurs, but others shake their heads.

"Food is scarce, High Prince," argues Lord Sánjesh hiKirisáya, a Thúmis priest who has thrown his lot in with Mirusiya. "The winter is coming, and we are far from any supplies. The Baron's forces gather at Rüllá, and the Sa'á Allaqiyáni yearn to avenge the destruction of Grái and Krú Sékka. The one will strike us in the front, while the other stabs us from behind. It were best if we turned back to Sunráya until next season."

"Turn back?" growls Kárin Missúm. "When does the Flame ever turn back? Fa!" He drops his hand to his sword-hilt. The Prince's bodyguards, Méntek hiCharshúnu and Achumél hiTánkolel glance across at each other. The Prince tolerates all sorts of advisors. Indeed, he surrounds himself with a veritable ecumenical army of "new men": adherents of most of the various Gods and Goddesses, scholars, priests, warriors, and foreigners. You are not surprised when he waves Kárin Missúm back.

"My colleague gives good advice." Another outsider, the Hnálla priest, Osumétlu hiVu'úrtesh, puts in. "Matters transpire in the Empire, Lord. Truly, it were best that you should travel to Fasíltum, where your strongest support lies." He gives a quick recounting of recent events.

Others speak: Taríkme hiChaishyáni, a priest of Lord Hrü'ü; Ashiyán hiVessúma, who is an officer in the Legion of Kétl; her husband, Kírktá hiVessúma, who had once been a Servitor of Silence and who serves Lord Belkhánu; Lord Arjái hiVaisonér, a priest of Lord Ksáru, and his wife, Lady Chitlásha hiTlélsu; a Pé Choi with an unpronounceable name; Lord Sánjesh' wife, a slim, aristocratic-featured foreign woman named A'ís Chrái; and a host of others. The wrangling continues through the night.

In the end, it is Lady I'éna hiSharítla, Lord Arumél's wife and herself a High Preceptress of Lord Vimúhla, who puts the cap on it. "Lord Prince, you know me, and you know whom I serve. We cannot win — now — in Yán Kór. You are needed at home to counter your rivals for the Petal Throne. March to Fasíltum, Lord, and confound your foes!" She bows. "I go to make sacrifice for our journey."

You and dozens of others listening in the great hall debate the matter after the high folk have gone to bed. When morning comes, most are agreed that the Prince must return to Tsolyánu. Marching across Yán Kór, surrounded by enemies and without supplies or reinforcements, holds little appeal, except to fanatics like General Kárin Missúm.

News arrives of a victory at a little town named Dlakár, on the *Sákbe*-road north of Sunráya. General Kánbe is doggedly pushing north to find you and join forces. Heartened, your army abandons Tléku Miriyá and begins the trek south.

Each day the Milumanayáni nomads harass your column, and your troops grow fewer, weaker, and hungrier. You pass the road to Grái, which now leads only to a scorched, stony field, and go on. Your scouts return from the village of Chatlár with a grim discovery: they have found General Kánbe hiTuplángte — or rather his living corpse, mutilated and "frozen" with an Excellent Ruby Eye in a paroxysm of eternal agony. His body has been set up as a sort of "exhibit" in a mud-brick "temple" where all can mock and defile him. His army, you discover, was defeated and driven back to Sunráya. Prince Mirusiya orders all possible medical aid given to poor Kánbe, then signals the army to move on. You must force your way through to Sunráya, where old Governor Kuruktáshmu hiKétkolel holds the citadel for the Flame.

At Dlakár, the site of General Kánbe's greatest victory, your army must fight yet another battle. This one is different: the foe who confronts you consists of Yán Koryáni, Sa'á Allaqiyáni, and



Tsolyáni units, all together! Your countrymen are garbed in blue and brown, and their weapons have the red sheen of copper. A strange general emerges to parley. He is Lord Ielmúna hiSharvóya of Penóm, who commands one of Emperor Dlich'uné's newer Legions: "The Fishers of Death," the 21st Imperial Heavy Infantry. This man demands that Prince Mirusiya lay down his arms and return to Avanthár: "either to give up the Gold, or to give up your life as a rebel against the God-Emperor." Prince Mirusiya makes no reply but returns to your lines and orders the advance.

Instruction: go to Sec. 11. You fight many foes. All together these equal a Type 4 opponent. No magic may be used. If you win this combat or lose but are only wounded in Sec. 13, you are soon back on duty since your army wins the battle. The Prince is assisted by troops from Sunráya who come up in time to attack the foe in the rear. Continue in this Section. If you die, the army now has several sorcerers who possess the spell of Revivification: roll a **D10**: 1-2 = you are not one of those revived (alas!); 3-10 = you are restored to life. Continue in this Section.

The Prince decides not to head for Sunráya. His enemies occupy all but the citadel, and there is no possibility of running the gauntlet of the Pass of Skulls between fortresses held by Lord Sáрку's adherents. Instead, your army turns directly south,

bypassing Sunráya on the west, and heads for the mountain pass west of Kayál Peak. This splits into two passes, the western one of which leads out into the Desert of Eyági, with Fasíltum just a hundred and fifty Tsán away.

Unfortunately, the enemy knows this terrain, too, and another army, hastily put together, awaits you near the village of Arvér, just north of the foothills called the Lands of Tá-Tsér. You are outnumbered, and your foes are fresh. Kárin Missúm glances up at the sky and says, "It is a good day to die."

Instruction: go to Sec. 11 and fight. Your foes equal a Type 3 opponent. No magic may be used. If you win this combat or lose but are only wounded in Sec. 13, continue in this Section. If you die, you have less chance of revivification since the Prince loses this battle: roll a **D10**: 1-6 = you are not revived (woe!); 7-10 = you are lucky: you are restored to life. Continue in this Section.

The Prince's left and right wings are routed and flee northward into the Desert of Sighs, where many perish. By dint of hard fighting, the Prince and a small contingent of officers and bodyguards break straight through the enemy centre and continue south. You are in this group. After much privation, you stagger over the last sand dune and see the red and black walls of ancient Fasíltum shining in the morning sun. You hear the music of the glass-chimes hanging from the battlements and see the skulls swinging on their silver chains. You are back in Tsolyánu!

The city's welcome is tumultuous. The Vrídidi, for once, are overwhelmed with emotion. The streets are filled with flowers and banners and screaming, rejoicing people. Prince Mirusiya Tlakotáni enters the High Hall of the Glorious Clan of the Vrídidi and proclaims his ascendancy to the Petal Throne. Thousands cheer him.

If you reach Fasíltum, you deserve the adulation the city showers upon you. As you march between the sand-worn towers in your battered armour, you have a right to pride. It is still a long and arduous road to Avanthár, and the Worm Emperor has thousands more troops. If there is civil war, so be it. You are stricken with awe: you are a part of history.

Instruction: you ask leave to go home and see your relatives. The Prince grants this willingly, though he needs every soldier he can get. You are welcome to return, he says, when you have seen what the Worm has done to the Empire. He bestows a reward upon you for your service. Roll a **D10**: 1-2 = you receive a suit of steel armour and a

sword worth 10,000 Káitars; 3-5 = you are given writs for 10,000 Káitars, a finely chased steel sword, and "The Gold of Glory," the highest award for personal valour the Empire has; 6-9 = if you are not yet a Kási, you are given this rank, plus the writ, the steel sword, and the medal; 10 = you receive the awards listed above for a score of "6-9," plus a small fief (in the foothills of the Chayéngar Range), plus a beautiful Vríddi bride, if you are a man. If you are a woman, instead of the bride, you are offered a handsome husband. Your spouse is spoiled, arrogant, and demanding, but the prestige is great; the Vríddi do not marry their offspring to just anybody, and they'll be insulted if you refuse. Go to Sec. 2.2 and choose a personal name for your spouse, then to other Sections in Part One to discover his/her skills, etc. Your new in-laws provide a marriage gift of 20,000 Káitars with which you are to set up housekeeping. When the wedding is over, you may either join the rôle-playing game, or go to Sec. 10. Your spouse will go along to help you in your future adventures.

B.11. HAIL THE CONQUERING HERO!

Instruction: if you are an adherent of Lords Hnálla, Thúmis, Belkhánu, Hrü'ü, Ksárul, or their Cohorts, or of Ladies Avánthe, Dlamélsh or their Cohorts, continue in this Section. If you follow Lord Sárku or his Cohort, Lord Durritlámish, go to Sec. B.13.

You see the Battle of the Village of Arvér from the other side: your scouts follow Prince Mirusíya's progress, and your forces set up camp to await his coming. Your army's commander, General Ilelmúna hiSharvóya, escaped from the defeat at Dlakár and is bent on vengeance. He goes out to meet the "rebel Prince" and quickly returns to announce that Prince Mirusíya will not meet his terms. You wonder if this is strictly true; General Ilelmúna does not appear to have negotiated very long.

Your array consists of a central block of troops from the Battalions of the Seal of the Worm. This is flanked by contingents from Legions favouring other deities (or none in particular), and also Yán Koryáni and Sa'á Allaqiyáni units. It seems odd to be fighting on the same side as the "Green Beetles," but such are the fortunes of war. You want little contact with your former enemies, however; this you leave to your leaders.

The field at Arvér is an expanse of gravel, low underbrush, and sand. At first you watch Prince Mirusíya's tired, ragged, and sunburned troops tramping towards you; then the dust hides everything more than a man-height distant. The battle begins in an impenetrable, choking white fog, and you are not surprised when you learn later that

Prince Mirusíya has slipped away, presumably back north toward the Desert of Sighs. You are certain that some of his officers went that way: you yourself see General Kánbe hiTuplángte fighting his way out of the battle in that direction. Others are not so lucky, and your prison pens are full of hungry, exhausted captives. The majority of these people will be pardoned and sent home, but those most devoted to Lord Vimúhla will be sacrificed to the Worm Lord, while others will be enslaved and set to work rebuilding the Sákbe-road here in Milumanayá.

Instruction: go to Sec. 11 and fight. Your foes equal a Type 3 opponent. No magic may be used. If you win this combat or lose but are only wounded in Sec. 13, continue in this Section. If you die, you have a fair chance of revivification: roll a D10: 1-3 = you are not revived (sorry!); 4-10 = you are restored to life. Continue in this Section.

You are assigned guard duty in the headquarters tent. You thus hear Mriyán Sikún hiKhanúma, the new commander of the Legion of the Scales of Brown, advise General Ilelmúna to abandon pursuit and let the desert and the nomads take care of the fleeing remnants of Prince Mirusíya's army. If the Prince is with them, he, too, will soon perish. If he has escaped southward, he can be dealt with later. After all, who will aid him? A few thousand arrogant Vríddi from Fasiltum? Some of the disaffected "red"



clans of the west, who are more likely to opt for Prince Eselné in any case? Princess Ma'in Krüthái's depraved sycophants? Everyone laughs, but General llelmúna looks thoughtful.

Your Legion returns to Sunráya and thence through the Pass of Skulls to Thri'íl. You spend the next weeks on the road, going home. You hope that you will be in the party detached to serve in Avanthár itself, but this is not to be: you learn that only Lord Sárku's legionaries are now assigned to Avanthár.

You find your homeland outwardly calm. Food riots erupt in Jakállá, but then, that happens almost every year. The old, conservative clans mutter about a "Sárku Emperor," but there are always grumblers. Sárku's loyalists are slowly replacing officials of the Four Palaces, you note: a scribe here, a functionary there. This, too, is standard whenever a new Emperor takes the throne. The Omnipotent Azure Legion is energetic in apprehending those who blaspheme, criticise, or insult the God-Emperor. Your friends no longer chatter about politics at parties, and the presence of a devout Sárku-worshipper seems required at every feast and celebration — it never hurts to have witnesses who can vouch for your party-loyalty! Yet no one is really afraid. Not that they will admit, anyway...

The news of Prince Mirusíya's safe arrival at Fasíltum amazes everyone. When the Vríddi subsequently declare him a candidate for a new *Kólumèjalim*, you are uneasy. When Fasíltum declares itself an independent state until such time as Prince Mirusíya ascends the Petal Throne, you feel a sense of shock. Such a thing has not happened since the "Time of Many Emperors," back in 2,015 A.S. Some go back even farther, to the "Time of the Usurpers," in 1,699 A.S. Others speak of the Vríddi rebellion of 2,040-1 A.S., and you are astounded to hear that the leader of that uprising, Lady Elára hiVríddi, is free and with Prince Mirusíya! You had thought her dead long since, but it seems that she had been "frozen" with an Excellent Ruby Eye and sealed into a block of adamantine stone in the Lower Catacomb of Silent Waiting below Avanthár. She was expected to remain there for all eternity, but somebody, somehow, seems to have freed her and reunited her with the Prince! You hear also that the two of them plan to marry! This is very odd, in view of the difference in their ages, but then she is physically no older than she was when the Imperium condemned her in 2,341, and Prince Mirusíya, who was a boy at that time, has since grown up to manhood. The marriage is obviously political, anyway.

In the summer of 2,364, the Mu'ugalavyáni strike deep into the two Chákan Protectorates. The Pé Chói region of Dó Cháka is overrun, and Pán Cháka falls. The nonhuman Páchi Léi, who hate the Red-Hats, are slaughtered or forced to flee. Tumíssa, Chéne Hó, and Páya Gupá prove tougher nuts to crack, however, and Prince Eselné returns in time to lower Mu'ugalavyáni morale and compel them to withdraw. The Salarvyáni take the outpost cities of Rü and Fénul in the southeast, and invade the Gilráya forests, but their city-states are so disunited and embroiled in internecine rivalries, that there is little chance of them taking Thráya or Jaikalór.

The real danger is internal. When the "Disposer of Mekú" (as the Governor of that city is called) destroys the local temples of Lords Sárku and Hrü'ü, the threat of civil war becomes urgent. You hear of more riots in Jakállá, Béy Sü, and Ürmish. Emperor Dhich'uné orders his armies both to Fasíltum and to Mekú. Chaos is imminent.

Instruction: your choices are: (1) remain in the army and be sent wherever the Imperium chooses, or (2) request an end to your enlistment — after all, you have served long enough! The latter choice is less restrictive, and you may wish to go home and visit your relatives. You can thus enter the rôle-playing game as a soldier on duty (and go where your gamesmaster decides), or you may join the game as a just-released veteran. Go to the next paragraph.

Instruction: if you leave the army, roll a D10: 1 = you get your mustering-out pay: 2,359 Káitars; 2-3 = you receive your pay, plus a bonus of 750 Káitars for valour; 4-5 = you get your pay and bonus. You have also become toughened by constant physical exercise: add 2-20 (a D10 roll x 2) points to your Height-Build-Strength number in Sec. 6.4; 6-7 = you gain all of the preceding, plus a piece of Milumanayáni jewellery you've been carrying in your knapsack. It is worth 1,000-10,000 Káitars (roll a D10 x 1,000); 8-9 = you gain all of the preceding and are also promoted to Kási, if you do not already hold this rank; 10 = your Legion offers you a post as liaison officer at the (retired) rank of Molkár. You may take up this post in any city you prefer. The pay is 700 Káitars a month, and all you have to do is go over supply requisitions (bribes!) and enlistment papers (more bribes!). This is one way to become rich, fat, and yuppy!

Instruction: go to Sec. 10, unless you prefer to enter the rôle-playing game at this time.

B.12. BAD DAY AT PÁYA GUPÁ

The city of Páya Gupá opens its gates wide to welcome Prince Eselné. The Governor, Lord Díyo

Sáno hiHehésha, declares a holiday, and the Great Square at the top of Armásu Street is awash with ribbons, streamers, and children sporting scarlet headbands. Your Legions march in to the sonorous thunder of the *Tunkúl*-gongs and the skirl of flutes. Soldiers loyal to Lord Karakán or Lord Chegárra find the sight of so much grey a bit odd, but the sect of Lord Thúmis has always been popular here. You are reassured to see two priests in the vestments of Lord Karakán coming down the grand staircase before the Palace of the Realm. Prince Eselné greets these men as friends and introduces them to the Legion: they are *Mriyán* Túlkesk Kázha hiMawár, the Ritual Preceptor, and *Mriyán* Arizáshte hiChaishyáni, the head of the temple administration in this region. *Mriyán* Túlkesk is the elder of the two, but he has a round, jolly face, while *Mriyán* Arizáshte is gaunt, dour, and smells of ink and dry account-books. A third priest in grey robes is introduced as the Patriarch of the temple of Lord Thúmis: *Tsémel* Gámalu hiBeshyéne. He is in his middle years, slender, greying, and rather nondescript for one who wields so much authority. He salutes your Prince gravely, and then all of these high persons enter the Governor's palace.

You are assigned accommodations in what smells like a grain warehouse, and after a pleasant supper you are summoned to your officer's bivouac. "Guard duty," he tells you. "First watch. Behind the High Prince's dais in the great hall of the grey-robes' temple." You have just time to burnish your armour.

Somebody has to do guard duty, you suppose, but you wish it were not you, especially tonight when the city is festive and eager to reward you for your service to the Empire. You pick a *Semétl* of your best troops and tramp through the flower-bedecked streets to Lord Thúmis' pyramidal temple on the highest hill in this hilly little city. Chamberlains, priests, and two *Semétl* of temple guards greet you at the outer gate, and a pair of grey-robed maidens (who do not appear at all grave or serious) escort you inside. You are to take position behind the highest dais, where the gilded emblem of the Seal looms above the daises. You station ten of your soldiers along the rear of the dais, put four beside the one door, and keep six with you to watch over Prince Eselné from about a man-height away. The Prince knows you from long campaigning and nods to you before turning to the guests coming up to bow to him: a mixed bag of officials, priests of most of the Lords of Stability (and a few from the temples of Lady Dlamélisk, Lord Ksárul, and Lord Hrü'ü to boot), soldiers, clan-elders, foreigners, nonhumans, and other notables. You stand as stiff as though

frozen with an Excellent Ruby Eye, and focus upon those closest to the Prince.

Tsémel Gámalu hiBeshyéne and his entourage enter and make their way slowly up the stairs, chanting and censuring the air with smoking thuribles as they come. A score of boys and girls step forward to pile grey-green Tetél-flowers at the Prince's feet. One, a tall lad with a clear tenor voice, recites stanzas from what purports to be an epic poem in the Prince's honour. The hymns and incense are enough to make a stone idol swoon, and it is all you can do to repress a sneeze. The temple of Thúmis is famed for its singing, however, and the grey-robes must have their day.

A solemn cadence of drums signals the entrance of the contingents from the temples of Lords Karakán and Chegárra. What a splendid sight they make in their scarlet cloaks and silvered armour! You watch, a trifle dazed by the fragrant smoke, the heat of the foot-thick candles in their tall candelabra, the stuffiness of hundreds of bodies so close together, and the endless, droning formality.

Dinner is served, but you must remain a statue until you are relieved. The Prince has a taster, of course: a little man from his staff who tries all food and drink first before allowing it near his master. You idly watch him picking here, nibbling there, taking tidbits from each dish. There are so many that one bite of each ought to bloat the fellow like a blowfish! A priest of Lord Karakán sits close by as well; he is the Prince's house-mage and doubtless has set up a long-lasting spell to detect poisons. You let your eyes go shut, almost drowse off, then wake with a silent curse.

Guests come up to the high dais to bow, kiss the Prince's muscular hand, and wish him well. This is the boring part of the evening. You have seen celebrities with fingers rubbed raw with too much kissing and squeezing and shaking. Ah well, the price of glory!

You emerge from your reverie to see the Prince staring fixedly at one of *Tsémel* Gámalu's entourage. A tall, slender priestess is just backing away after kissing the Prince's fingers and making her obeisance. She is pretty in a rather demure and intellectual way. Her eyes are lengthened with enough black *Tsúnure*-paste to paint a Shén warship, however: her make-up is so overdone that she appears comical! These provincials! She is with a score of Thúmis priestesses in similar attire, and were it not for her choice of cosmetics, she would be unexceptional.

Prince Eselné looks at his hand as if it hurt him. Then he purses his lips, knits his brows, and rubs his

heavy jaw. At last he asks, "Do I know you, Lady?"

The priestess looks a trifle flustered. She shakes her head and moves back into the throng. Her companions giggle. You do not hear her reply.

"Yes — yes — I recognise you — are you not — ?" A grimace crosses Prince Eselné's bluff, handsome features. Without warning, he clenches his fists, then slowly topples over sideways to sprawl full-length upon the figured carpet. His high-crested helmet rolls to a stop by your feet.

Pandemonium!

Priests, soldiers, guests: some people rush toward the Prince, while others flee in the opposite direction. A girl trips on her long gown and tumbles down the stairs to bowl over a delegation of clansmen below. A woman screams; Tséme! Gámalu shouts for aid; the Preceptor of the temple of Karakán flourishes his great sword and threatens death to any who touch the Prince; your guardsmen form a tight wall around the topmost dais and await orders.

The house-mage and the taster are kneeling beside Prince Eselné, each screaming accusations of negligence at the other. You yell for attention, then have your soldiers pick the Prince up and carry him swiftly to an antechamber behind the dais. He is still breathing, but his eyes are closed, and his cheeks are pallid and yet dewed with perspiration.

"The woman!" you snap at one of Tséme! Gámalu's staff. "Who is she?" It takes long moments before the man understands whom you mean.

"Lady Sitláya, I think — Sitláya hiHehéshe, the Governor's clan-sister, Sir — newly returned from Béy Sü, or rather from her post in Usenánu." The fellow is so rattled he cannot get his story out. "A noble woman of our own Clan of the Grey Cloak —"

"Arrest her!" you snarl at your *Heréksa*, Kágesh hiQuródu. He snaps his fingers at two troopers and dashes away.

"Allow me!" You look to see Tséme! Gámalu. He is accompanied by a half dozen clergy, physicians, and scholars. You are minded to forbid him access to Prince Eselné — all outsiders are suspect — but you cannot. You sigh and make room for them.

"Rule out poison!" the taster squawks. "I ate everything the High Prince did!"

"No question of venoms, toxins, spells, curses, or other foreign bodies!" the house-mage declares with equal vehemence. "I swear this upon my head!"

"No weapon touched him," you add. "What, then?"

A short, thick-set man shoulders his way through. You recognise Kéttukal hiMraktiné, the Prince's First General. Other officers are arriving, too. You explain the situation.

"Lord Sáрку's 'Worms of Death'?" General Kéttukal puzzles. He shakes his head. "No, they putrefy the flesh within moments —"

Another officer, General Ekuné hiBosúga of the Legion of Lord Khariháya, interrupts: "Look at him! He's dying!"

It is so. Prince Eselné's broad features have taken on a greyish cast. His breathing is slowed, and his limbs have gone limp. You turn to Tséme! Gámalu. "Get your best sorcerer here — with a spell of Revivification ready on his lips! Hasten!"

"He's already here, soldier" the Patriarch replies. An elderly priest behind him steps forward and bows.

Someone else forces his way through the crowd to squat beside you. It is your *Heréksa*. "We've taken the woman, Sir," he murmurs. "Will you come and see?"

You go with him, tramping through halls and corridors crowded with wide-eyed, panic-stricken people. As you go, a small, rather stocky girl comes racing toward you from a cross-corridor. She flashes you a look that could be fear, apprehension, hatred — or a mixture of several emotions. She wears a loose-cut, black *Hnelésh*, the universal poncho-like woman's garment of the west. Black is favoured by Lord Ksáru!l's devotees, but you do not think she is a priestess. You see — and hear — heavy, silver jewellery as she runs by. You shout to her to stop, but she pays no heed.

Instruction: for all you know, the girl could be just a guest. You lack the troops to detach a squad to follow her. If you ignore her and continue on your way, go to Sec. B.14. If you follow her, go to Sec. B.15.

B.13. PEEK-A-BOO, I SEE YOU!

The God-Emperor, Hirkáne Tlakotáni, died near the end of 2,363 A.S. and Prince Dhich'uné held his *Kólumèjalim* a few weeks later. Even before this, the Emperor-to-be had been withdrawing units of troops

loyal to Lord Sárku from both fronts, regrouping them near Thri'íl and Aukésa and Avanthár itself.

Instruction: you may choose to remain to fight Prince Mirusíya at the Battle of Arvér: return to Sec. B.11; or you can be one of those sent home: continue in this Section.

The city of Béy Sü has a festive air: flowers, processions, incense, largesse for the poor, public feasts with huge casks of beer and cheap wine broached by torch light and drunk until dawn, columns of soldiers tramping behind their gilded and bejewelled standards, priests garbed in ceremonial vestments and wearing plumed headdresses, clan delegations attired in colourful liveries, officials riding high above the crowds in palanquins festooned with wreaths and ribands, the thunder of the *Tunkúl*-gongs day and night, paper lanterns, displays of magic, entertainers, singers, jugglers, puppeteers, and all the panoply of the Gods themselves!

The overweening hue, however, is yellow: the colour of Lord Belkhánu, death, and the transition to the paradises of the Isles of Teretané. This is the culmination of the funerary rituals of Hirkáne Tlakotáni, "the Stone Upon Which the Universe Rests," the sixty-first Seal Emperor of Tsolyánu.

You did not arrive in time to see the *Kólumèjalim* itself. People tell you that Prince Dhich'uné entered the temple of Lord Hnálla with all the pageantry of an Engsvanyáli Priestking. There he declared his intention to "accept the Gold," laid the traditional sword, book, simple white headband, and purple *Diél*-fruit upon the altar, faced toward each cardinal point in turn, and four times summoned any rival to appear. Each time the response was silence. When no challenger came forward, the priests of the Lords of Stability and those of the Lords of Change proclaimed him Emperor in an hour-long antiphony. Further rituals followed that lasted another twenty-four hours. Then the Council of the Priesthoods came forth from the temple to declare to the waiting populace that Prince Dhich'uné Tlakotáni had passed the rites of the Choosing of Emperors. Some folk cheered, and the worshippers of the Worm Lord rejoiced openly, but others stayed silent.

Prince Dhich'uné's formal coronation took place in Avanthár. He was led through the Jade Arch, said to guarantee a person's fealty to the Empire, and thence to the Hall of the Petal Throne where he gazed upon the outside world for the last time and announced his "throne name": "Eternal Splendour." He was then conveyed by chanting servitors of the Court of Purple Robes and the Lords of the High Chancery to

the Golden Tower, where the Servitors of Silence received him. He will never emerge from that place again until someday, like his father, Hirkáne Tlakotáni, he is carried out to his own funeral. Thus it is with the Emperors of Tsolyánu. The Petal Throne is not a seat for the weak or indolent.

When your unit arrives, you are assigned barracks and set to helping the city guards control the crowds, stop brawls, and keep order. These are not tasks for soldiers, you think, but they are important now. You settle into the routine, and soon you feel at home.

Imperial funerary rituals are both time-consuming and complex. Once all is complete in Avanthár, the embalmed body is carried down the Missúma River on a great barge to Béy Sü to be handed over to Lord Belkhánu's hierophants. The final rites are performed on a day judged astrologically auspicious in the Tlakotáni mausoleum in the City of the Dead on the east bank of the river. Crowds dressed in yellow follow the procession as far as they are permitted; yellow candies are given out to the children; professional mourners weep, cry, tear their hair, and flog themselves with scourges made of reeds; and at night there are magical illuminations, singers, and recitations of hymns. The *Tunkúl*-gongs drone a mournful threnody, and muffled drums accompany the cortege to the cavernous entrance to the tombs below.

You wonder why the temples of your Worm Lord and his Cohort are not more central to these rituals. After all, it is your two deities who rule the halls of Death. Your priests tell you that Lord Sárku deals only with the sad relics of death in this world; the Afterlife belongs to those who see to the transmigration of the Spirit-soul in the World to Come. One of your friends also tells you that the bodies of the Emperors are never permitted to decay, kept fresh both by chemicals and magic, and hence the Worm Lord is never allowed to feast upon Imperial flesh. He laughs: "What a repast there will be when our Emperor Dhich'uné opens the tombs of Stability and lets our Master in!"

As an officer in one of the Worm Lord's Legions, you are assigned to the escort provided by each of the twenty temples to convey the catafalque bearing the Emperor's body into the Underworld. You are given a magnificent suit of copper armour, hardened by a secret process almost to the consistency of steel, a halberd with five odd-shaped, curving blades, and a *Kü'núr*: a copper dagger used in your rituals. You are bathed, censed, oiled, and painted with bone-white pigment. Then you and two full *Semétl* of your comrades march in swaying, chanting procession to

the wharves where skull-helmeted oarsmen row you across the Missúma River to the City of the Dead. Priests of Lord Sárku in brown and others in the brown-and-purple robes of Lord Durrilámish are awaiting you. These take the lead as you proceed to the forbidden sector of the Necropolis where the entombment is to take place.

Slaves load the golden sarcophagus of the God-Emperor onto a wheeled bier hung with blue and gold, and the priesthoods assemble to accompany it. The last rituals on the surface are performed, and all begin the descent into the Underworld.

The stone walls slant down; the flooring changes from paving blocks to natural stone; the bas-reliefs of gods and heroes on the walls and ceilings change subtly from a modern style to those of earlier eras. History is reflected in art: the Engsvanyáli occupied Béy Sü for millennia; before them the kings of the First Imperium ruled it for millennia more, and the carvings show this.

Trapezoidal corridors branch off here and there; some of these are guarded by priests of Lord Qón, fearsome in their strange, canine-looking masks. The larger chambers hold wonders: huge sculptures of gold and glass and crystal, lead-wrapped standards of long-dead Legions, and statues of Gods and Aspects and heroes now lost. From a great distance you hear the winding of the gigantic horn, two man-lengths long, named "The One Who Is Mournful of Life." This is a thing of your temple, and it will not be silent until after the God-Emperor has been laid to rest. You descend a long, circular stair, cross halls in which the each stone of the mosaic floor lights up as your party sets foot upon it, and march on into echoing tunnels covered with splotchy alien growths that seem to turn to watch you as you pass by. Priests of Lord Wurú, garbed in purple and mauve and wearing hoods of black velvet, hold up ritual symbols, and the white-robed hierophants of Lord Hnálla who lead your party halt to recite litanies and brandish emblems of their own. This is all ceremony, and you trudge on, into a world without light.

At the mouth of a semicircular passage more priests await. These are attired in vestments of silver brocade, and upon the breast of each is a black circle with a central round dot that flickers and changes colours as you look at it. Who these people are is a mystery to you. Lord Hnálla's delegation recites words in unison in an unknown tongue, and the strange priests silently retreat into their corridor.

The guardians of the tombs emerge to meet you as well: grey, bulbous Thúnru'u, squat Hrá, rotting Shédra, and other Dwellers in the Dark. The flying Undead, the Vorodlá, swoop out over your head as you come into a high-domed cavern. It is your delegation's turn to chant and utter incantations.

At last the mighty bronze valves of the Portal to the Land Beyond Life lie before you. Hymns are sung, and the gates sigh open to admit you into the precincts of the mausoleum itself. Passages stretch away before you, along which you see many doors sealed with drippings of lead and imprinted with the Necropolis' stamp. Each door leads to a tomb complex of its own. You follow in silence as slaves wrestle the heavy bier on to its appointed place. The singing and the drums go silent, and even the lanterns seem somehow dim. Candles burn like malignant orange eyes upon an altar by the entrance. Here the slaves who accompany the cortege will later be sacrificed to keep them from reporting what they see.

The tomb chamber itself is bare: a square room hacked out of eternal stone. The sarcophagus is placed upon a pedestal in the centre of the floor. You have a feeling of uneasiness, a yearning to be done and out of this place so far beneath the surface. You are used to ceremonies and sacrifices in the Underworlds — such things are usual in your temple — but yet you sense a closeness here. It is difficult to stand motionless while the sacerdots complete their rituals. Then it is time for the slaves who carried the God-Emperor hither to be sacrificed and their bodies given to the Dwellers of the Dark. This is custom.

One of the slaves suddenly breaks free, looks wildly in all directions, and darts this way and that. He cannot get by the priests and soldiers, however, and scrambles blindly back into the tomb-chamber. The stiff ritual dissolves into confusion as the priests cry "Shame!" "Catch him!" and "Sacrilege!" Your officer gestures for you to take your squad and go after the fellow.

"There he is!" hisses your *Tirrikámu*, Garón hiKái-kodlan. You see a figure moving in the darkness. "Hó! Get him!"

One of your troopers goes left, a second to the right. You advance right up to the sarcophagus, fearful that he rascal may climb up on it or leap over it.

The slave's head appears on the other side of the golden cartonnage. You move to stop him, calling to your comrades to seize him from both sides.

As you reach the sarcophagus you see something so amazing — and horrifying — that you stop in your tracks, eyes wide and mouth open. A tiny section of the gilding seems to have fallen away, showing black beneath. You cannot help but squint at it.

It is not just a defect in the modelling. It is a hole.

The torch light reflects a gleam from something on the other side.

It is an eye. It blinks at you.

So amazed are you that your breath goes out of your lungs in a great gasp. You stumble, skid into the base of the pedestal, and fall to the floor.

"Got him!" crows one of your soldiers. You hear scuffling. You get up, sword out, pointing to the massive golden coffin.

"It's — there's a — !"

Several priests, officers, and necropolis officials are beside you. The escaped slave is being hauled back out of the room toward the altar outside.

"What did you see, soldier?" The speaker beside you is a priestess of Lord Ksárul. She slips off her heavy mask of dark wood, and you see that she is very lovely. She has a heart-shaped face and long tresses bound with silver cords. She smiles at you. "What was it? The slave's been caught."

You suck in cold, musty air. "Lady, I saw an eye — a human eye — looking at me through a chink in the God-Emperor's sarcophagus! I know it sounds insane, but I swear this is true!"

She dimples prettily and lays slim fingers over yours. "La! Not insane, but a trick of the light! How could such a thing be? In a few moments this chamber will be closed forever with lead seals that will last for all eternity." She pulls you down to sit upon a stone bench in the corridor. "Let me see. You may have hit your head."

"No, no, Lady. I saw what I saw." You resist her attempt to remove your flanged copper helmet.

Lines of annoyance appear between her brows. "Then come. Let us look at the sarcophagus together!" She calls out to one of the priests, a stout man in Lord Grugánu's black and purple robes. He snaps an order, and the functionaries by the tomb door stand back.

She takes your hand and leads you inside. There is now no sign of an aperture in the moulding of the coffin. A secret peephole could be there, of course, but if so, it is now closed, and in the flickering lantern-light it is impossible to tell if it exists.

"You see? Nothing!" The girl leads you back out again, and the tomb guards resume their task of shutting and sealing the heavy door. She turns to you. "I am skilled in healing, soldier. If you have fears, dreams, or strange impressions, seek me at Lord Ksárul's shrine." If you are a man, her pose and tone hint that her assistance could consist of more than just counselling. She is very beautiful. If you are a woman, you think this lady may have many contacts in the upper reaches of Tsolyáni society. She could be useful.

"Your name and lineage, Lady?"

She brushes her hair back from her widow's peak. "I am Kalusü hiViridáme, of the Hand of Darkness Clan. Usually I dwell in Jakálla, but my temple sent me here for the God-Emperor's funeral." She prepares to don her demon-mask again.

"I shall assuredly come to visit you, Lady," you say. She squeezes your hand and is gone. The funeral is over. You follow your comrades back to the world above.

***Instruction:** if you visit Lady Kalusü hiViridáme, go to Sec. B.16. If you decide to tell your own priests of what you saw, go to Sec. B.17. If you choose to do nothing, go to the following paragraph.*

***Instruction:** roll a D10: 1-3 = you receive 1,569 Káitars as mustering-pay. Go to Sec. 10; 4-7 = you get the mustering-out pay, plus an offer of employment in the Palace of the Realm: the Emperor's newly appointed Supervisor of City Security requires a young person with military experience to keep track of criminal and treasonable acts in your area. The pay is 650 Káitars per month, plus "inducements." Go to Sec. 10; 8-10 = as a reward for your service to the God-Emperor, you are granted a small fief in the Kraá Hills, near the City of Sárku. You also receive your mustering-out pay, of course. Go to Sec. 10.*

B.14. BUSSED TO DUST

Your trooper leads you to a tiny, square chamber near the outer entrance. The priestess, Sitláya hiHehéssha, sits upon a stool, bound hand and foot with strips from her own grey vestments. Her clan-brother, the Governor, stands beside her, arguing vociferously with two of your soldiers.

"Release her! I command it!" He waves a beringed fist under your nose. "By whose authority do you treat her thus?"

"My Lord, a Prince of the Empire lies near death," you explain carefully. "This lady was there. He recognised her. She seemed shaken. When he collapsed, she fled."

"A natural reaction — !"

"Does she always wear so much make-up?"

"What? What does — ?" The Governor peers at the woman in surprise. "Sitláya, why — ?"

She smiles resignedly. "He would have known me and become suspicious. He must have remembered what we once were to one another. He did not keep our troth but turned to others."

"You sought to slay an Imperial Prince out of jealousy?" you explode. Such a thing is inconceivable! Emperors and Princes have the right to use common mortals as they deem fit!

Lady Sitláya gives you a crooked grin. "Not really, although that was part of it. No, I did what I did for the good of the Empire — so that there may not be civil war!" She licks her upper lip and lowers her head. She trembles, then starts to slide off the stool. One of your men puts out a hand to catch her, but she is dead before she reaches the floor.

The Governor goes to her, then backs away in horror. Her skin is turning grey-white and becoming dry and flaky. Even as you watch, her limbs shrivel, her lips shrink away from her teeth, and her flesh crumbles from her bones.

"The Grey Hand!" one of your soldiers gasps. He makes the lightning bolt sign of Lord Karakán across his breast.

"How can that be?" you retort. "That spell is privy to the temple of Lord Wurú. None other knows it!"

The Governor kneels beside his clan-sister, his features a cold mask. "They did this! They killed her!"

You whirl upon him furiously. "Who? Who did it?"

He stares blindly up at you. "She believed. She truly believed. The Empire cannot tolerate three rivals for the Petal Throne. Your Prince — brave though he is — is not of the stuff of Emperors —"

Your sword is out of its clip, but one of your troopers is faster. The soldier's fist takes the Governor on the side of the head just as your weapon slices down. All you hit is Lord Díyu's shoulder-pauldron. "Damn you!" you grate. "A plot! Treason! My Prince is worth ten of the other heirs — and a hundred Sárku-kissing vermin like you!"

The Governor makes no answer but cradles the corpse of his sister in his arms. The dry bones are already little more than dust.

"Kill him, Sir?" your trooper asks tonelessly.

"No — no. We have to find out what they did — who is in on this plot — what they used on our Prince — !"

You hear footsteps in the passage and turn to see *Tsémel Gámalu*, General Kéttukal, and several strangers entering the room. You tell them what has happened.

"Soldier," General Kéttukal says with formal dignity, "know that Prince Eselné Tlakotáni is dead. None of the Thúmis priests' incantations could restore him." His voice does not quiver at all, but his lips bely him. This man loved his Prince well, indeed.

Instruction: go to Sec. B.18.

B.15. WHAT DID YOU TSÁI?

The girl disappears around a corner. You and two of your soldiers follow, but she has vanished. An arras painted with scenes of gentle Lord Thúmis hangs all along one wall. You send one of your men dashing back, then follow more slowly, lifting the tapestry as you go.

A whirl of action erupts at the far end of the corridor, and your trooper lets out a surprised yell that turns to a howl of pain. A lithe, black-garbed figure slips through his outstretched arms and bolts past him. When you reach the man, he has one hand clapped to his cheek. Ruefully, he says, "Scratched me, she did, the bitch! Stuck me with something — a cross between a dagger and a long pin!"

"Just pray it wasn't poisoned!" you tell him helpfully. You do not stop but take your remaining soldier and go after the fugitive.

You rush through a long, tunnel-like passage, into a room where frightened guests stare as you go by, down a flight of stairs, then into a short corridor

leading down into the cellars. In a place like this you'll never catch her if she gets into the subterranean storerooms.

"There!" your man puffs. "There, by that door!" He is right: you see the girl tugging furiously at a heavy, bronze door-handle.

"Surrender, woman!" you shout. "You can't get out!"

She whirls on you, teeth bared. "Leave be, soldier! It will be better for you!" She pulls at her braided hair, and her long tresses tumble down around her shoulders.

"Something in her hand, Sir!" the soldier warns. You send him around to one side, and you take the other.

***Instruction:** go to Sec. 11 and fight. Since there are two of you, the girl counts only as a Type 2 opponent. If you lose, you should be ashamed of yourself! She leaves you and your soldier on the floor of the passage and escapes. You never find out what she had to do with this matter. In disgust you resign your commission and leave the army. Go to Sec. 10. If you win the combat, roll a D10: 1-2 = she swallows something and goes into convulsions. Her body dissolves into dust, and she cannot be revived. Go to Sec. B.14; 3-8 = you prevent her from committing suicide, but she wounds you with her long stiletto. Go to Sec. B.14 for now, but you die from slow-acting poison the next day. Your Legion has you revived so that you can tell what happened, but you know very little. Go to Sec. 10; 9-10 = you capture her after a hard-fought battle. Continue in this Section.*

It takes both of you to pin the girl. She is not tall, but she is strong and skillful. Your soldier jerks her arms behind her back. "Shall I give this little *Zrné* a twist or two, Sir?" he asks harshly.

"No. Leave that to the professionals." Devotees of Lord Karakán and Chegárra do not enjoy causing pain; heroic battle is their preference.

You turn to the girl. "Your name?" She does not answer.

Your trooper tightens his grip on her wrists. "Come, girl, tell us who you are and how you figure in this mess!"

At last she says, "I am Tsái Sédla Nréku, an officer in the army of Sa'á Allaquí. Let me go, or there will be an international incident."

You fumble at her waist and drag her belt-pouch free of its loop. You flip it open with one hand and dribble its contents out upon the rough stone floor. You see what you are looking for: the invitation that admitted her to this feast tonight. There it is, a folded document written on *Hruchán*-reed paper with the dove-grey seal of the temple of Lord Thúmis at the top.

"'Lady Lithéni hiKarélsa,'" you read. "'Of the Clan of Dark Fear, from the city of Khirgár.' Is this your real name?"

"She ain't no Sa'á Allaquíáni!" your soldier opines. You are inclined to agree.

"Talk!" you order harshly. "My Prince lies near death tonight, and you had some part in it. Do you speak to me or to the Emperor's interrogators? They will be less kind, I assure you."

"Now you know my real name," she answers at last. "You cannot save the Prince. I tried to get to him in time, but the Thúmis priestess was faster and better placed."

"You meant to save him?"

"I would have succeeded, but I was too late."

"How did the Thúmis woman do it? What did she use?" It may still be possible to revive the Prince with either medicine or sorcery.

"*Onúmish*-leaves — from Mu'ugalavyá. She painted her lips with a tincture of the stuff."

"Cha! Then why did she herself not die?"

Your captive shrugs ruefully. "She remembered not to lick her lips. They were also coated with fuzzy *Sitáa*-spines from the Layóda Swamps — they're like tiny, invisible needles. The poison must be injected into the bloodstream. When she kissed the Prince's hand, the spines punctured the skin, and the poison entered his body."

At last you understand. "We must get to him! He may be dead or dying!"

"You're too late. *Onúmish* takes only seconds."

"Revivification? A spell or an Eye...?"

"Unless the grey-robles had the presence of mind to use an Excellent Ruby Eye on him at once, he will be

a heap of dust by now. If they put him into stasis, there is a bare chance."

You're off, up the passage before she is finished speaking. "Hurry!" you call back to her. Your soldier follows.

As you go, you remember one more question to ask this girl: "You — what's your part in it? Who are you?"

She sweeps her hair back from her forehead and matches your speed easily. "Omnipotent Azure Legion. — Not Emperor Dhich'uné's swarm of vermin but the old Legion, the one Prince Mridóbu built. I served him — and my deity, Lord Hrü'ü — before the coup. Now I work at the behest of Lord Murésh hiQolyélmu, the Head of the Intelligence Arm."

That strikes you as wrong. "How can that be? Both Prince Mridóbu and Lord Murésh vanished the night Prince Dhich'uné's seized Avanthár — it's common gossip."

"Not all the coins ended in Prince Dhich'uné's purse." She gives you a sideways look. "Some landed very far away, even on the Southern Continent!"

You suspected as much, but it is reassuring to hear it. Lord Murésh was — is — a noble servant of the Empire.

Instruction: go to Sec. B.18.

B.16. A LADY OF QUALITY

The Lady Kalusü hiViridáme occupies elegant quarters in the residence wing of the temple of Lord Ksáru. Patterned hassocks of red, black, and blue fabric lie scattered about on carpets of costly pearl-grey *Mnór-fur*. An ancient bronze vase stands in one corner, and low tables, ewers, brass lamps filled with perfumed oils, books, and statuary occupy the rest of the space. You know that she is a linguist and translator for the temple of Lord Ksáru, and this suite seems rather fancy for a person holding such a post. Perhaps she is independently wealthy?

A manservant ushers you in, seats you on a dais, and proffers cushions and bolsters for you to lean against. At last Lady Kalusü enters. If you are a man, she poses artfully by the door, waiting for you to appreciate her dark beauty. She is tall, slender, and wears almost nothing that matters: a twist of midnight-blue *Thésun-gauze*, a collar of sapphires set in silver, bracelets from wrist to elbow (in which you see a tiny arm-knife in a jewelled sheath), armlets, a girdle of

silver brocade, and sandals to match. Her long tresses are done in a long twist of silver cord, sapphires, and tiny rubies. She watches you expectantly.

Instruction: roll a D10: 1-2 = you spend a pleasant evening, but she is too sophisticated and not your type. You see her home and return to your barracks. The next day you go home on leave. Go to Sec. 10; 3-7 = you have a wonderful time. You take her out to one of the finer food-clan hostels for a very expensive dinner, then home again. She is as accomplished as any devotee of Lady Dlamélis, and she seems just as impressed with you. In the morning you take your leave, ruefully consider that this little party has cost you nearly 650 Káitars, and stagger home to your barracks. Go to Sec. 10; 8-10 = as just previous, except that you are both so smitten with each other that you hate to part. She tells you that it is not often that she meets a man who can keep up with her intellectually, emotionally, and sexually. She invites you to stay with her for a few days, but you have to report back to your barracks. A message awaits you, telling you to return home. Go to Sec. 10.

If you are a woman, Kalusü greets you warmly. She is dressed as described in the next to the last paragraph above, and she explains that she has an appointment to see a man "who is very dear to me." She invites you along. "He has lots of men friends," she adds archly. "Rich ones, handsome ones, strange ones — whatever you desire."

Instruction: roll a D10: 1-4 = Kalusü serves a delicious dinner, and the two of you attend several large parties where she seems to know everyone. She introduces you to a dozen handsome males: priests, soldiers, officials, merchants, clan-leaders, playboys, etc. You have a good time and return to your barracks. The next day you go home. Go to Sec. 10; 5-8 = as just previous, except that you meet two men who attract you: Lord Chushánu hiSenkólum, the son of the Governor of the City of Sárku; and Lord Mriyél hiChánkölun, who owns a fief east of Jakálla, and who tells you he collects rare gems and jewellery. Both of these men are handsome, cultured, and obviously impressed with you. Lord Mriyél hints that he would like to drape you in the bridal jewels of an Engsvanyáli queen, while Lord Chushánu just sits and stares at you from eyes that would set a stone statue afire. Lady Kalusü leaves you to enjoy yourself and disappears. You may choose whichever suitor you wish — or neither. You then return to your barracks. You may see these two noblemen again in the rôle-playing game. Go to Sec. 10; 9-10 = Lady Kalusü takes you to a discreet little house not far from the Governor's Palace in Béy Sü. There she introduces you to her "special friend": a bearded, balding man who at first seems too old for her, but then you decide that she herself may be older than she looks. Silent servants bring wine, dinner, and brandies, and at some

point another man joins you: a huge, muscular, sun-bronzed giant who speaks with a Yán Koryáni accent. He is also somewhat older than you are used to, but he makes up for this in jollity — and later on in performance. Lady Kalusü quietly vanishes with her friend, and you do not see them again this night. You never hear the names of either of these gentlemen, although you think you hear Lady Kalusü call her friend “Fíru” — or something like that — it means nothing to you. As the sun rises, you are borne back to your barracks in a covered palanquin. The next day you are given leave to go home. Go to Sec. 10.

Instruction: whatever happens with Lady Kalusü, after this night you no longer have any recollection of seeing an eye peering at you from inside the Emperor’s sarcophagus. La! What a silly idea!

B.17. A NEST OF WORMS

The council chamber in the subterranean labyrinth below the temple of the Worm Lord is lit by candles guttering in copper brackets along the walls. The tiers of daises are unoccupied, however; the scribes’ palettes and writing cases lie scattered unattended on the rich carpet upon the floor, and the carvings and images of the Worm seem to watch you covertly from stony eyes. You are apprehensive. It is not every day that a young soldier is summoned to meet with the Inner Chamber of the High Temple.

There are four men on the highest dais at the back of the chamber. The stooped, elderly priest on the left is *Tsémel* [“Patriarch”] Chánkoru híTlélsu, of the Black Stone Clan from Avanthár. Next to him sits an even more elderly man: *Tiritlén* [“Grand Adept”] Churmegásu híTlélsu, a clan-relative of Lord Chánkoru’s and the highest ranking scholar known to you. A third, *Tsémel* Ge’éru híTukkolén of the clan of the Open Sepulchre, represents the temple of Lord Durritlámish. He is in his forties, tall, and so dignified that he appears either frozen or dead. The fourth is *Jáshten* [“Grand Adept”] Uqétme híDautlésa of the clan of the Glory of the Worm, who comes from the City of Sáрку and is now the master of the temple here in Béy Sü. He seems nervous, fumbling with papers, running a hand through his shock of white hair, picking at his robe, and changing position.

After what seems an unconscionable delay, *Jáshten* Uqétme lays down his pen and squints at you nearsightedly. In a voice like rustling leaves, he says, “Please tell your story again, soldier.”

“My Lords,” you begin, “there’s really little to it. I saw — thought I saw — an eye looking at me



through a peephole in the God-Emperor’s coffin. I’d have investigated further, but —”

“We understand. The time and place were not right.”

“And that slut, Kalusü híViridáme, was there to stop him,” grunts *Tsémel* Ge’éru. “The fact that she was there—!”

“Yes, yes. That could be coincidence...”

“And the pebble in my shoe could be the Egg of the World! Cha!”

Another man slips unannounced into the chamber. He is very tall and balding, with eyes set in deep sockets under thick eyebrows. He says, “Pardon, Lords. I’ve been checking.”

“Well, well, noble Jayárgo?” *Tsémel* Chánkoru steeples his fingers. “Anything?”

The newcomer speaks in a dark, rich voice: “I’ve been out exploring Béy Sü. It is amazing how little people really know about their government.”

Old Lord Churmegásu looks up. "Heh! Just finding that out now?" He cackles.

"My Lords, I have done my best...If there is—information about certain persons— I have not come upon it yet."

"You have heard this soldier's tale?"

"Enough of it. He may have been mistaken —"

"Or he may have seen — something."

"As you say. How can we check further? If a certain person did hide in the sarcophagus and thus escape from Avanthár, how will we ever know? The mausoleum is in the care of the temple of Belkhánu, and it is sealed as tight as Lord Ksárul's Blue Room!"

"Speaking of which," *Jáshten* Uqétme interjects, "we hear Lord Ksárul's priests grow ever closer to Lord Belkhánu's sect. Cheek-by-jowl — bedfellows —"

"Spare us the anatomical details of what logically comes next," old Churmegásu says. "Aye, some factions within the black-robés' temple favour us, while others have come to love the colour of yellow."

"Yellow gold," *Tsémel* Ge'éru sneers.

"Not necessarily. If — ah, a certain person in Páya Gupá does as planned, neither Lord Ksárul's nor Lord Belkhánu's temples will be left with an Imperial heir who suits them! Then it's either the Flame Prince or us. They won't have either."

"Let them go abroad, then, for their health!" Lord Churmegásu snorts up laughter.

The others ignore him. Jayárgo rises, bows, and goes out. At last *Jáshten* Uqétme remembers you. "Thank you, soldier," he says. "We shall investigate your report."

You salute and depart.

Instruction: go to the last two paragraphs in Sec. B.11 and follow instructions there. You may resign from the army at this time.

B.18. THERE MAY BE LIFE IN THE OLD BOY YET!

"She's lying!" General Ekuné snaps. "Hand her over to the torturers — or to the Thúmis priest, here. His

mind-bars will scan her brain as a child thumbs through a book!"

"My Lords, I do not lie," Lady Lithéni says. She extracts a ring with a blue gemstone from her pouch. "Here: the emblem of the Omnipotent Azure Legion. It is magically imbued, as you know, and cannot be forged or copied."

"It can be stolen, though," observes General Kéttukal drily.

"We waste time. There are other conspirators. At least you grey-robés had the sense to put the Prince's body into magical stasis."

"A not uncommon practice," *Tsémel* Gámalu says, somewhat smugly. He looks down at his hands clenched in his lap. "But how do we revive him? The poison acts not unlike the spell of the Grey Hand: the interplanar matrix of the body is dissolved, and without this it is impossible to refill the physical mould with matter from the Planes Beyond —"

Lithéni leans forward. "My Lords..." Some of the others glare at her; after all, who is she to interrupt when mighty persons are speaking?

"Let her speak," General Kéttukal says.

She gives him a grateful look. "There is a sage in your own temple, *Tsémel* Gámalu: a *Badrágu* [High Adept of the Powers] named Ejél hiKaráktu, of the clan of the Golden Bough. He is from Jakálla, I think. He has studied the art of regeneration and revivification more than any other scholar."

Tsémel Gámalu looks a trifle miffed, but he conceals it. "I know the man well, of course."

"We — in the Omnipotent Azure Legion — had heard he was working on certain machines of the Great Ancients that can take as little as a few particles of flesh and rebuild the interplanar matrix."

"Exactly what spells and Eyes of Revivification do," *Tsémel* Gámalu says. "The Great Ancients had not mastered our psychic powers but were tied to instruments and devices."

"I know. Their machines were not as flexible as our spells, but they were perhaps more detailed and precise. Where we need a good sized piece of a body to revive, their technicians required only a few specks. — So *Badrágu* Ejél hiKaráktu says, anyhow."

"Where is this mage now?" General Ekuné hiBosúga puts in.

"Near Jakállá, at an archaeological site. At least that's where he was two months ago."

"Bring him!" General Kéttukal orders. "Use a nexus point, an underground tubeway car, an aircar — whatever it takes to get him here quickly!"

You turn to Lithéni. "You know this man? You can find him?"

"Of course —"

"Then you're taking us to him. Now."

"In the meantime what do we do about the Prince?" Tsémel Gámalu worries. "He was to have attended feasts, ceremonies, private meetings with clan leaders?"

General Kéttukal fixes him with an icy stare. "Think of something. Exhaustion. A heart attack. A sudden passion for solitude. — A sudden passion for some woman!"

You take Lithéni's arm and signal to your Heréksa. "Jakállá!"

Instruction: roll a D10: 1-2 = the priests of Lord Sárku intercept you on the way to Jakállá. Go to the following

paragraph; 3-8 = you reach Jakállá safely, but you must travel from there to the archaeological site to find the priest. [This adventure will be released in a future volume.] 9-10 = the next day you learn from Lithéni's contacts that the Badrágu Ejél hiKaráktu is already on his way to Béy Sü, bringing some of the artifacts from the excavation with him. The temple of Thúmis summons him at once, and within a few days he reaches Páya Gupá, thanks to the ancient tubeway car system. He goes into conference with Tsémel Gámalu, and in three days' time he employs his instruments on the Prince's body. You are not present, but you hear from others that the Prince is up and around as usual the following day. You vow a sacrifice at the next annual "Celebration of Splendid Victories."

Instruction: you are ambushed in an underground tubeway station by a large party from the temple of Lord Sárku. You, Lithéni, your Heréksa, a wizard from the temple of Thúmis, and five soldiers must fight. Go to Sec. 11. Altogether, the enemy count as a Type 5 opponent against your group. If you win, collect an Eye of Frigid Breath (17 charges, a counter with numbers in Tsolyáni) from one of the corpses. You also find an amulet of protection against the Undead, and Lithéni discovers a golden disc — the sort used to send tubeway cars to various destinations. You go on to Jakállá to seek the Thúmis priest. [This is an adventure in another volume.] If you lose, you and Lithéni and the rest are unceremoniously slaughtered and left as snacks for the Dlaqó-beetles in the Underworld (Regrets!). General Kéttukal and Tsémel Gámalu will send another party soon, so all is not lost.



17. REJOICE, FOR THOU ART WITH THY LORD!

Of all the callings, that of the priesthood is perhaps the easiest. It offers an agreeable life, if you don't mind getting up at all hours for the various prayers; you rarely miss a meal; you don't break your back at hard labour; you are not often in danger of wounds or death; and you need not fear losing your job. Most of the Tsolyáni sects permit their clergy to live a normal life: hold political office, marry, raise children, own property, and have whatever slaves and concubines they wish. Males, females, and various friendly nonhumans are acceptable as clergy. Only the temple of Lady Dilynála, the virginal Cohort of Lady Avánthe, does not enroll males (of any species) and discourages marriage and sex. See Part One, Sec. 3, for the Gods and Goddesses of the Tsolyáni pantheon.

Those with a religious bent (or who just enjoy the thrill of mysterious doctrines, the pageantry of the ceremonies, and the excitement of the sacrifices) become ritual priests. Seekers after knowledge find their niches in the scholarly branches of their temples, and those who love handling other people's money, tithes, deeds, writs, and investments achieve fulfillment in their sect's administrative wing.

Within each of these three "divisions," members are ranked in "Circles." A beginner joins as a *Kengyél* ["Acolyte"] and eventually becomes a *Shártó* ["Priest"]. Subsequent ranks, Tsolyáni names, and minimum Circle requirements are listed in Table 17.1.

Priests and Lay-Priests who practice sorcery have their own ranks, based upon the kind of enchantments they use. Ranks, Tsolyáni titles, and minimum Circle requirements are listed in Table 17.2.

"Circles" do not correspond with "magic-user levels" (i.e. skill levels of "sorcery"; see Sec. 8.5) or of priestly knowledge (Sec. 8.3); they are ranks within the temple hierarchy. If you do well and impress your superiors, you can expect to be promoted one Circle about once every year or so.

For those who love wearing fancy armour and leaning on a halberd, the temples also provide temple guard units. These have a properly military appearance but do not often have to undergo the hardships required of real soldiers.

Instruction: examine your statistics, abilities, and skills. If the profession of priest/priestess appeals to you, you may enter one of the four branches of your sect's clergy: ritual, administrative, scholarly, or temple guard. See Sec. 8.3 (and S.8.2 for an example). Temple guards (both male and female) are essentially warriors. After obtaining one or two skill levels of "priest" (Sec. 8.3), they choose their skills from Secs. 8.6 and 9.3.8. They may also have a modicum of "soldier" skills (Sec. 8.4).

Instruction: All priests and priestesses begin with much the same curriculum. Go to Sec. C.1. Temple guards also go to Sec. C.1 for their first year.

TABLE 17.1: PRIESTLY RANKINGS AND TITLES

RITUAL BRANCH	ADMINISTRATIVE BRANCH	SCHOLARLY BRANCH
Junior Priest: Su'umél; 2	Junior Priest: Su'umél; 2	Scholar: Kusijákto; 2
Priest: Shártó; 3	Priest: Shártó; 3	Senior Scholar: Kusijáktosa; 5
Chief Ritual Priest: Rashángto; 8	Temple Commandant: Njáshte; 8	Ranking Scholar: Kusijáktodáli; 7
High Priest: Qusúnchu; 10	District Commandant: Hrugash; 10	Licentiate: Jokálto; 9
Grand High Priest: Hrugash; 12	Senior Commandant: Otlú; 12	Proctor: Qùrupengáto; 11
Ritual Preceptor: Mriyán; 15	Administrative Preceptor: Mriyán; 15	Great Proctor: Qùrupengátodáli; 16
Patriarch: Tsémel; 16-17		
Lord Adept: Jáshten; 19-20		
Grand Adept: Tiritlén; 20-30		

TABLE 17.2: SORCEROUS RANKINGS AND TITLES

TITLE, NAME, AND CIRCLE	TITLE, NAME AND CIRCLE
Minor Spell-Caster: Shátun; 2	Commander of Energies and Powers: Chagún; 11
Illusionist: Nyélme; 3	Great Wizard: Tselinál; 16
Seer: Rusalá; 5	Necromancer and Master of Demons: Hnéshtu; 21
Higher Spell-Caster: Bálash; 7	High Adept of the Powers: Badrágu; 26-30
Caster of Enchantments and Controls: Durún; 9	Supreme Adept: Dolkólun; 31-up (Perhaps only one per century!)

C.1. PRAY, BROTHERS, PRAY!

The following description is roughly the same for all of the twenty temples, although details differ.

You spend your first dismal six months as an Acolyte. You are charged with a variety of fascinating duties: washing pots in the scullery, cleaning latrines, holding candles at ceremonies, trying to sing (or at least hold a note) in the temple choir, making beds, and serving food in the common refectory. In your spare time you study, study, study in your temple's academy. The First and Second Circle clerics treat you like dirt, while those of higher ranks ignore you as though you were furniture. You sweat and swear and somehow muddle through.

At last you are initiated into the First Circle. About a hundred of you are bathed, attired in simple robes of your deity's colour (Part One, Sec. 3), anointed with oils and perfumes, and led in solemn procession through the outer halls to the great upper shrine of your God. The flaring torches, the incense, the sculptured friezes of gods and demigods, the chanting, all conspire to awe any last-remaining doubts out of you. Tonight you stand before the Presence Itself. You hardly remember when your turn comes, and you are led by senior priests and priestesses to fall flat on your face before the mighty, lamp-lit, golden image of your God. Syllables flow over your head like water over a fish, and when you are finally escorted back to your group, your knees are as rubbery as *Gudái*-stalks.

Afterward your comrades hold the traditional party, with much wine, food, and rejoicing. Your clansmen come to congratulate you and admire your new vestments, while family servants ask your blessing (an old tradition in the Empire), and your elders pile gifts into your arms and rejoice.

Instruction: if you have already achieved the First Circle of your temple's priesthood, go directly to Sec. C.2.

Instruction: if you have not yet reached the First Circle, go to Sec. 9.2 and acquire another year of "academic" skill levels. Choose either ritual or administrative "priest" skills from Sec. 8.3. You may also add "hobby skills" from Sec. 9.3.10. You must invest at least a quarter of your skill units in "knowledge" skills: Secs. 8.1, 8.2, 8.5, 9.3.9, and 9.3.10. At this time, you may invest no more than one quarter of your skill units in "sorcery" (Sec. 8.5).

Instruction: roll a D10 and add 6 to the score. This is the number of months you remain in the First Circle. You may then apply (or hint!) for a promotion.

Instruction: to gain promotion, add your Intelligence, Comeliness, and Charisma scores (Secs. 6.3, 6.7, and 6.8) together and average them (i.e. divide by 3). Find this number in Table C.1.1 and roll a D10. Before you roll, you may add an "inducement" to aid success: for every 2,000 *Káitars* you give the temple, you apply a +1 to your D10 score. Use only your personal funds (Part One, Sec. 4.3), or money you have acquired in your adventures in Part Two of this book.

TABLE C.1.1: PRIESTLY PROMOTIONS

INTELLIGENCE-COMELINESS-CHARISMA RANGES					
D10	01-60	61-80	81-90	91-95	96-100
1	Expelled	Failed	Failed	Failed	Failed
2-5	Failed	Failed	Failed	Passed	Passed
6-8	Failed	Failed	Passed	Passed	Passed
9	Passed	Passed	Passed	Passed	Honours
10	Passed	Passed	Passed	Honours	Honours

Instruction: if you pass, go to Sec. C.2. If you fail, roll a D10 and add 6 to find the number of further months you must stay in the First Circle before you may try again. (Be sure to keep track of your age.) Then roll a D10 against the foregoing table, as above. If you are expelled, or if you fail three times, you must leave the priesthood. The temple has enough problems without you! If you have money (roughly 5,000 *Káitars* per year), you can go on learning "knowledge" skills, but not "sorcery," no matter how great your psychic talents!

Instruction: if and when you are promoted to the Second Circle, go to Sec. C.2. Temple guards go to Sec. C.5.

C.2. UPWARDS...!

Your studies progress apace. You make friends — and some enemies. Life is busy but placid.

Instruction: if you hope to become a ritual priest, you study the ceremonies, dogma, and other academic skills that interest you. Administrators follow their own "ladder" in Sec. 8.3. Scholars must now devote one half of their skill units to "priest" skills, and the other half to "sorcery," a language, or other "knowledge" skills of their choice. Temple guards must use at least one half of their skill units to buy "warrior" skills, one quarter to purchase "soldier" skills, and the remaining quarter to obtain whichever academic or priestly skills they wish.

Instruction: repeat Sec. C.1. "Inducements" now cost 4,000 *Káitars* for every +1 to your die score. You can use your own money, but your clan may also help you: roll a D10: 1-2 = your clansmen pay nothing. They feel you are

better fitted for a post of broom-jockey in the clanhouse; 3-7 = your clan pays 4,000 Káitars; 8-9 = your clan pays 8,000 Káitars; 10 = your clansmen pay 12,000 Káitars to the temple on your behalf. If you fail, you may try twice more. Roll as in Sec. C.1 to determine how many months you must spend between each attempt. If you fail three times, you must leave the temple: try some other profession!

Instruction: when you have achieved the Third Circle, go to Sec. C.3.

C.3. ...AND ONWARDS!

Your next period of temple service is more of the same. You memorise rituals, join in the daily ceremonies, take your turn in the squad sounding the *Tunkúl*-gong, go to classes, study, and debate the finer points of theology with your comrades. Temple life is not all work, of course: there are festivals, feasts, parties, and private get-togethers in somebody's rooms in the dormitory. (The priesthood of Lord Thúmis is accomplished at a *capella* folk-singing.) All of the temples except that of Lady Dilinála are co-educational and offer opportunities for dalliance. Nobody minds, as long as the young ladies chew *Lisútl*-root, which prevents the addition of unwanted priestlets to the flock.

Instruction: repeat Sec. C.1. Inducements now cost 5,000 Káitars for every +1 to your die score, but your clan will pay 15,000 Káitars, giving you an automatic +3. They don't want to lose their original investment! Roll in Sec. C.1 to see if you are promoted to Fourth Circle. If you fail, roll to see how many months you spend at this level, then try a second time. If after a third attempt you are still unsuccessful, you are not expelled but are given a post in some small town or village and allowed to eke out your existence as a rural priest or priestess. Say farewell to the big city!

A scholar priest of the Third Circle who fails to win promotion is still allowed to study "sorcery," but he/she/it cannot continue in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and must become a "Lay-Priest": an unattached mage who lives outside the temple and works as a "house-mage" for a noble family, as a "chaplain" in an affiliated clanhouse, etc. (Those who do make their promotion roll are also permitted to become "Lay-Priests," if they wish. This makes it easier to "adventure" since such people are not bound by temple duties and commands.)

Instruction: go to Sec. C.4.

C.4. HERE'S YOUR MAGIC DECODER RING!

Every human organisation divides itself into factions. Within the temples of the Five Empires, such groups often manifest themselves as secret societies: recondite associations, each of which possesses its own rituals, texts, doctrines, and objectives. You hear about certain of your sect's secret societies almost as soon as you enter the priesthood, but you see nothing of them. The external trappings of power — the High Priests, Adepts, and Councils — are very visible, but you sense that these are not all. This is particularly true in the clergy of Lords Ksárul, Hrü'ü, and their Cohorts. Members of those faiths perceive a hollowness and superficiality in their "outer" hierarchy; there are "inner" doctrines — and a whole structure of administration — that remain unseen. As the priests of Lord Drá say, "Like the many veils that conceal the Celestial Face of Lord Hnálla, layers upon layers of 'mysteries' exist which are manifest only to those who find the Way." Secret societies recruit both men and women, humans and nonhumans, temple priests, lay-priests, and temple guards (in the sects of Vimúhla, Karakán, and their Cohorts, as well as in the martial Sisters of the Cerulean Flower of the temple of Lady Dilinála).

Secret societies also play a rôle in the four major political parties of the Empire: the Imperial Party (mostly officials and bureaucrats); the Priestly Party (the clergy of various temples); the Military Party (officers of the Legions); and the old Royalist Party (aristocrats and wealthy lineage-members descended from Engsvanyáli and Bednálljan nobility). These constantly vie for power, and the secret societies support one or another — or sometimes more than one — faction as events demand. Some secret societies also transcend temple boundaries; this is particularly true between the temples of a God and his/her Cohort, but a few are still more widespread. For example, the Incandescent Blaze Society of the temple of Lord Vimúhla extends beyond the borders of the Empire into the Flame Temples of Mu'ugalavýá.

When you join a temple, you are watched. If you are "society material," some senior member will ask if you would like to join. You may then accept and undergo indoctrination. If you refuse, you will be mind-barred (with or without your permission) to keep you from informing, but you will not be harmed otherwise.

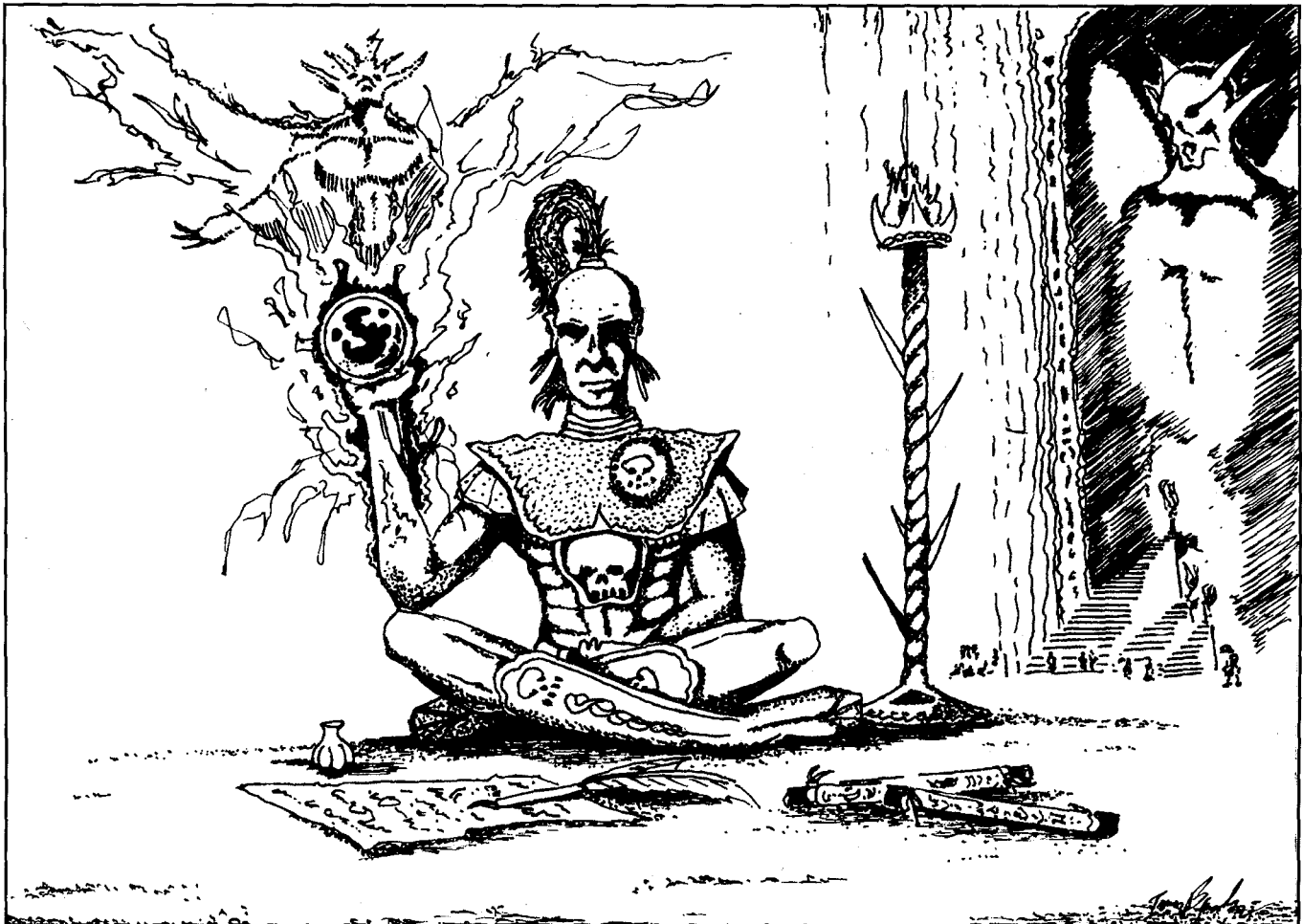
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SECRET SOCIETIES

DEITY	SOCIETY NAME AND D10 TO BE RECRUITED	OBJECTIVES
Hnálla	(1) Crystal of Pure Light Society (1-7)	Triumph of Stability through pacifism and scholarship; a-political otherwise
	(2) Companionship of Scintillation (8-10)	Service to the Emperor and the Priestly Party; devoted to the Doctrine of Ultimate Light
Karakán and Chegárta	(1) Clan of the Sword of Righteousness (1-6)	Martial glory, bravery, loyalty to the Empire; powerful in both the Royalist Party and the Military Party
	(2) Brethren of Scarlet (7-10)	Warlike, powerful in the Military Party; favourable to Prince Eselné
	(3) Righteous Ones of the Arcing Shaft	Open to all archers, crossbowmen, slingers, and artillerists. Ancient and traditional order devoted to archery and missile weapons. Serves Órkutai the City-Destroyer, the 14th Aspect of Lord Karakán; loyal to Prince Eselné
Thúmis and Keténgku	(1) Brotherhood of Supernal Wisdom (1-4)	Triumph of Stability through the dissemination of knowledge; not political
	(2) Guild of the Scroll of Grey (5-10)	Strong support for the Priestly Party; use knowledge to further social goals
Keténgku only	Staff of Mercy Society	Open to all followers of this deity. Healing and medicine; wisdom used for the sake of philanthropy, aid to the poor, and the betterment of the world
Avánthe and Dilinála	(1) Girdle of Purity Society (1-7)	Environmental issues, active in the Priestly Party; supports economic and agricultural improvement
	(2) Company of the Eye of the Storm (8-10)	Extremely secretive, esoteric doctrines; non-political; emphasis on sorcery; Dilinála members are all lesbian mystics
Dilinála only	Sisters of the Cerulean Flower	Activists who collaborate with the more martial elements of Lord Karakán's Sword of Righteousness Clan; made up of fanatic Aridáni warriors
Belkhánu and Qón	(1) Sect of the Golden Sphere of Eventual Transcendancy (1-4)	Like Avánthe and Thúmis; this sect urges a middle course of priestly activism; loyal to its patron, Prince Rereshqála
	(2) Group of the Amber Glow (6-10)	Theological and doctrinal studies, the Afterlife, the Planes Beyond, and the Journey of the Soul
Hrú'ü and Wurú	(1) Cusp of Night Society (1-8)	Change through secret, strong action; supports the Priestly Party and Lord Ksáru's Ndálu Clan (see below)
	(2) Crucible of Purple Destiny (9-10)	Mystical, non-political, hostile to Stability; seeks radical, random change
Vimúhla and Chiténg	(1) Incandescent Blaze Society (1-6)	Strong political action; supports Prince Mirusiya and the Military Party; sometimes works with Lord Karakán's Sword of Righteousness
	(2) Company of the Resplendent Flame (7-10)	Purity through the Flame, asceticism, retreat from society; non-political
Chiténg only	Company of the Orange Band	Violent, sadistic orgies together with members of the temple of Lady Hrihayál; political activism in support of the old Royalist Party

SECRET SOCIETIES continued

Ksárul and Grugánu	(1) the Ndálu Clan (1-3)	Political power through intrigue and enlightened self-interest; supports the Priestly Party
	(2) Society of the Blue Light (4-7)	Personal aggrandisement through knowledge and intrigue; abhors politics
	(3) Refulgent Blue Curtain Society (8-10)	Wisdom kept secret until it can be used to free Lord Ksárul from the Blue Room and return him to supreme authority over the universe; mystical and otherworldly
Sárku and Durritlámish	(1) Copper Tomb Society (1-8)	Allied to the Ndálu Clan; supports Emperor Dhich'uné and the Dark Trinity (Sárku, Ksárul, and Hrü'ü); favours violent political action
	(2) Brotherhood of the Victory of the Worm (9-10)	Doctrine, ritual, and ceremony with the Undead in the catacombs; little interest in this world; non-political; secretive; deals with Demons
Dlamélish and Hrihayál	(1) Society of the Emerald Radiance (1-6)	Hedonistic sensualism; enjoys the most orgiastic pleasures of this life; non-political. See also Chiténg, above
	(2) Society of the Emerald and Silver Crown (7-9)	Hedonism, as just above, but also political activism in favour of the Ndálu Clan; supports the Priestly Party
	(3) the Order of Argent (10)	Devoted to rituals and worship of the Demons of the Planes Beyond; little interest in this world



Actually, you may not want to belong to a secret society; this limits your freedom of action, and you may be given dangerous missions or sent off to perform tasks that take you away from what you want to do. This is up to you. If you do join, you must be prepared to obey without question, particularly in the more “activist” societies of the temples of Change.

Instruction: if you have reached the Fourth Circle and wish to join a secret society, roll a **D10** to see if you are approached: 1-6 = yes; 7-10 = no. If yes, make a second D10 roll to see which of your sect’s societies it is. In the following table, a D10 score is given after the name of each society in a deity’s sect; this is the chance you have of being asked to join that society. If you are not recruited now, or if you are recruited by a society you do not wish to join, you may roll again at about six-month intervals, even after you have joined the rôle-playing game.

Instruction: at this time, too, you may begin to invest skill units in a secret language, if your sect has one: see Sec. 8.2. These are: *Thu’úsa*, used by the priesthoods of *Hnálla*, *Avánthe*, *Belkhánu*, and their Cohorts; the *Tongue of the Lord of Worms*, employed by priests of *Lords Sáрку* and *Durrilámish*; and the *Tongue of the Priests of Ksáru*, used only by his clergy (and a few members of the “inner temple” of *Lord Grugánu*). *Zna’yé*, the ancient tongue of the devotees of the Goddess of the Pale Bone, is open to anyone, but there are few texts, and it is mostly lost. (It is said that there is one mad scholar who lives on the Isle of Eyes, in the southern oceans, who knows this language. This may be only rumour, of course.)

Instruction: if you are a temple scholar or a Lay-Priest who has chosen “sorcery” as your specialty, go to Sec. C.6. If you are a ritual or administrative priest, or a temple guard, this is as high as you can go in this book. Go to Sec. C.7.

C.5. SOLDIER OF THE FAITH

Temple guard units are organised like army Legions: cf. Sec. 16, ff. In comparison with “real soldiers,” however, temple guardsmen tend to be wealthier, softer, less disciplined, less well-trained, and less prepared to fight. Much of their work consists of directing traffic during festivals, standing watch at gates, breaking up occasional fights, acting as bodyguards for senior temple functionaries, dealing with pickpockets and minor criminals in the temples, wearing fancy armour, and leaning on halberds while looking heroic. These posts are sinecures for those who like pretty costumes and little work! A few temple guards are indeed trained for the dangerous task of defending the labyrinths

that surround the hallowed, ancient shrines in the Underworlds.

Instruction: return to Sec. 9.2. and obtain further skills. You must spend one quarter of your skill units on “warrior” skills and one quarter on “soldier” skills (Secs. 8.4 and 8.6). The other half may be invested in “knowledge” skills, languages, and/or “priest” skills (Secs. 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3). Hobbies (Sec. 9.3) are also available to you. You may not study “sorcery.”

Instruction: go to Sec. C.1 and roll for promotion as detailed there. You may add “inducements,” if you wish. If you succeed, you are promoted to *Tirrikámu*. If you fail, roll for the time you must spend before trying again. If you fail three times, you may remain in the temple guard, but you will never be promoted unless you perform some feat of great valour! Otherwise you can stay on as a glorified door-stop for the full twelve-year enlistment. After the first year, you may not obtain further “knowledge” skills, although “warrior,” “soldier,” and “priest” skills, plus languages (Sec. 8.2) and hobbies (Sec. 9.3), remain open to you.

Instruction: if you achieve *Tirrikámu*, wait one game year (repeating Sec. 9.2); then go to Sec. C.2 and try for promotion. If you succeed you become a *Heréksa*. After another year, you may attempt to become a *Kási*; go to Sec. C.3. You may obtain further “warrior” and “soldier” skills, plus hobbies, but all other subjects are now closed to you. If you fail, you will not be promoted any farther.

Instruction: temple guards of the rank of *Heréksa* or higher are eligible to join one of the secret societies. If you wish to do this, return to Sec. C.4. Then go on to Sec. C.7.

Few temple guards go higher than *Kási* since promotion to senior ranks in temple guard units depends upon money, patronage, and priestly favour. You may use your averaged Intelligence-Comeliness-Charisma number in the rôle-playing game to make friends with priests of the upper echelons, persuade your clan to give you money (often 30,000 *Káitars* or more for a Captaincy!), and use political favours and gentle blackmail to gain promotion to *Molkár* and *Dritlán*. In many temples the highest guard posts — and also generalships of temple-supported Legions — are reserved for ritual and/or administrative priests of the rank of *Mriyán* [“Preceptor”] or higher. If you go up either of those ladders and wish to obtain a temple guard generalship, you must approach clansmen, friends, and patrons during the rôle-playing game.

Instruction: when you have reached the highest rank you can, go to Sec. C.7.

C.6. IT'S MAGIC — AGAIN!

As a scholar-priest interested in "sorcery," you must first complete the basic curriculum of rituals, dogma, and other topics. You must have mastered at least fifteen of the spells in Sec. 8.5. Now you want to learn some of the more powerful incantations open to junior-level students. The spells listed below are still only part of the total spell corpus; you are not yet eligible to learn the most difficult "Universal" spells, the higher "Generic" spells shared by your temple and others, and certainly not the secret "Temple" spells known to your sect alone. For these, you must enter the rôle-playing game. You may use skill units gained in Sec. 9.2 each game year (up to a

maximum of three game years) to buy spells from the following lists. Spells marked "A" are "aggressive" (= weapons); others are non-aggressive "utility" spells, useful in the rôle-playing game. Spells do not take a year to learn, of course: it is assumed that you work at other duties at the same time.

(1) UNIVERSAL SPELLS

Each of the following UNIVERSAL spells costs THREE SKILL UNITS to master. You must buy all lower levels of a spell before going on to acquire a more advanced one (cf. Sec. 8.5). When you have obtained at least FIVE of these spells, you may go on to buy "Generic" spells (which cost FOUR SKILL UNITS apiece) from

TABLE C.6.1: UNIVERSAL SPELL LIST

SPELL AND COST	RITUAL/PSYCHIC	DESCRIPTION
Ascertainment 6* (90)	Psychic	Communicates telepathically with one member of the caster's own species within a 100 foot circle; an unwilling target gets a saving throw; lasts 5 minutes
Clairvoyance/Clairaudience 5* (75)	Psychic	Sees into darkened rooms, chests, etc.; hears very faint sounds through walls 3 feet thick; 60 foot range; lasts 3 minutes
Control of Self 4* (60)	Psychic	Halts bleeding from a wound; allows the caster to hold on to an object and not let go because of fatigue; lets the caster hold his breath for the duration of the spell; caster only; lasts 30 minutes
Domination 5* (70) A	Psychic	Gives delicate control over 1 being of the caster's own species for 3 minutes; a target will give guidance, open chests or doors, etc. but nothing very complicated; 60 foot range; instantaneous; a target gets a saving throw
Elicitation 3 (50)	Psychic	The caster holds a bit of some homogeneous substance in his hand and is guided to more of the exact same substance within the spell's circle of effect; 30 foot range; lasts 3 minutes
Elicitation 6* (90)	Psychic	Sees into an opaque object and detects its contents or workings: e.g. an area around a trap, the locking mechanism of a chest; does not inform the caster how the device works if he/she does not know; 10 foot range; lasts 1 minute
Elicitation 7* (110)	Psychic	Detects drugs and toxins within a substance and whether these materials are life-threatening; this spell is not more specific; 10 foot range; lasts 1 minute
Favouring* (80)	Ritual	Cast before a fight, it replaces 2-20 (1 D10 x 2) body damage points (Sec. 6.5) in advance as they are lost by the caster or by 1 target during combat; touch range; lasts 1 hour
Healing 8* (120)	Ritual	Heals and restores one lost limb, eye, or other body part. It does not act upon damage due to disease, drugs, starvation, thirst, poison, etc.; touch range; instantaneous; permanent
Invisibility 6* (80)	Ritual	1-5 targets (including the caster if desired) within a 6 foot circle become completely invisible for up to 4 hours. Targets cannot move out of the circle without becoming visible again; may be used to hide inanimate objects

the second list below. At that time you become a Fourth Level magic-user (see Sec. 8.5). When you have at least TEN spells from either or both lists in

this Section, you become a Fifth Level magic-user and should enter the rôle-playing game at once. You have passed beyond the scope of this book.

TABLE C.6.1: UNIVERSAL SPELL LIST continued

Light and Darkness 5* (65)	Ritual	Throws a beam of light (or darkness, if desired!) up to 50 feet illuminating an area 6 feet in diameter; the caster can move and fight normally but must use one hand to hold the beam; lasts 10 minutes
Nutrition 6* (80)	Ritual	Creates simple, nourishing food and drink for 1-10 persons (roll a D10) of the caster's species; lasts 10 minutes (or until the food is consumed)
Phantasms 3* (45) A	Ritual	Creates 1-5 (roll a D10 ÷ 2) human-size or smaller apparitions; they cannot move out of the 10 foot circle of effect and make no sound; they wave weapons and look ferocious; if touched, they vanish; foemen must roll a 7-10 on a D10 to perceive that these are not real; 5 foot range in front of caster; lasts 2 minutes
Robustness 3* (45)	Ritual	Lightens a burden of a maximum weight of 300 pounds so that it feels like 50; caster can only use this on him/herself and cannot engage in combat or cast other ritual spells while using it; useful for carrying off wounded comrades; lasts 5 minutes
The Seal Upon the Powers* (160)	Ritual	A globe of glowing particles surrounds the caster and others within a 30 foot circle; no ritual magic may be cast inside this shell, and none may enter from outside; the caster can move, fight, and cast psychic spells normally, but this shell does not move with the caster, nor can a second "Seal" be cast while the first one is in effect; lasts 3 minutes; takes 1 minute to prepare
Soporiferousness 4* (55) A	Ritual	Causes 1-5 (roll a D10 ÷ 2) targets to sleep for 1 hour; 90 foot range; instantaneous; targets get saving throws
Sphere of Impermeable Quiescence* (170)	Psychic	This is the psychic counterpart of the Seal Upon the Powers; no psychic spell can be cast within it or penetrate it, although ritual magic, missiles, blows, etc. are unaffected; 30 foot circle; lasts 3 minutes; takes 1 minute to prepare
Terrorisation 4* (60) A	Psychic	Terrifies 1-5 targets (roll a D10 ÷ 2) for 5 minutes; victims flee screaming in fear; instantaneous; 90 foot range; targets get saving throws
Transportation* (140)	Ritual	Transports the caster and 1-5 human-sized targets within 5 feet of him/her back exactly 300 feet to the location previously occupied by the caster. An unwilling target gets a saving throw. Only items carried (i.e. up off the floor and not attached to anything) by the caster and the targets go along; instantaneous; unwilling targets get saving throws; takes 1 minute to prepare
Web of Kriyág the Lover of Spiders 5 (65) A	Ritual	Hurls a net of tangling webs at 1-5 (roll a D10 ÷ 2) targets, causing them to lose 1-2 minutes (roll randomly for each) as they struggle to get free; 30 foot range; instantaneous; targets get saving throws
Zoic Domination 4 (55) A	Ritual	Controls 3 semi-intelligent creatures or 1 very large creature for 3 minutes; 90 foot range; instantaneous; targets get saving throws; does not work on androids, automatons, or Undead
*Either no other levels exist or intermediate levels of these spells exist but are not included here.		

(2) GENERIC SPELLS

Space prevents the listing of more than a few "Generic" spells. "Aggressive" (=weapon) spells are again marked A." These spells are available to "Fourth Level" magic-users or higher. An abbreviation is given after each spell's name, indicating those temples which may acquire the spell. These abbreviations are:

"Hn" = Hnálla/Drá

"Ka" = "Karakán/Chegárra

"Th" = Thúmis/Keténgku

"Av" = Avánthe/Dilínála

"Be" = Belkhánu/Qón

"Hr" = Hrü'ü/Wurú

"Vi" = Vimúhla/Chiténg

"Ks" = Ksáru/Grugánu

"Sa" = Sáru/Durritlámish

"DI" = Dlamélísh/Hrihayál

Instruction: if you are a temple scholar, when you have spent a maximum of three game years learning spells, go to Sec. C.7.

TABLE C.6.2: GENERIC SPELL LIST

SPELL AND COST TO CAST	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Acceleration 8 {Hn Be Ka Vi} (110)	Psychic	Gives the caster or 1 target within 5 feet triple speed; touch range; instantaneous; lasts 2 minutes
Adornment 1 {Av DI} (30)	Ritual	Makes the caster or 1 target more handsome or beautiful; roll a D10 x 2 and add the score to the target's Comeliness number (Sec. 6.7); touch range; lasts 5 minutes
Aeriality 6 {Hn Th Av Be Hr Ks DI} (80)	Psychic	Caster and 1-5 (roll a D10 ÷ 2) targets rise as high as 60 feet and fly at 300 feet per minute for 5 minutes. Instead of "passengers," the caster can raise a weight of 400 pounds instead. The caster and comrades can melee normally and use psychic magic, but not fire missiles or employ ritual spells; spell is cast in a 10 foot circle around the caster; lasts 5 minutes; an unwilling target gets a saving throw
Benefaction 9 {Hn Th Av Be Hr Ks D} (140)	Ritual	Restores expended "psychic energy points" (the total of your Intelligence, Psychic Ability, and Psychic Reservoir; cf. Sec. 6.6); the target (the caster or 1 other) gets D100 x 3 points back for further spells but not more than his/her original total; 3 foot range; instantaneous; lasts 12 hours or until used, whichever comes first
The Blade of Inexorable Dissection 3 {Ka Vi} (50) A	Ritual	Creates a one-handed long sword of ruby-hued light which the caster or 1 target can use; it adds 2 skill levels of long sword but may be dispelled by Disenchantment; 3 foot range (from the caster to a comrade); lasts 1 minute
Comprehension 3 {Hn Th Hr Ks} (50)	Psychic	Caster speaks, reads, and understands one spoken human or nonhuman language (except Miháli); touch range; lasts 5 minutes; target gets a saving throw if he/she does not want to be understood
Derangement 2 {Hn Be Hr Sa} (40) A	Psychic	Causes 1-5 (roll a D10 ÷ 2) targets to become temporarily insane; the gamesmaster determines the actions of the victims; 60 foot range; instantaneous; lasts 1-10 minutes (roll a D10 for each victim)
Dessication 3 {Av Hr Ks Sa} (45) A	Ritual	Dries up the fluids in one affected body part (roll randomly); hitting the head causes a coma that lasts 1-10 days; a hit on the torso or abdomen paralyzes the target for 2-20 (2D10) days; and a hit on a limb withers it permanently (unless restored by a spell of Healing 8); 60 foot range; instantaneous; target gets a saving throw
Doomkill 8 (Hn Ka Vi) (110) A	Ritual	Creates a noisy, brilliant explosion; slays all targets within a 10-foot circle who fail their saving throws; even if the target succeeds, he/she/it loses 1-10 Body Damage Points; hitting requires a D10 roll: 1 = the spell explodes at the caster's feet, killing him (a random saving throw may be allowed); 2-3 = the spell falls short by 5-50 feet (roll a D10 x 5); 4-7 = the spell hits the target area; 8-10 = the spell overshoots by 5-50 feet; 250 foot range; instantaneous; takes 1 minute to prepare; targets get saving throws

TABLE C.6.2: GENERIC SPELL LIST continued

Far-Seeing 1 {Ka Vi} (25)	Ritual	Provides the caster with a “telescope”: objects 300 feet away are seen as though only 3 feet from the caster; blurs the caster’s vision at close range, however; caster only; lasts 1 minute; takes 1 minute to prepare;
Guarding 6 {Hn Th Be Hr Ks Sa} (75)	Ritual	Creates a 60 foot magic-proof circle around the caster; no magic can enter, although both ritual and psychic spells can be cast inside of it; physical beings, blows, and missiles can go in or out; androids, the Undead, and creatures created by sorcery cannot enter or leave; the circle does not move with the caster; touch range; lasts 6 hours; takes 5 minutes to prepare; can be dispelled by Disenchantment
Hands of Krá the Mighty 2 {Av Be Sa Dl} (40) A	Psychic	Seizes 1-5 targets in invisible pincers; a saving throw is allowed, but even if it succeeds, the target loses 1-10 Body Damage Points; 60 foot range; instantaneous
Healing 4 {Ka Th Av Be Vi Ks Dl} (55)	Ritual	Heals caster’s wounds, as well as those of 3 human-size beings (or 2 larger beings) within 10 foot circle of the caster; instantaneous
Missile of Metállja 6 {Th Ks} (80) A	Psychic	Hurls a silent bolt of psychic force at 1-5 targets; the caster may choose whether to slay or only stun the targets; 120 foot range; instantaneous; targets get saving throws
Necromantic Domination 4 {Th Ks Sa} (55) A	Ritual	Gives fairly detailed control of 1-5 Undead; targets will give guidance, perform simple tasks, and fight for the caster but will not fight other Undead or “commit suicide”; 90 foot range; instantaneous; lasts 2 minutes; targets get saving throws
Radiant Gaze 3 {Ka Vi} (45) A	Ritual	Fires a hissing blast of flame that slays 1-5 targets unless they make saving throws; also sets fire to inflammable materials in an area 10 feet in diameter; 120 foot range; instantaneous
Silver Halo of Soul-Stealing 6 {Be Hr} (80) A	Ritual	Sends a glittering circle of energy to strike 2 targets and take their souls away into the Unending Grey; victims become mindless automatons who can only be returned to normal by the special temple spells of Revivification* or Re-embodiment*; 90 foot range; instantaneous; targets get saving throws; takes 1 minute to prepare
Speculum of Retribution 4 {Hn Ka Th Av Hr Ks Sa Dl} (55) A	Ritual	Reflects aimed hostile spells back on their caster; it works against aimed spells read from books or scrolls but not against Eyes, amulets, or talismans; caster can move and fight normally but cannot cast other spells; caster only; lasts 1 minute; saving throws are permitted; takes 1 minute to prepare
Vapour of Death 4 {Hr Vi Ks Sa} (55) A	Ritual	A visible fog of poison gas appears 3 feet in front of the caster and moves directly away at a speed of 15 feet per minute; Lord Hrú’ü’s vapour is a purplish-grey nerve gas; Lord Vimúhla’s is a reddish-brown smoke that causes drowsiness; Lord Ksáru’l’s is a bluish-black suffocating gas; and Lord Sáru’k’s is a greenish-brown corrosive gas that burns exposed body parts, even through clothing and armour; fills a spherical area 20 feet in diameter; lasts 2 minutes at fullest expansion; takes 1 minute to prepare; saving throws are permitted to those in the affected area
Visitations of Other Planes 8 {Hn Th Be Hr Ks Sa} (130)	Ritual	Caster can detect and open a nexus point 6 feet in diameter and take his/her party through; the destination cannot be known in advance; the caster must be the last person to enter the nexus doorway and can cast only psychic spells until the door closes; touch range; lasts 1 minute
*Although the T8 spell of Revivification is known to all the temples in one form or another, it is not available to students at your level. The same is true of Re-embodiment, which belongs to the temple of Lord Belkhánu. If you should die during the rôle-playing game, leave word with your comrades to carry your body to a large urban temple where advanced scholars may be found. The temples charge anywhere from 20,000 to 60,000 Káitars to use these spells, and there may be political considerations as well.		

C.7. MUCH ADO ABOUT A COUP

Instruction: worshippers of Lords Hnálla, Avánthe, Thúmis, Belkhánu, Hrü'ü, Ksárul, and Dlamélis use this Section. Those who follow Lords Karakán and Chegárra go to Sec. C.8. Devotees of Lords Vimúhla and Chiténg go to Sec. C.9, and adherents of Lords Sárku and Durritlámish go to Sec. C.10.

Your High Priest summons you and others of your temple to a meeting in one of the subterranean chambers close to the sanctuary. The guards close the doors, and one of the senior magic-users surrounds the place with a spell that guarantees that prying eyes cannot see and ears cannot hear what transpires. The torches flare in odd, prismatic colours as another sorcerer lays down a spell to prevent demons and Other-Planar beings from entering or spying through nexus points. The air smells of wax, chemicals, and essences. Your colleagues glance at one another apprehensively.

The High Priest rises to stand before the daises upon which the elders of the hierarchy sit in serried rows. He leans upon his carven Staff of Power, raises a hand for attention, and speaks: "Tonight we must take counsel concerning matters political. As most of you know, our temple has telepaths who are in contact with others of their kind in a network that stretches across the Empire and beyond. Thus are we aware of what occurs in other places. What we hear is disturbing."

Somebody coughs, and a priestess' bracelets tinkle; otherwise all is silent.

"This day the Concordat was broken," the High Priest continues. "This day in the city of Mekú, the Governor there, who is called 'the Disposer,' ordered an assault upon the temple of Lord Hrü'ü. His troops, who, like him, follow the faith of Lord Chiténg, sacked the shrine and burned it to the ground, slaying all within. He has done the same to the sanctuary of Lord Sárku—"

An outcry rumbles up from the audience. However little love your sect may have for Emperor Dhich'uné and his Worm Lord—or for dark, cold Lord Hrü'ü—to sack a temple is unthinkable! The Concordat has always prevented such violence, even during the worst of times. Now your world is suddenly turned topsy-turvy.

"In Fasíltum," the High Priest intones ominously, "Prince Mirusíya Tlakotáni commands the worshippers of Lords Vimúhla and Chiténg to march on Avanthár. In Chéne Hó, Prince Eselné Tlakotáni



orders the same on behalf of Lords Karakán and Chegárra. The God-Emperor in Avanthár summons those who love the Empire to resist both these rebel leaders — that is how he names them. They did not appear at the *Kólumèjalim*, he says, and hence they have automatically 'given up the Gold.' They have no right to the Petal Throne!"

Somebody yells, "No!" and there is general chaos. Another voice shrills, "The *Kólumèjalim* was false—!"

"Be as may be!" the High Priest shouts back. "Yet we are faced with a fact: the Emperor won because no rule exists to cover the forced absence of candidates from the contests. Now he sits upon the throne, and who are we to pluck him off of it?"

"The clans want peace—the Empire needs peace after the long war with Yán Kór—!" another man shouts.

"—The Red-Hats rampage through our Chákas and slay the Páchi Léi and loot Butrús!"

"—While the Baron Áld and his Yán Koryáni barbarians swagger through our streets and pinch our daughters' arses—!"

An elderly priestess calls, "—And the dog-mothered Salarvyáni steal our Gilráya Forests, while we sit on our thumbs and do nothing—!"

"The Emperor has taken the throne-name 'Eternal Splendour,'" one of your friends remarks drily, "and in the temple of Sárku they take that literally!"

"Ohé, they do manage to last, dead or otherwise!" a ruddy-featured Chákan answers with a chuckle. "Though it's better to have them dead; at least they're slower then!"

The High Priest claps his hands for attention. "Tonight we learn that Imperial troops from Béy Sü are moving against the Disposer of Mekú. Others come from Úrmish and Katalál."

"—And others from Tumíssa—warriors of the Vimúhla-loving clans of the west," a man whom you recognise as one of the senior telepaths interjects urgently. "Whose side will they be on? Whose, I ask you?"

"They swing between Eselné and Mírusíya. Time will tell." The High Priest thumps the butt of his staff upon the stones. "We must decide our course here tonight! Do we sing with Eselné, dance with the Emperor, or play the *Sra'úr* with Mírusíya? How say you?"

"What of Prince Rereshqála?" an older priest injects querulously. "Folk say he has not yet formally 'given up the gold.'"

"Forget him!" snorts one of the younger men. "He has no power — nor the youth and strength to wield it! He is a tired old man, devoted to his court ceremonials! Better to wait for Prince Mridóbu to re-surface — do not think him dead just because he vanished after Prince Dchich'uné's coup!"

"Nor Princess Arimála — unless Princess Ma'in succeeded in having her slain out of jealousy!" a woman snaps back. "If they've disappeared, they're dead! You can be sure of it!"

"Cha! Princess Ma'in sits helpless in Tumíssa, a 'guest' of the Red clans of the west, waiting to see whom she must marry in order to stay alive! Probably Eselné—"

"Come back to our issue!" the High Priest thunders. "Where do we stand and what do we do about it?"

If you have joined one of the secret societies (Sec. C.3), you see your superiors indicating how you should respond by means of tiny gestures. A finger raised here, an ear scratched there, and you know which way your society's wind is blowing. You must speak and act accordingly.

Instruction: the wrangling goes on into the night. Make up your own mind as to which course your temple should take and prepare to defend it in the rôle-playing game. Go to Sec. 10.

C.8. THE CHLÉN-BEAST IN BLUE ROBES

"My Lords," the Bearer of the Silver Blade announces formally, "Here stands Lord Bekkánu. hiCháishmru of the Clan of Sea Blue, our Ritual Preceptor in Jakálla. He brings news."

You look at the stern faces beneath the helmet visors all around you. Scarlet capes rustle as your comrades turn this way and that to whisper and mutter. A steel sword scrapes against the stone benches upon which you sit in the innermost hall of the sanctuary.

"I bring news, Comrades of the Sword. Tonight the Concordat lies broken, smashed by the fools in the temple of Chiténg and their mad leader, the Disposer of Mekú! He has plundered the temples of Lords Hrü'ü and Sárku and has put all who were within to the flame. Tonight our Empire is at war with itself! Emperor Dchich'uné calls his Legions to battle."

The Grand High Priest raises his ceremonial staff. "We are sworn to defend the Imperium. We have no choice. The Seal Emperor summons, and we obey."



That is the way of our Lord Karakán, and of his Cohort, Lord Chegárra."

"Not necessarily, my Lord," a younger individual puts in smoothly. "If the *Kólumèjalim* was done fraudulently, then we must serve that faction which will put things right again!" He turns to the silent, cloaked figures on the upper daises. "Great Masters of the Blade! Let us follow the behest of our Prince Eselné, who commands us to his side! He is our proper leader until and unless he loses at the *Kólumèjalim* — a correct *Kólumèjalim*!"

"The Lord of the Blazing Bolt strike the Worm Prince!" a new voice shouts. "We are decided! It is Prince Eselné! He and no other! The Prince! The Prince!"

Booted feet begin to tramp upon the mosaic floor. Sword hilts clang in time with the rhythm, and somebody raises the first canto of the Call to the Martyrs of Valour. One of the Legion drummers present picks up the beat, and your High Priest marches to the racks on the wall where the ancient *Káing* ["Standards"] of the Legions are kept. Reverently he takes down the oldest of these and lifts it high above his plumed helmet.

"We march, then, Brethren of the Silver Sword! We follow our Prince to death or to victory! We shall not falter in the search for Glory! We send as many of our warriors to Chéne Hó as we can spare! Who will go? Who will go?"

The thunder of the response deafens you.

Instruction: if you are a dedicated follower of Lords Karakán or Chegárra, you know how you must view these events. Be ready to support Prince Eselné in the rôle-playing game. For now, go to Sec. 10.

C.9. MY OLD FLAME

You sit in formal silence upon the matting that covers the floor of Lord Vimúhla's underground shrine. On each side, you feel the presence of your comrades: men, women, and nonhumans who are as imbued with the Presence of Blazing Purity as you are. At the altar, the sacrificial flame is now dying away to red coals, and the screams of tonight's sacrifices are only echoes. The chamber is hot and smoky. Your headdress is heavy, and you surreptitiously put up a hand to steady it.

In the front rank of your congregation a man stands up. He is nude except for a twist of orange-red fabric about his loins: a true devotee, one who would hurl



himself into the Flame if Lord Vimúhla so commanded.

The man raises his chin, rubs his sharply bent nose, and says, "I am of the Vriddi, comrades. My clan is old in the service of the Flame! Long have I myself served it as well. Yet tonight I am shamed. Tonight I am unworthy!" He tugs at his loincloth, pulls it off, and throws it down. "I cannot wear the hue of the Flame! Tonight, Brethren, I dwell here in comfort while the Worm Prince squats upon the Petal Throne in the place that rightfully belongs to our own Lord Mirusíya! Tonight I am not at the forefront of our soldiers. Tonight I am not fighting upon the walls of Avanthár! I can no longer hold up my head, my comrades!"

Your fellows sway and begin to moan in a deep, minor key.

The man covers his face with his fingers. "My name is Hákkán hiVriddi. I fought in the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation against Yán Kór. I did battle beside our Prince Mirusíya at the siege of Tléku Miriyá. I stood with General Kárin Missúm at the sack of Grái and the rape of Krú Sékka. My Prince praised me for my valour. He clasped my fingers in his own, vouchsafing me eternal honour!" The man raises his right hand above his head. "Here is my hand, O Flame-God! Well has it served Thee! Now it serves

Thee no longer but instead busies itself snatching food from the table, fondling wives and children, and stroking my beard! This hand has become ignoble, O Lord! It is no longer worthy of Thee!"

Without warning, he dashes forward and plunges his hand to the wrist in the bed of coals smouldering on the altar. A hissing sigh goes up from the watchers.

The man does not cry out. His cheeks turn pale, and beads of sweat burst out upon his brow, but he does not faint. "Brethren!" he gasps. "Seek ye glory? Seek ye the Flame? What do ye in this place? Our Prince has been wronged! He calls to us! Do we go to him, or do we lurk here like craven worms? Do we love the Flame?" He staggers. Several priests help him out of the room.

There are shouts, the clanging of weapons, and the clashing of sword-hilts upon armoured breasts. Somebody jumps — or falls — into the sacrificial pit and is instantly immolated. A priest snatches up one of the wavy-bladed, two-handed swords used by the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation and cries, "On, then! To Fasiltum! On to our Prince!" The chamber has become fiery, smoky chaos.

***Instruction:** Lord Vimúhla's followers are not all as earnest as the man who sacrificed his hand; he represents the most zealous of the zealots. Such people are numerous, however, and you must decide whether to join them or not. The Incandescent Blaze Society stands for an immediate, total commitment to Prince Mirusíya, while some of the large western clans (Red Mountain, Red Sword, Red Sun, etc.) are more cautious. The choice is yours. Go to Sec. 10.*

C.10. AS THE WORM TURNS

"Death!" declares the Ritual Preceptor. "Death they ask, and death they shall have!"

You gaze out over the many-levelled subterranean hall of your temple. The Junior Priests are just completing the midnight rituals of Ku'ún the Corpse Lord, who is one of our Master's more gentle Aspects. The singing has died down to a mumbled chant, and the lamps have burned down to a dull amber in their sconces of brownish glass. The circle of skull-painted faces before you trembles in the flickering light. A wisp of incense smoke drifts up past you, bringing the scent of rotted, funereal blossoms to your nostrils.

"As you say, Lord," one of the scholarly Proctors replies. "Treason against the Empire — the destruction of our shrine in Mekú — insults to the person of the God-Emperor himself!"

You have never been sure whether this particular scholar is one of the living or whether he is a *Jáigi*, one of those Undead so skillfully re-animated that they bear almost every semblance of life. Sometimes *Jáigi* forget to breathe, of course, but they are more aware and capable than the ghoulish *Shédra* or the shuffling, near-mindless *Mrúr*, whose rotted limbs have to be continually re-attached with sorcery. The man fumbles within the sleeve of his brown robe, extracts a pomander of perfume, and holds it to his nose. This, you think, may be a mark of the Undead: always do they yearn for the sights and scents of the world they have left behind. Those who accept the virtual immortality vouchsafed by the Worm Lord must pay the price.

Down in the nave of the temple the procession of Lord Chmúr of the Hands of Grey is forming up to descend into the cool depths of the Underworld. You debate whether to join it; after the rituals there will be orgiastic revelry with the Undead and with certain creatures of the Dark. A certain young — and very much alive — member of the ritual clergy will be there, too, and there will never be a better opportunity! You shift position, ready to rise.

The Preceptor fixes you with a fierce eye, and you sit back down. "We send envoys to the other temples," he says. "We speak to the clans. We wriggle our



people into high offices and winkle their people out. We do not occupy the land with troops because that would cause hatred — “

“Great One,” an administrative priestess interrupts diffidently. “Do not our Legions already hold Aukésha—Thri’íl—“

“Necessary. The Battalions of the Seal of the Worm and the Legion of the Scales of Brown were summoned when the inhabitants raised rebellion against the Seal!”

“Ohé, necessary, indeed, when the Yán Koryáni would have gobbled up those northern cities and added them to the Baron’s domain!” The speaker is a Shrine Guardian: a copper-armoured member of a temple guard unit that hardly ever emerges above ground.

The Preceptor looks down over the gilded railing of the mezzanine balcony upon which you sit. “Nearly time for the Calling of Skulls.” He refers to the mighty *Tunkúl*-gong that signals the striking of midnight.

“Lord... “ the administrative priestess murmurs. “Say unto us what we must do. Some say that we should retaliate, destroy the temples of the Flame-God, call out those Legions loyal to the Petal Throne, and put down all rebellion with blood.”

Copper chainmail jingles as the temple guardsman raises one brawny arm. “La, many urge that we bring forth the Undead from their tombs and put an end to these puling piss-ants for all time! Now that mighty Emperor Dhich’uné, He of Eternal Splendour, sits upon the Petal Throne do we even need the other gods? The populace would speedily join with us. Thereafter a nation of worshippers of the Worm Lord could never be beaten!”

“We cannot do that!” a Junior Priest protests. “The Concordat—!”

“As defunct as a *Mrúr*’s mother! It is time for action.”

“Heresy,” the Preceptor warns. He does not appear overly disturbed.

The scholar sniffs disdainfully. “Our Undead are not trained soldiers. They do well defending tombs and the labyrinths of the Underworlds, but can you picture them fighting in open field battles? Not by day, anyhow!”

Someone is wending his way towards your group along the arched mezzanine. He wears Imperial blue and gold, and it is not until he gets close that you see the copper pendant at his throat. His uniform is that of a *Kási* of the

Omnipotent Azure Legion — not the same Legion that existed in the old Emperor’s time but one that has been culled and sifted and now largely contains members loyal to the present occupant of the Petal Throne.

The Preceptor gets to his feet, bows, and accepts the rolled document the man holds out. He opens it, reads, and stands musing for a time. At length, he says, “Well, Brethren, it has come.”

All are up now, crowding about to hear. He looks around at all of you, and you see pride and apprehension and even a trace of sorrow in his eyes. “We are commanded,” he announces formally, “to the city of Tsurú, there to join with other temple and army units and move upon Mekú. We will be half of a pincers with forces from Mrelú and our own City of Sárku.”

“What of Eselné to the west in Chéne Hó?” the Proctor puts in worriedly. “Will he not attack from the rear?”

The Omnipotent Azure Legion officer lifts his chin angrily. “Let ‘the *Chlén*-beast in Blue Robes’ try! Our folk in Mrelú will pinch his pretty cheeks for him! His army is weak and small from years of fighting in Pijéna, and no one in the west gives him recruits. Indeed, there are few left to give. Lord Hrü’ü’s troops from the City of Hmakuyál will join us and keep the Flame clans from Tumíssa in their place!”

“The Mu’ugalavyáni in the Chákas?” the priestess inquires.

The officer gives her a sly grin. “We have some surprises for them — as we do for Prince Mirusíya in Fasíltum and his mad-dog General Kárin Missúm!”

Arguments and queries buzz around the Preceptor’s head like *Chrí*-flies, but he waves them away. “Enough! Enough! We must organise. We move within a six-day!”

You have just one question left, and you ask it: “What of the Undead and the creatures of our catacombs?”

It is the Omnipotent Azure Legion Captain who answers. “Why, the best of them come along of course. They are our reinforcements.”

Down in the smoky lamplight of the main nave, you see a thousand faces gazing up at you. They have watched the Captain arrive, and they hunger for news, too. Not all of them are alive, nor are all human.

Instruction: If you love the Worm Lord and the Seal Emperor, prepare for the conflict to come. Go to Sec. 10.

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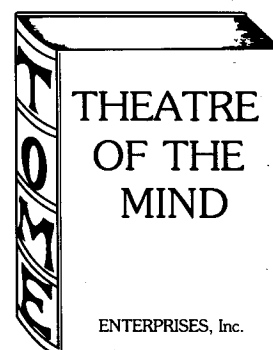
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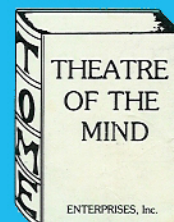
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