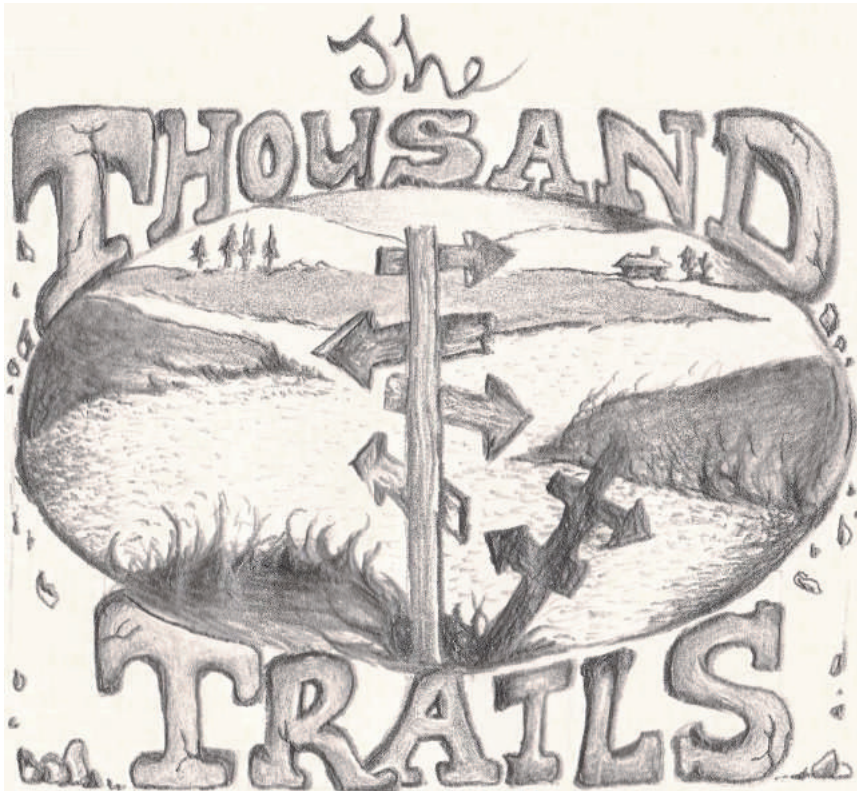




DARK CITIES

THE THOUSAND TRAILS

PART 1



A "True Mask Games" Product

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first book of “The Thousand Trails”!

Before you is a collection of over one hundred plothooks and story-seeds to be used as you desire. Most of these should fit into nearly every fantasy setting with only small adjustments.

The plothooks in this specific book are focused around urban areas, allowing your players to cross blades with criminals and assassins, rub elbows with the high and mighty, hunt serial killers through the streets and investigate many dastardly intrigues and evil schemes. Make the best use of the city landscape, an arena that can prove more deadly than even the most untamed of wild places!

These story seeds can be turned into full – blown adventures quite easily, adjusting small details to fit into your world and the city your group of heroes is currently visiting. Or you can use the adventure ideas presented as inspiration, turning them into your personal plots, tailored specifically to the likes and dislikes of your very own gaming group.

Either way, I hope you have a lot of fun with The Thousand Trails: “Dark Cities” and are already looking forward to our next book in this series, "Edge of the Wilds", which will be dealing with rural areas, where civilization and the wilderness fight for dominance!

As always, please feel free to reach out with any feedback or ideas you might have! You can contact us at earin_shaad@msn.com on our Facebook channel, or check out our Youtube channel, True Mask Games.

We look forward to hearing from you!

December 28th 2017,

For True Mask Games

- Alex



All the ploohooks and storyseeds in this document are divided into three categories: their challenge level, suggested length and what elements of an RPG they mostly focus on.

CHALLENGE LEVEL

This is the suggested level the heroes need to be to successfully complete the adventure. Since this book is intended for many different game systems the suggestions here are very basic. You know the game system you are playing better than we do and will be better suited to judge whether an adventuring idea might be too “tough” for your group or not. That said, with a bit of work you should be able to adjust the challenge level of an adventure quite significantly.

The numbers in brackets describe character levels in some of the best known, D20 based roleplaying games.

Low Level (1-5): The heroes are still at the start of their journey. They might already be locally admired, but they are not yet equipped to face greater threats.

Medium Level (6-10): Leaving their humble beginnings behind, the heroes are now veterans in their fields. They have faced deadly dangers and lived to tell the tale. Their skills, influence and resources are growing. This will be the challenge level most often found in this book.

High Level (11-15): After many adventures the heroes have reached a status only few ever get to. Their names are known far and wide, and they are considered amongst the most dangerous and skilled individuals in the realm. They are ready to stop all but the greatest threats.

Epic Level (16-20): The heroes are legends, their names and deeds known in better parts of the civilized – and maybe also the uncivilized – world. Only the most powerful individuals would dare to cross them, and only the most extreme threats are worthy of their attention.

SUGGESTED LENGTH OF THE ADVENTURE

This is of course up to the individual Gamemaster, for adventures can easily be embellished or shortened according to the desires of the gaming group.

A **short adventure** can usually be played on a single evening, sometimes in as little as an hour or two. They usually include few location and only one or two adventuring styles.

Average adventures can last anywhere from two to four gaming sessions and will often involve several different locations and styles of challenges.

Long adventures are such that will take five, six, or even more sessions to finish, and are basically campaigns at this point. Some can be turned into plots that last for years. Such adventures will nearly always feature a lot of different locations and focus on all four different parts of adventuring (see below).

FOCUS ON:

Exploration: This adventure will have the heroes visit regions they have never seen before, push through untamed wilderness or find secret chambers. They will be filling out the empty spots on their maps, even those spots they never realized were there...

Diplomacy: This adventure heavily features the heroes talking to living creatures, tricking or persuading them to do their bidding. Sometimes such interactions will require a delicate touch, but other circumstances might profit from a more heavy – handed approach. Many situations, if handled badly, can quickly turn into combat.

Investigation: Adventures like these will involve a lot of sneaking, deception and interaction with living beings. Secrets need to be found, plans revealed and schemes pulled into the light of day. Mysteries and complicated intrigues are featured quite often, and only clever actions will be rewarded. For urban landscapes, this is the most common and best suited adventuring style.

Combat: Sometimes the most simple of all adventures, combat – focused plots can be more or less straightforward, but they will always feature dangers to the very lives of the heroes. Monsters, outlaws and other villains need to be fought and defeated. This might require a more tactical approach, but sometimes it will be a very direct experience. In the end, you never know what your players will come up with!

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS FOR CITIES AND OTHER BASTIONS OF CIVILIZATION

These short encounters can be thrown in whenever the heroes are visiting a town or city. They are best used sparingly, but nonetheless can serve to make the players feel they are immersed into a living world, where not every single thing is part of some greater plot. Or you can use these encounters to fill the time if your players, as so often, decide to do something you are completely unprepared for... Most of these encounters should only take a couple of minutes to at most an hour to play, but they might spawn longer adventures, if you so desire. You will probably only need a few minutes to prepare such an encounter - maybe during a foodbreak? Or you could try to improvise the whole thing, if you are experienced enough.

D20 Roll	Random Encounter
1	People in the street start leaping aside, for a massive coach is running out of control, the horses panicking and no driver to be seen. Suddenly the coach rams a building, breaking apart and spilling forth sacks filled with gold and silver. A massive brawl erupts, as citizens and thugs go for the coins. Even with the city watch arriving chaos reigns. And who is the owner of these riches?
2	While traversing a seedier neighbourhood our heroes are approached by a group of scantily clad but very attractive men and women. These are new “workers” at a local brothel, desperate to prove their skill and earn some money. The heroes look like wealthy potential patrons, and thus will be pursued with quite a bit of stamina and ingenuity.
3	When crossing a small market place the heroes witness a group of street urchins stealing a merchant's money pouch. The urchins then scatter into all directions, with their overweight victim begging people to go after them. Once one or more of the urchins are caught after a chase through the back allies the merchant will start beating them severely with a stick, not caring that many of the onlookers are asking for mercy.
4	A fire has broken out close by, the flames threatening multiple lives. And if the fire is not stopped it could spread and consume half the district! Any citizen of able body is conscripted into dealing with the inferno, and those unwilling will face harsh penalties from both neighbours and city watch. The flames are already getting extremely hot, and a family is trapped inside!
5	The gates of a fancy tavern bursts open, a blood – drenched, heavily wounded door guard stumbles out. More screams and the sounds of breaking plates are coming from within. One of the guests, an infamous sword master, has gone crazy due to drug abuse, and exploded into violence in the middle of the meal. Many rich patrons will be very thankful if they are saved.
6	Late one evening our heroes hear screams coming from an ally. There three men are beating a fourth to a pulp. They will threateningly brandish daggers if anyone approaches. Soon it is discovered that the whole thing is a farce: the “attackers” were hired by their “victim” to pretend to beat him (some of the bruises ARE real though). He is trying to draw the attention of a widow living close by, a wealthy woman well known for her nurturing tendencies..
7	A young, extremely nervous looking man stumbles into our heroes. He presses a small package into their hands, promising a rich reward if they deliver it to the Red Moon Inn on the following evening. He then rushes off quickly. A few moments later a squad of city guards arrive and starts questioning people. Should they spot the package and find the illegal opiates within, our heroes might have a large problem.
8	As our heroes approach a plaza they see a large crowd gathered, witnessing an unusual spectacle: two massive ovens are standing out in the open, each being used by a sweaty man. Here two master bakers are competing who can make the best and biggest meat-pie. After they are finished they will ask for volunteers to eat the pies in small teams and will reward whoever manages to eat the most with a month-long supply of delicious goods.
9	A group of city guards is approaching very fast. And they have their weapons drawn! They are arresting one of the heroes, acting very aggressively. Should anyone try to resist a fight might break out. If the heroes remain calm the lieutenant will explain, showing a wanted poster with the face of the accused, who is supposed to have murdered a local merchant only a day ago. This is clearly a case of mistaken identity, but the real murderer actually looks a lot like one of the heroes.

10	Loud voices draw the attention of our heroes. Several men are accusing a street performer of cheating at cards. They might become violent, and the performer calls for help. If he is indeed saved he will issue a challenge to a game of cards. Should he be beaten he will pass on his invitation to a high – stakes tournament to the victors.
11	On a small square an old priest in a dirty robe is being mocked and harassed by children. They tug at his clothing and beard, flinging mud and even a few rocks at the poor man, laughing all the while. Should our heroes intervene the children will run off, but later on return to now harass these new “victims”. Should anyone try to harm a child they might get massive problems with a mob of aggressive parents.
12	The heroes are stopped by a teenager dressed in armour far too big for him. He wishes to join their group and go on adventures to become a great knight. In truth the boy has run away from home and is being pursued by his parents, who might become quite agitated if the heroes allow their son to join their group. The young man might show up again and again, sneaking away and looking for the heroes at every opportunity he gets.
13	While wandering down a street the heroes are spotted by a group of religious fanatics. One of them points at several heroes, calling them “unclean”. The fanatics will demand that these characters need to be “cleansed”, which is only possible in a local temple. The process requires several hours, many odd rituals and costs quite a bit of coin. If the heroes ignore their demands the fanatics might become aggressive.
14	Several tough looking man, staggering and surrounded by strong alcoholic fumes, are accompanying a richly dressed drunkard down the street. They are showing interest in the heroes, mocking them and trying to provoke them into a brawl. Their leader is the son of a wealthy nobleman and can cause a lot of trouble for the heroes if he is injured.
15	An older women looks out of a window, then empties her chamber pot right onto the heroes' heads as they are passing by. If confronted she will state that she clearly shouted a warning, which is definitely untrue. The women is ancient and not quite right in the head, so any discussion with her is bound to be difficult.
16	A small group of beggars approaches the heroes, asking for a few coins. Should they be refused these poor souls will turn vicious, screaming obscenities and even flinging dung. Later on they will spread bad rumours about the heroes. Should the beggars be paid they will be very happy to have found such generous people, and will tell all their friends about them. These friends will then of course also show up, asking for money as well.
17	The heroes are approached by an apparently desperate woman. She asks them to point her to the nearest shop where she might be able to sell a magical amulet that has been in her family for generations. She has fallen on hard times and is willing to part with it for very little money, happily selling it to the heroes, if they wish it. The woman however is a con artist and except for giving off a faint magical aura the amulet does nothing at all.
18	An obvious member of a racial minority is being chased down the street by a mob. If the heroes do not intervene the poor soul will be caught and beaten mercilessly in front of them. If they do try to help the mob will not be easily intimidated, but back off eventually. With this the heroes have won the support of the person they saved and also all their kin, but their reputation amongst other parts of the population might suffer significantly.
19	A sudden but fairly small earthquake hits the city. Not far from our heroes the ground of the local herbalist's backyard splits open, revealing several clothed and partially decomposed bodies. A mob gathers quickly, starting in morbid fascination. When the city guard arrives to investigate the herbalist reveals himself to be a murderous mage and tries to burn his way out of the situation, with both civilians and the heroes being caught up in his attacks.
20	While walking past the heroes a wealthy – looking merchant by accident drops a dagger made of silver onto the road. He will discover it missing a few moments later and will cause a loud ruckus, screaming about thieves and accusing the heroes of wanting to keep it for themselves even if they are trying to give the precious weapon back.

INVESTIGATIVE ADVENTURES - A FEW THOUGHTS

In this book you will find many, many adventures focusing on investigations. The urban environment is very well suited for murder mysteries, political intrigues, the hunt for serial killers and similar scenarios. These plots can be notoriously difficult to run. To get the best out of such adventure types there are several things a Gamemaster should keep in mind. Here are a few techniques developed for our own games.

1. **Know your timeline:** In an investigative scenario, there are usually some sort of plans happening, either openly or behind the scenes. Like in a game of chess, secret players are moving figures across the board, sacrificing pawns and seeking to fulfill their goals. It is extremely important for a Gamemaster to know **who is doing what when**. Having a timeline of NPC actions (does the baron send assassins against his son on the second day, and more against his brother on the third? does the monster strike at midnight, then spend a few hours in hiding before striking again?) will help immensely with not mixing things up, and it also shows you what will happen if the heroes do not get involved or fail to stop the villain's scheme.

2. **Know the WHY:** In sandbox - type investigation scenarios, a Gamemaster will often have to improvise. A tool that makes improvisation much easier is knowing the motivation and drive of the main NPCs in this scenario. Do they act out of greed? Revenge? Love? Fear? Being aware of the WHY means having a much better idea of HOW your villains will react if things do not go according to their plan.

3. **Know the resources:** Your player characters have different strengths and abilities at their disposal that can help them solve the riddle. They might have contacts within the city to call upon (people who can give them information or provide them with other types of assistance). They could have magical abilities that can make the scenario fairly straightforward (being able to force people to tell the truth, see the past and/or future, read minds etc. helps a LOT with investigations). And there are also libraries the heroes can visit, law agencies that might be willing to work with them and share knowledge, etc.

4. **Prepare for failure:** The Gamemaster, who already knows everything about the adventure, might consider it easy to solve. Players will often disagree. While searching for answers they might miss even the most obvious of clues, and there are few things more frustrating than realizing that the adventure might fail completely, because the heroes do not know what to do. That is why a Gamemaster should always prepare multiple clues that lead to the same solution. That way, if players miss the first and second clue, they might still pick up the third one. If even that does not help, the Gamemaster can "give" players additional clues...but make them work for it! Maybe they are attacked by the villain's henchmen and can interrogate them after the battle? Or another NPC might be willing to offer information, but demands something precious in return?

5. **Everything makes sense in the end!** Once our players have gathered and connected all the necessary clues comes the probably best moment in an investigative adventure. The players get to feel smart. They have seen through the villain's scheme and know what they need to do to stop it. Victory is close!

A skilled Gamemaster can strengthen this important moment of triumph by presenting the clues and information in such a way that they seem pretty obvious in hindsight. When your player characters (and their players!) say "oh, we should have known, this is totally obvious!" you know that you have done your work well, and you are definitely allowed to feel smart too!

Keep these tips in mind when preparing to run the adventures coming from this book and you will be well equipped to have a good time! Investigative adventures can be tough to prepare, but in the end they are more than worth it!

PLOTHOOKS AND STORYSEEDS

(ROLL 1D100 FOR A RANDOM RESULT...IF YOU ARE CRAZY)

1. THE RESTLESS SPIRIT

MEDIUM LEVEL LONG ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION

Carson Redbitch, a middle – class merchant, has recently started acting strangely. He has begun showing more and more aggressive business practices, alienating former trading partners and is now even rumoured to be in contact with criminal elements. One of Carson's friends, Jowrick the wool merchant, has contacted some “independent investigators” (our heroes) to find out what is going on. They will indeed realize that Redbitch has hired thugs to sabotage the operations of Jowrick and two other merchants. He has also quarrelled with his wife and son, who both seem put off by his sudden change in behaviour. Both of them think the death of Carson's father, Goodman Reinhardt, a few months ago, led to this change. They are only partially right...

Carson Redbitch is in the grips of a cunning creature, a shape-shifter calling itself “Whiteclaw.” This thing is posing as another merchant, Gabriel, who only recently came to town. It has also taken on the guise of Reinhardt's ghost, and is visiting Carson regularly. In the form of his father the creature has told the merchant that it was poisoned and killed by several business rivals, amongst them Jowrick, and is demanding revenge. Now Redbitch is engaged in the business of vengeance, willing to spend however much money necessary to destroy his father's murderers. All the while Whiteclaw, in the guise of Gabriel, is heavily profiting from the losses of his rivals and is looking forward to amassing a nice little fortune...

2. BITTER WINE

LOW LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION

Baron Merin of Sencastle has unexpectedly died, struck down by a weird disease that had his cheeks turn black, blood gushing out of his mouth, nose and ears. There is talk of a plague, but no one else in his household shows any symptoms. The son of the deceased, the young Baron Lucian, hires the heroes to investigate what is going on. He believes his father might have been murdered. Asking around the characters will soon realize that Merin had been mostly a good man, but also harboured a real fondness for other people's wives.

A very short while after they are hired, the heroes will learn that Baron Lucian has also sickened, as well as two kitchen servants. They all three share the same symptoms and are expected to die within a few days. Now the talk of a plague is everywhere, and the mansion is surrounded by city guards, not letting anyone enter or leave. If the heroes are clever they will realize the symptoms of the disease are very similar to those of a poison known as “Bloodeye”, a vile substance that can seep through the skin by regular contact and leads to a slow death.

This terrible crime is the work of the goldsmith Anders, a wealthy man wishing to take revenge for the seduction of his wife. After many years of anger he has created a golden goblet and gifted it to the baron. Everyone who touches the goblet, especially if they drink from it, will take doses of Bloodeye into their system. Now however Anders has realized that innocents might fall prey to his revenge and is trying to have the goblet removed before it kills any more servants. He has some basic knowledge of how to make a poison antidote, but is afraid to draw too much attention to himself if he takes any direct measures, like contacting a herbalist and having him brew it.

3. PLAGUE TIMES

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION

A terrible plague grips the city. It started suddenly, killing dozens within the first few days. Soon the nobility flees to the countryside and the king's army surrounds the walls. They do not let anyone enter or exit and will kill those who try to escape.

Within the city the situation is dire. Streets are emptied, people turn against each other. Food stores are starting to run out and gangs are forming. Our heroes are caught up in all the chaos.

In the midst of everything steps a herbalist by the name of Zane. He who was only known as a minor mage up until now, suddenly appears to have discovered a medication to fend off the plague, and he is giving it away for very little money. People start flocking to him, for to be completely safe this “cure” needs to be taken daily.

Soon Zane holds control over most of the city, and is hailed as saviour. At the same time people criticizing him and his methods of obtaining larger and larger amounts of wealth – some minor nobles and merchants who did not get out in time amongst them – die of the plague even after taking the medication. An old scholar by the name of Delmore, after analysing the medication, declares it to be a simple fake without any effects. Weird rumours start circulating, as Zane's devotees (many of them good people, but fearful for the lives of their families) are now working against all those who dare stand against their leader.

The truth of the whole thing is dark: Zane is a minor wizard who has managed to summon a spirit of plague and is controlling it with a magical amulet. Thus he decides who lives and who dies. His plan is simply to take control over the city and stand as its ruler, winning the devotion of the masses and all the riches of the – by then dead – wealthy citizens.

4. KEY OF KINGS

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Olivander, a brilliant but also foolish young wizard, creates a magical key that can open any door, magical or non-magical, except for the ones with the most powerful magic. Originally created on a simple bet between students of the arcane, whispers of this key soon reach the wrong ears. The wizard Olivander himself is murdered by “the Street-Kings”, a gang of young, ambitious cut-throats, who then turn against each other.

At the end of the chaos only four members of the Street – Kings are alive, and they all go into hiding. It is unclear which of them has the key, but knowledge about it is out in the open. All the more powerful gangs and thieves' guilds are after the artefact, and they are ready to wade through a lake of blood to get it. At the same time several wizards hire their own groups of agents to find and secure the key. Our heroes are just one of these groups, and they will have to race against many different factions that are tearing the city apart in the search for the artefact. Then, once they have it, they will realize that Olivander has spoken a curse onto the key as he lay dying, and its possession alone will be enough to make everyone around it covet it powerfully enough to murder their own friends over it...

5. WORKS OF THE MIGHTY

LOW LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

The founding fathers of the city, Dante and Rogelius, have been dead nearly two hundred years, but their descendants still hold powerful positions in all layers of society. Sadly most of the friendship once connecting the two founders is gone from the hearts of their great-great-great grandchildren. Both families have decided to erect magnificent statues and thus honour their founding father. Whole teams are hired to do the work. At the same time both families seek to stop or at least slow down the creation of the other statue. All kinds of tricks, legal and illegal both, are deployed to this end, with the heroes hired by one side or the other. This is a mostly bloodless battle, but it is fought nearly as hard as a life – and – death one, as masons and workers are bribed, intimidated, beaten up or blackmailed. Wagons of building stone are delayed or disappear, provisions for the workers are spoiled or poisoned, and many other tricks are happening all over town. Can our heroes put a stop to it, or will they adapt cunning methods themselves, making sure their employers' statue is the only one that will be finished?

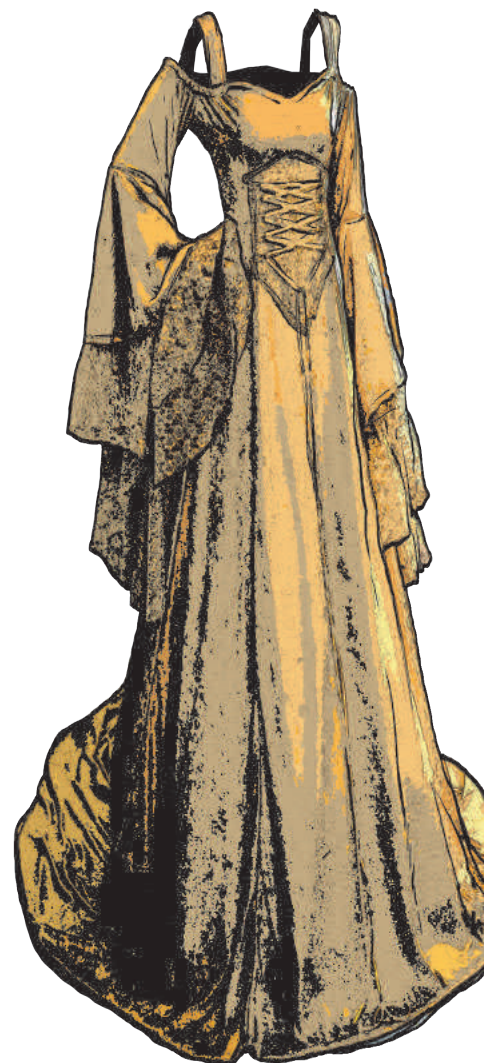
6. BATTLES OF THE HEART

MEDIUM LEVEL LONG ADVENTURE,
FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION, COMBAT AND DIPLOMACY

Two high officials in the city, Magistrate Carlin and High Judge Talephos, have once been close allies. This has changed in the last few months. Recently they have waged a secretive war, trying to undermine whatever the other might try to achieve. This conflict is fought both by legal means – prohibiting the other's servants and underlings to work efficiently, opposing them in votes and generally trying everything to bring chaos to the enemy organization – and by illegal means. Thugs and thieves are hired to sabotage and strike against the rival, bribes are paid to other magistrates and their servants...even blackmail and outright intimidation have been used. Slowly but surely the situation is spiralling out of control. While the public doesn't exactly understand what is going on, trade and the life of the common man have started to suffer. The other officials of the city are not sure what to do, but some of them might be ready to hire outsiders to put a stop to the whole thing one way or the other...

At the heart of the issue is a fairly simple, nearly ridiculous matter. Both Carlin and Talephos are in love with the same woman, a sharp – eyed beauty by the name of Carmen, who has been mistress to both of them. This dangerous courtesan has convinced both her lovers that she has been wronged by the hand of the other and would not offer any more services until the insult is avenged – preferably by the complete ruination of the other man's reputation, career and finances. Carlin and Talephos, both men easy to anger and quite firmly in love with Carmen, began their half-secret war on the very same day.

There is more than just the spite of a bitter woman behind Carmen's actions. She is a professional, currently in the service of the local Baron Coldire, an extremely rich man who wants the trade of the city damaged as thoroughly as possible so he can step in and take over. His agents in the city, led by a dangerous mercenary named Jurik “the Wolf”, are watching the whole situation, and guarding Carmen. They have established close ties to the local underworld and will not hesitate to use this influence to get rid of whoever shoves their noses into the whole affair.



7. THE DREAMWEB

LOW LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Several gruesome murders have been committed in the last month or so. Victims were found strangulated and slashed open, their innards mostly gone. Now finally the murderer has been apprehended by the city watch. He is Onder, a local carpenter who has obviously gone crazy. Spotted around several crime scenes and apprehended as he tried to flee, he was unable to come up with a good alibi, mumbling incoherent things about ghost spiders stalking him from the shadows. Even after calming down he could not explain himself, falling into several screaming fits over the course of the next two days. Under pressure both from the public and his superiors, lieutenant Silvan of the city watch gave the order to have the criminal executed. Onder, however, managed to escape on the night before his execution, leaving his guard behind as a sucked – out husk, same as the other victims. Now our heroes become involved and half the city is hunting for the madman.

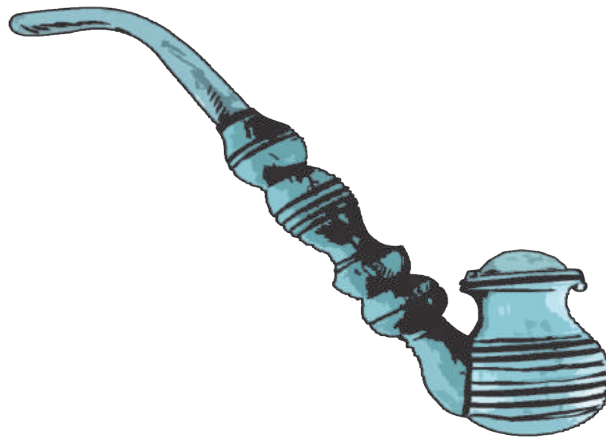
Sadly Onder is not completely insane. Since coming into contact with a strange substance he found dripping out of an exotic tree delivered to his workshop he started having strange trembling fits about once or twice a day. During these fits he experienced intense pain, but could also see monstrous white spiders lurking around him. These creatures are all too real, fiendish spirits that were hiding inside the magical “Makara-tree”, and intent on devouring as many delicious people as they can, now that they have been delivered to such a rich banquet. The beings are quick, dangerous and extremely stealthy, for they hide their presence with a mantle of illusion, up until the very moment they strike. Onder, who has a mental connection with them, has been driven insane by it. Killing him will only enrage the creatures. The only way to stop the attacks is to destroy the Makara tree and the nest of evil magic found within its trunk, which is lying forgotten in Onder's basement...but the workshop is closely guarded by the watch, in case the madman comes back.

8. LEGION

HIGH LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Homeless people often vanish in a great metropolis, but the recent string of disappearances has the poor and suffering really riled up. More and more of their brothers and sisters are taken, never to be seen again. Some of these are attributed to the fledgling slaver gang known as the “White Fists”, but others are taken for a far more nefarious purpose. Yet even after several pleas for help the watch is not interested in the plight of drunkards and morons...

While the whole thing is being ignored the danger for the city grows, for Magnus, one of the best known wizards of the city, is behind the disappearances. His servants, tight-lipped and extremely dangerous foreigners, are striking on his behalf. They are even using conjured spirits to help them in their task. Magnus is working on an ancient spell he found on a scroll of the old times. With this ritual he can draw the life forces of many, many men and women into a single being, creating a servant of untold power, a creature that can rip apart castle walls with its bare hands and shrug off even the most terrible of wounds, all the while presenting a mortal face to the world. Magnus the wizard is not so much interested in using the creature as he is in mastering the spell...but his search for arcane knowledge might very well prove his undoing, for the scroll is incomplete and the creature, once summoned, will go on a terrible rampage.



9. GOUGING OUT THE EYES

HIGH LEVEL LONG ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY, INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Several seers, fortune tellers and other adepts of divination have died over the course of the last months. At first glance the deaths seem unconnected, save for the occupation of the deceased. The fortune teller Jerwil apparently committed suicide by ingesting a quickly working poison. Lady Janina, who had some mystical skills with the Tarot deck, died during a hunting accident, having fallen off her horse and hitting a rock. Oppius “Lighteye”, a rich seer, burned to death in his house as it caught fire during the night. The wizard Elodin was killed by his own fighting dogs, beasts he had recently acquired for protection, for he had been increasingly paranoid. Finally Honger, another wealthy fortune teller, has been recently murdered by his elderly servant Endymon. This Endymon is still awaiting execution and is devastated by his crime, freely admitting it but unable to explain his motive. He had always loved his young master.

The heroes will be hired by Elessar, one of the last remaining seers in the city, who fears for his own life. He does not believe in coincidences. And he is right. The whole thing was carefully orchestrated by a group of cultists calling themselves “the Knowing Ones”. They have used magic, poison and outright assassination to commit these murders, for they are preparing for the coming of their masters. Demons will appear within the city soon, when the gates open on the next full moon, as according to an old prophecy. They can influence the emotions of mortals, turning them against each other, and they can only be perceived by those skilled in the arts of divination. Thus the Knowing Ones are removing any potential threat to their masters.

10. SHADOWS IN GLASS

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY, INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

In the depths of an old building, recently collapsed into a sink hole, a young thief named Crocas discovers a mirror wrought from silver. He will sell it to his masters in the local thieves' guild, receiving a decent payment for it. The guild leader, a man by the name of Mercurio, only known as "the Moonman" will soon discover the ancient mirror's mystical properties: the artefact can capture the visage of whoever gazes into it, creating a (reversed) doppelgänger of the person and unleashing it out into the world later. Mercurio, very much aware of the power he holds in his hands, will soon start using it to get rid of his competitors. Thus other underworld bosses are murdered by the likenesses of famous citizens. A well known athlete by the name of Borius goes on a killing spree, Captain Vilas of the city guard murders someone in broad daylight, even the mayor himself is seen fleeing a crime scene. At first these happenings are only ridiculous rumours, but soon our heroes might find themselves face-to-face with any one of their friends or former quest givers.

Mercurio is getting greedy and has started making plans to force the whole city under his control. His mirror-puppets shatter in many pieces of glass once they are slain, and only the story of a young thief bragging about a mystical mirror he had found might lead the heroes to Mercurio and his centre of power...where they might have to face themselves in a brutal battle.

GM NOTES:

In this adventure, with several falsely accused NPCs, it is important to make it fairly clear for the player characters that at least some of them have to be innocent. This is easily achieved by giving them very good alibies. However, some NPCs should still act (and be) suspicious. To add a more personal touch to it the GM can add one or more of the player characters' closest allies to the accused, without them having an alibi, and asking the PCs for help. This does add an additional layer to the whole scenario, making it a bit more complex.

11. WHEN TYRANTS FALL

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

Our heroes arrive in a city that has been under the control of a tyrannical ruler for a long time.

His laws are firmly in place and his mercenary guards stand ready to punish all those who oppose his will. Especially their leader, a brute by the name of Savarius, is hated and despised, but with the protective hand of the tyrant hovering over him, Savarius is untouchable.

Shortly after the arrival of the heroes in this city the tyrant dies from a sudden, mysterious illness. This sends shock waves through the city, as the oppressed see the dawn of freedom rising. The common people are becoming unruly, demanding the death of several high servants of the tyrant. Noble families and rich merchants are making their own plays, trying to secure as much influence within the city as they can. Lord Gilvis wishes to proclaim himself ruler, and has a decent sized force of house-guards to back him up. The most influential guild leaders, Jacobus of the trade guild and Osir of the smiths' guild, are trying to raise the masses and create a ruling council.

In the midst of all of this Savarius, fearing for his own future and even life, is getting ready to give the order and unleash his plundering mercenaries upon the people...

The heroes are caught in the midst of all this disorder and potential violence. Will they seek to calm the situation or are they more interested in making profit from the chaos? Or maybe they are already busy with their own affairs and all this is just a distraction to them? This quest – trail can very well be used as (very loud) "background noise" when characters are already following another quest in this same city.

12. THE WALKING DREAD

MEDIUM LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Several people in town are experiencing terrible dreams, getting more exhausted every day. This has been going on for some time, but ever since the fire in the ironmakers' quarter a few days ago it has been getting out of hand. Several people, while asleep, slay their own loved ones, only to awaken to this terror. So far the guard has not believed their weak defences that they "did not know what they were doing", and half a dozen people are imprisoned, waiting for execution. One of them, a bulky man named Sandor, is a relative of an old friend of the heroes (or maybe a wealthy patron) who hires them to look into the whole thing. Soon they will realize that all those experiencing the dreams have close connections to the western quarter of the city, where most of the blacksmiths and similar tradesmen have their shops. Either they live there, work there or are visiting regularly.

The terrible nightmares all are experiencing are filled with fire, pain, and whispering voices. With every day more and more people seem to fall into this grip and even though only few of them actually commit acts of atrocity during their sleep many have started asking their loved ones to tie them down during the night. Disturbing rumours fill the streets and panic is spreading.

The trail, glimpsed in pieces of the nightmare, leads to the burned down ruins of a large smithy in the north-west of town. It, and the houses around it, have been devastated by the raging flames. The blacksmith working here, a respected man named Master Grigor, was the first to fall under the dark influence of the nightmare demon. He burned down his own smithy and several other houses, killing over a dozen people. Every death and every evil acts empowers the demon who is hiding underneath the ruins. He wears the body of Grigor and is spreading his influence further and further with every single night...

13. FACES OF EVIL

MEDIUM LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

After weeks of terrible deeds a masked serial killer is finally apprehended by the watch. He is Germinus, a scrawny man, well respected in the scholar community. Nonetheless, despite many questions still unanswered, Germinus is publicly executed. Hundreds have arrived to watch him hang, but he himself seems mostly confused...and that is how he goes to his death.

The respite, however, is brief. Only a few days later the killings start anew, fresh victims found hung up with their feet pointing upwards, their throats slashed, large puddles of blood on the ground. Surely the heroes will become involved this time. They will not find it too difficult to apprehend the new killer, for he is acting brutally and leaving plenty of trails behind every night. It is Calvin, a young member of the city guard, one of the men who originally apprehended Germinus. He will not admit to any crimes, but the evidence is damning, especially when bloody knives and the leather mask of the first killer are found in his possession. Soon he will be awaiting execution as well, but that might not be the end of the problem...for the true evil is still around.

It is the simple leather mask worn by both killers. This cursed artefact holds the spirit of an ancient killer only known as "the Drainer". Whoever spends too much time close to the mask will be forced to put it on and will be possessed by the old slaughterer. This might happen to Captain Rendil of the guard, or it might happen to one of the heroes themselves, if they choose to keep the mask as a trophy after overcoming Calvin.



14. IF ONCE YOU FAIL...

MEDIUM LEVEL LONG ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Many, many times the half – secret society calling themselves the “Sons of the Sky”, have tried to create the ultimate weapon to take control of the kingdom. At first they were brutally repressed and persecuted, but after every single one of their attempts has failed they are not being taken very seriously at all. They are the laughing stock of the realm and the name of their “secret” weapon, the “Skyshatterer”, has become synonymous with a foolish, unachievable dream. After several decades only the young, the dumb and a small core of hardened fanatics still remain within the Sons of the Sky. They are punished if caught in illegal acts – mostly the thefts of weird objects and the smuggling of forbidden substances – but otherwise ignored by the authorities. The heroes will probably have had their own run – ins with the society over the course of their adventures. Most members of the Sons are inefficient in their dealings, failing to pose a significant threat to the heroes and therefore hopefully not taken seriously. But there is a great danger hiding behind the Sons of the Sky. Their weapon, the Skyshatterer, is very real. It is an ancient artefact allowing its wielder to control the weather in large areas, able to unleash horrifying storms, blizzards or droughts, devastating whole landscapes. The true leader of the Sons, posing as the rich merchant Gemminia, has been working on her plan for a long time. Now that no one takes her agents seriously any more, her core group of supporters (the only ones who know her true identity as the “Sky Father”, leader of the Sons) have begun assembling the Shatterer in earnest. Suddenly very capable agents of the Sons of the Sky appear as if out of nowhere, while the fools are being used as scapegoats and distractions. Many rare gems and other substances vanish all over the realm, being taken to Gemminia who is, as one of the richest women in the kingdom, extremely well guarded. Can the heroes, despite former dealings with the society, recognize the true threat? And if they do, will anyone believe them?

GM NOTES:

Such a long adventure can only be pulled off properly if it is running in the background for a significant time. Have your heroes vanquish the Sons of the Sky several times, without finding them to be a threat. Ideally make them believe the propaganda, have NPCs make jokes about them and turn them into a laughing stock. This is all happening while the player characters are having different adventures. The Sons are "background noise", never heavily focused on. Until it is nearly too late...

15. STEEL BENEATH THE STREETS

MEDIUM LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON EXPLORATION AND COMBAT

Many buildings collapse as a sink hole opens under the northern part of town on one sunny spring afternoon. Most people manage to escape when their houses start shaking, but at least a dozen disappear into the depths of what seems to be an ancient cavern. Rescuers climb down in an effort to find survivors, and none of them return...

Soon the whole area is surrounded by soldiers and mercenaries are hired to investigate what is going on. Enter our heroes.

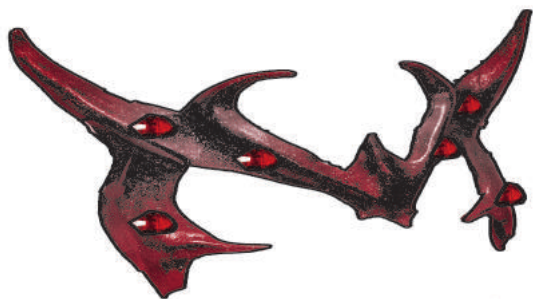
After climbing down into the depths the heroes will discover the remains of a rescue party. They have been killed by sinister blade traps placed on the ground. Soon it will become apparent that the remains of a much older city can be found within this cavern, now half buried under the debris that has rained down from above. Navigating these ruins will prove dangerous, for the traps left behind by the original – nonhuman – denizens are mostly still functioning and have killed many of the rescuers. Others have been chased off by the ancient guardians, beings made of stones and still protecting the homes of their long deceased masters. Riches can be found here as well, ancient objects of art made of gold and bronze. Will the heroes decide to fill their pockets, or will they try to find and protect the few remaining survivors of the city above, many of whom are heavily injured? Or maybe they will attempt to do both and be caught between greed and morals?

16. KISS OF THE MUSE

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION

The Loge of the Gold Petal is an exclusive group of the most talented artists in the city. In their semi-secret meetings sculptors, painters, poets and weavers socialize, discuss their work and explore the greater depths of the human mind together. This last step often involves music, the reciting of old esoteric texts and the consumption of illegal substances. In one such gathering they reach deeper into magic than they had planned. A spirit of inspiration is summoned, a creature the assembled artists, in their drug – induced state, call their muse. Sadly the thing is a succubus, a demon feeding on the life force of whoever it visits. It is now bound to some of the most prominent artists of the city and will slowly leach away their life-force.

While those artists most closely connected to the creature are visited by it nearly every night in what they think are wondrous dreams of a red haired beauty (male or female, depending on the sexual preferences of the artist) and are inspired to reach greater levels of their talent they also grow weaker and more erratic with every passing week. Some of them start losing their mind, hiding away from the world and frantically working on more and more art. Others are wasting away physically, with no medicine able to help. When Liosai the Golden, considered by many the most talented painter of the city, commits public suicide our heroes are hired to investigate, and might find clues in some of the artwork the deceased has left behind...



17. MISSING FOOD

LOW LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON EXPLORATION AND COMBAT

Beppo, innkeeper of the “Three Cranes”, has a problem. Food supplies are disappearing from his basement. At first he suspected rats or other vermin and has left two vicious dogs to guard the basement and his employee Felis to watch over the dogs. When he came back in the morning both Felis and the dogs were gone. The only traces left were trickles of a weird, greenish liquid on the floor. Beppo is starting to feel fear for his life and is hiring a group of mercenaries, our heroes, to go take a look and find out what happened.

A short investigation will reveal a crack in the ground behind some old crates in the basement. This can be widened and leads into a subterranean tunnel system. Here live several weird, fungoid slime – creatures, one of which has managed to get into the cellar of the Three Cranes, and has grown quite a bit due to all the nice food it found there. Both dogs and Felis are currently being digested within the thing, but it's family members will be more than happy to welcome any intruders.

18. GAMES THE RICHLINGS PLAY

MEDIUM LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON COMBAT

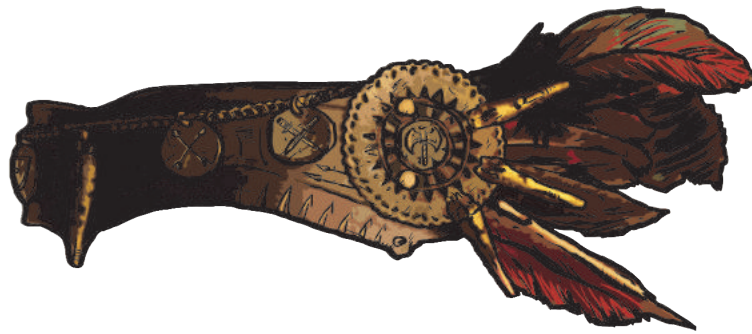
During their stay in a low class tavern our heroes will meet a duo of young nobles, Baronet Merilian and Sir Gellek, surrounded by hulking bodyguards. The two arrogant richlings have come to “mingle with the scum” and treat their little excursion as a great adventure. They will get fairly drunk quickly and then be eager to start some trouble. Both will be as insulting to the patrons as possible, trying to provoke them into a fight. Of course their well armed bodyguards will stand ready to break the bones of whoever actually dares to threaten their masters. Soon our heroes themselves will be targeted by the nobles' little games. Will they keep their cools despite horrible insults, or will they risk getting into a fight they might not win? And should they actually hurt one or even both nobles they might soon realize both of those arrogant youngsters are very well connected...and their families do not easily let commoners spill blue blood and get away with it.

19. FAST HANDS, SHORT FEET

LOW LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION

Several local merchants are suffering under a series of thefts and burglaries. Gold, jewels and fairly great amounts of high quality food are stolen. The thieves, fleet of foot and highly skilled, appear to be children. Soon the local watch is chasing after street urchins, trying to find out which of them have committed those crimes. Sadly and despite ever increasing brutality, the watch is not making much progress, especially because the street urchins are striking back, peppering the watchmen with rocks and dung while they are on patrol, then disappearing through allies and up rooftops.

The merchant Dandel, unhappy with both methods and progress of the watch, hires our heroes to track down and apprehend the criminals. The best way of finding the truth is befriending street urchins, for they know what is going on in “their” part of the city very well. The thieves are a group of halflings/gnomes (or people suffering from dwarfism, if that is better suited to your world) that have recently arrived in the city. They have opened an inn in a neighbouring part of town and have been collecting small riches to bolster their finances...and decent food to serve their guests. Indeed the leader of this group, a nimble cat burglar by the name of Tim Two-eyes, has assembled quite a bit of wealth. The tavern, called the “Short and Large”, is doing quite well, and the thieves will soon have no more reason to commit crimes. They have been looking for a way to become honest citizens, and the tavern might very well provide them the means to do so. If Tim and his folks are caught they will try to flee, but if the heroes let them go they will have made some interesting friends.



20. POWERS BEHIND THE THRONE

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION

For many years the name of “Redeye” has been feared in every corner of the city underworld.

This ruthless, masked crime boss has held many gangs under his control, mercilessly slaughtering all those who dared oppose his rule. He is the mastermind behind several high profile crimes like the blackmailing of Baron Senmore, the theft of the Green Heart emerald and the kidnapping of young Gregor, heir to the rich merchant house of Alavar. Many a time both the city watch and bounty hunters have been on his trail, but never could they close in on the mysterious villain, whose very henchmen do not know his identity.

Now a desperate thief by the name of Sulven approaches our heroes. He has heard of their honourable reputation and has forced himself to trust them with his life. He has some extremely valuable information about Redeye, for whom he had been working for quite a few years now. In exchange for that information Sulven wants the heroes to help him, his wife Carla and their two young daughters to find a safe haven, a secure hiding place in the city or beyond. He will not speak before his family is safe, but then hand over documents that strongly hint at the location of Redeye's headquarters...and they seem to be under the very manor of Baron Senmore, the man he had blackmailed and nearly beggared just a few years ago! Sulven thinks the whole operation was a smokescreen, and Redeye must be none other than the baron himself!

And he is nearly right...behind the mask of the villain hides Aldian, the baron's personal servant and close friend. Aldian is a very dangerous man, a retired assassin who has been working in (and under) the baron's mansion for over five years. His master does not know about the whole Redeye scheme and would be furious if he found out...but will be unlikely to believe the accusations without substantial proof. Needless to say, should Redeye learn about the heroes' investigation he will be ready to use his full power and influence to silence them forever.

21. THE TRUEST RED

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION

There is a serial killer on the loose within the city. He has struck half a dozen times, leaving behind cut – open victims missing organs or body parts. Soon the watch also discovers that most of the victims' blood is gone and not to be found around the bodies. When this information is passed around a panic grips the population. The word “vampire” is whispered everywhere. Temples are nearly overrun with new-found faith, undead – repelling charms are purchased in their hundreds and very few people go out at night. Some of the more aggressive elements amongst the people even build vampire hunting – squads, armed with stakes, silver and garlic, patrolling the streets and harassing anyone that looks even remotely suspicious.

In this panic our heroes are hired to investigate. They will soon realize that every victim disappears for a few hours before their remains are found. And those disappearances happen during the day, when the people feel safe...

Indeed the killer is not a vampire, but a very mortal maniac. Elias Karding is a wealthy painter, known for using bright and vibrant colours. Elias has always had a rather loose grip on sanity, and recently he has slipped even more. He now believes that only “living” material is worthy of his artwork. He drugs people, abducts them and drains them of blood, which he then uses as paint. Several other body parts feature in different artworks, and Elias has a whole basement full of grotesque paintings. He is eager to add much more to it.

While not a very skilled fighter himself Elias has hired two tight – lipped bodyguards from a distant land and has his house guarded by vicious dogs.

22. HOUSES OF LOVE AND GOLD

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND DIPLOMACY

The Shrine of Petals is the most luxurious establishment in the whole city. It is a house of exquisite wines, superbly beautiful women (and men!) and many other subtle pleasures. Only the richest can afford to enter these walls. Many powerful men are seen here quite often, most of them even discussing business transactions in private rooms. Sadly the rooms are not quite as private as one might hope. Consuela, the mistress of the house, has installed many hidden corridors and spy – holes. She has been collecting the secrets of her clients for years, and written them down in a fine ledger, her “Book of True Heart”, as she calls it. Some of this information Consuela, disguised as a young man and appearing under the fake name Sullven – who is known as one of the most powerful information brokers in the city – sells to her other clients. So far she has not gone overboard with it, but recently she might have gotten a little greedy...and now several powerful men are blackmailed by the Yellow Knives, a group of criminals who have spent a lot of money on “Sullven”.

Our heroes are hired by Baron Estevan – who would hate if his preference for young men became public knowledge – to discover the source of the blackmail, take out the ones responsible in the most covert way possible and find out who has been giving away so many secrets. The heroes might want to tread carefully though, for Consuela is very well guarded and can pull quite a few strings if she feels directly threatened.

23. LAWS OF THE PURE

LOW LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

Recently a man named Asperius has risen to prominence in the lower middle class section of the city. He is a charismatic leader, deeply religious, preaching of a humble life filled with family, hard work and honesty. Within a few weeks he has assembled a large following, with hundreds coming to watch his speeches. And these speeches are becoming increasingly more aggressive...

Asperius has so far failed to create much change in the city, and in his impatient nature he blames this shortcoming on the ones who he sees as “tempters”, leading the good people to sin. He starts preaching against prostitutes and innkeepers, demanding them to be thrown out of town. Many people find this very idea ridiculous but some of Asperius' closest followers might start acting upon his words, harassing hard working men and women. Soon the tension grows as both sides of the conflict become stronger and more organized...and our heroes might be caught in the middle. Will a peaceful solution be possible, or will parts of the city be smothered in blood and smoke?

24. CHANGING HEARTS

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY

Warlord Garadin was once leader of a powerful mercenary company known as the “Silver Swords”. He and his men have committed many evil acts, burning villages, robbing merchants and slaying innocents. Despite all this Garadin has received a full royal pardon for martial services to the crown. The Silver Swords have been disbanded ten years ago and ever since the former warlord has enjoyed a life of luxury with his ill – begotten gains. Recently however he has had a change of heart. He can barely rest, both his waking and sleeping minds being tormented by visions of his own evil deeds. Therefore Garadin has decided to seek atonement, calm his conscience before his death, for he is already well past his middle years.

The former warlord has received word of our heroes' good reputation and invites them into his villa in the city. He asks them to help him find this atonement and is prepared to pay quite handsomely.

If they accept his offer they will find themselves negotiating with many poor people whose homes and family were destroyed by the Silver Swords. Some of them might still seek vengeance against Garadin. While success will bring them the eternal gratitude of a powerful man, failure might mean the heroes themselves suffer a terrible reputation, now known as associates to the hate-worthy “Silver Slayer”. Should more aggressive conflict be desired in this adventure the reappearance of some former soldiers of the Silver Swords, hell-bent on preserving the fearsome reputation of their former commander, can easily lead to potential bloodshed.

25. A TIME FOR MASKS

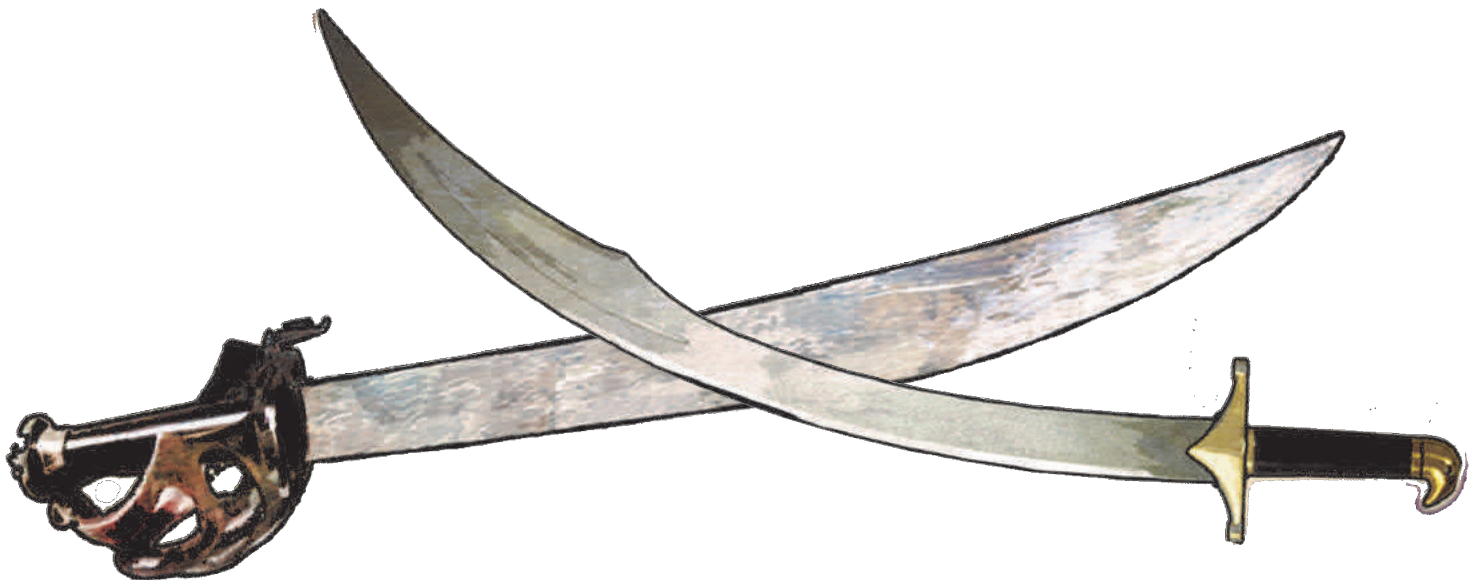
MEDIUM LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

The night of Carnival has come to the city, a time of letting go, experiencing things that you would never experience otherwise. People, their faces hidden, seek pleasures and small sins aplenty, and an atmosphere of exaltation rules within the streets. Harmless fun is king. But there is a darker side to this night of masks, for what lies underneath might not always be human...

In the “Crowned Eagle” tavern, gathering place for poets, musicians, connoisseurs of fine drink, and our heroes themselves, a conflict will erupt as the innkeeper, a popular man by the name of Bertram, is found dead in a back room. He has last been seen in the company of a lion – masked individual and a magnificent stag. When removing his peacock – mask, however, it is discovered that the dead body of Bertram has no face...only pale skin where eyes, mouth and nose should be.

The innkeeper was a changeling, capable of mimicking the human visage with supernatural powers. Both his assailants are also changelings. In fact they are “Bertram's” offspring, finally catching up to their father and slaying him in revenge for abandoning their mother many years ago. They are lingering close by, eager to see how their father's “friends” will react when witnessing his true nature, and unafraid of prosecution.

Our heroes, begged to investigate by countless guests of the Crowned Eagle on this night when even the city watch is drunk, will have to catch up to the two creatures and chase them down in a complex game of cat and mouse...for how do you find someone who can change his face at will? You will have to follow the masks.



26. TRUE BLADES

HIGH LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

The “Endorico” school of fencing is maybe the most famous of such institutions in the whole realm. Master Endorico, known as the “Black Sting” for his prowess with rapier and dagger, would despite his significant age still be considered as one of the most dangerous men far and wide.

For many years he has had two prize pupils, both of them as good or maybe even better than their master. Gisrak Stormblade is a common – born man of unsophisticated mind. He has dedicated his whole life, every waking moment, to perfecting the art of the blade. His rival and second direct pupil of Master Endorico, is Alric de Scarra, the son of a rich noble house. He is well read, intelligent and extremely ambitious...and he loathes Stormblade. Both of these two pupils are absolutely deadly, masters of the blade, and have assembled a large group of followers themselves.

Recently Master Endorico has unveiled an unpopular choice: he wishes for Gisrak and Alric to both succeed him and take mastery of the fencing school together. Sadly neither of the two, in their hatred of each other, has taken the news very well. Conflict is about to erupt amongst their followers, and soon the whole city might be engulfed in this three way battle between old Master Endorico, his best pupils, and all their many followers. First there are brawls in taverns, then blades are drawn in the city streets. Many dangerous fencers see a chance to make their names eternally known by defeating or even killing famous opponents. Our heroes might be able to end this conflict with diplomacy or the blade, but it might prove very difficult either way. The alternative, however, is seeing the city descend into a war zone, for the watch is incapable of stopping the dangerous duellists.

27. DEATH IS COMING

HIGH LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON COMBAT

Calderus the Hunter is probably the most feared assassin in the realm. He announces every single hit beforehand by sending his signature, a carving of stags and wolves, to his target. Nobles and merchants have hired small armies to stop him, tried to run to neighbouring kingdoms or have even faked their own deaths. None of them ever escaped...

Now Baron Wenfel has received an unexpected carving and is understandably terrified. He has sent his family out into the country and started fortifying his mansion. Dozens of soldiers are hired to protect him, and our heroes are also approached. The baron promises great riches if they can stop the Hunter, who will surely be arriving within the next few days to claim his life. But in truth Calderus is already here. The assassin has a very particular modus operandi. He has significant magical powers of both illusion and clairvoyance, being able to foresee what his prey will do once it has been scared. He nearly always slips in with the hirelings, bodyguards or servants, raising the tension with several small attacks or weird incidents. Then, when his target and its helpers cannot think straight any more, he moves in for the kill, slipping away as soon as the deed is done. But this time, if our heroes remain calm and clear – headed, the foul assassin might have finally found his match.

28. PRISON OF BROKEN SPIRITS

MEDIUM LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON COMBAT

Anderis Halgan, eldest of the Halgan brothers and heir to a large merchant empire, has gone insane a few years ago. To protect others and assure his own well being he was locked away in the Asylum of Greenlake by his younger brother Tomaso. Greenlake is a beautiful place from the outside, with wondrous gardens, small fountains and well – dressed wardens. On the inside it shows a different face: drugged, tied – down prisoners living in tiny cells. They are not fed much and hardly permitted any type of movement. It is a place for the insane and those who are abandoned by their families. Visitors are very, very rare. Luckily Gregos Halgan, youngest of the brothers, has not forgotten his oldest sibling. After much research he has discovered that Anderis was never insane. He was poisoned by Tomaso, who saw it as an effective way to get rid of the man standing between him and a huge inheritance. Gregos is now looking for skilled people to break into the highly secured facility of Greenlake and liberate Anderis. Sadly the elder brother is extremely weak from the horrible conditions he has been living in for several years and Gond, the sadistic head warden, has explicit orders (and has been well paid) to not let this particular lunatic/prisoner leave the facility alive.

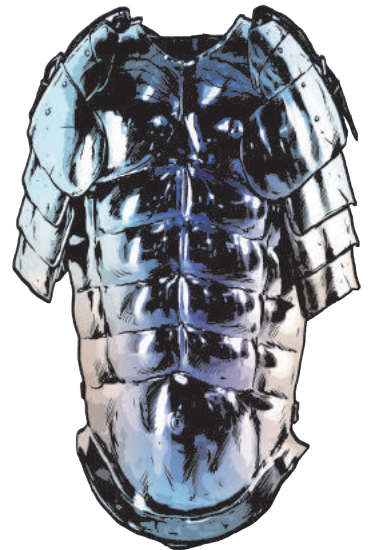
29. MADNESS IN THE GREAT

HIGH LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

Lord Elusis, long time ruler of the city, was once beloved by his subjects. He started many building projects, gave to the poor, kept the peace in the land and the underworld in check. As he grows older however the lord is slowly slipping away, losing his mind. He is becoming increasingly paranoid, imagining assassins behind every corner and demagogues planning his fall in every tavern. To protect himself Lord Elusis has bought a number of artificial creatures, automatons or golems, enchanted in a way that they only obey his personal commands. To pay for this small army taxes in the city have been raised, and people grow more and more hateful towards the man ruling over them. Now that the golems are created Lord Elusis has thrown out many of his human guards and servants, and the lack of interaction with sane mortal minds has even further increased his madness.

The “Ironfists”, as the new guard is called by the citizens, receives daily commands to arrest people suspected of plotting against their lord. Several of those who were taken away never return.

Now, driven to extreme measures by Lord Elusis, several members of the low nobility, rich merchants and even officers of the city guard are starting to plot the tyrant's fall. In light of his former good deeds they do not wish to stoop to assassination but would rather have a mostly peaceful exchange of power, with the Ironfists destroyed and Elusis living his last years in peaceful imprisonment. Our heroes are hired by Baronet Velmar, a man unsure of the right course of action, to find an unbloody solution to the whole problem, for he is afraid that the takeover his peers are planning might result in horrible tragedy.



30. THE MEANING OF WEALTH

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON
EXPLORATION, INVESTIGATION AND DIPLOMACY

Several weeks ago a new species of weird, golden – carapaced insect has been found in old catacombs beneath the city streets. These creatures seem fairly rare, illusive and slightly dangerous due to their poisonous sting, but all in all their discovery would have been forgotten soon enough were it not for one man: Silvio Severra, conman extraordinaire. In a series of well thought – out schemes, in the personas of a mysterious wizard named Saldar and a travelling merchant called Alfredo “the Golden”, assisted by an old alchemist named Finnek and the goldsmith Andreas, he has managed to convince several of the city's richest people that these insects are extremely valuable. These “Sun-scarabs” (a name completely invented by the silver-tongued conman), so many now believe, are magical creatures, leftover from an older age, and within their bodies they have the mystical ability to create small diamonds. These diamonds can be harvested within a few short months if the creatures are imprisoned and fed well.

Now the race for the Sun – scarabs is on, as hunters, mercenaries and criminals scour the catacombs for the critters. Greed has gotten the better of many people involved, and violence is spilling out into the city streets. Our heroes are caught up in the events as they make the acquaintance of a young scholar who is desperate to prove that the creatures are simply normal insects. Sadly no one seems to believe him, and thus the violence of the mad rush for jewels could soon engulf the whole city. Silvio Severra in the meantime is long gone, but both Finnek and Andreas might be found and put under pressure to set the most important minds of the city straight on the issue.

31. SEEING TRUTH

HIGH LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION, EXPLORATION AND COMBAT

Many years ago a powerful magical creature has been imprisoned deep beneath the temple of the sun god. There it has remained for several centuries, while the divine bonds holding it grew weaker and weaker. Only about a year ago has it finally liberated itself, rising to the surface to find that the ancient temple has been turned into an orphanage and the hated priests of the sun god were long gone. But this creature, a master of illusion and manipulation, decided to seek revenge against the whole city instead, many of whose inhabitants are descendants of the priests and their followers.

To this end the being, calling itself “Lakros the Benevolent”, has started undermining stability. Using its magic to hide itself in the guise of a golden – haired orphan it has dominated the monks working with the children, using them to infiltrate the city's criminal and mercantile elite at the same time. From that position Lakros has been fanning the flames of conflict, removing key figures from the board and dominating others. There has been several violent clashes between the city guard, private bodyguards and underworld thugs in the last couple of weeks. Tendrils of dark magic stretch trough the city, but not even the local wizards are skilled enough to find out what exactly is going on. One of them, an old scholar named Ignatius, hires our heroes for a specific purpose: he wishes them to retrieve the “Eye of God”, an artefact of true seeing, capable of determining the nature of the evil dwelling within the city. The Eye is kept in an ancient tomb, resting place of the high priests of the sun god. Sadly Ignatius will have already been killed by thugs under Lakros' control when our heroes return, but some notes hinting at the extreme danger the city is in might be saved from his burning home...and with the Eye of God the true nature of the benevolent golden – haired orphan might finally be revealed.

32. INNOCENCE DESPOILED

HIGH LEVEL LONG ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

For many years the powerful witch known as “Mother Nigura” has worked her evil magic in the great cities of the realm. She has been subtle but her machinations nonetheless impressive, for her magic gives her a disgusting power. She can take control of children, brainwashing them and turning them into spies, agents, even assassins. Many of the urchins in the city streets are working for her, passing on information to the evil creature. Mother Nigura has been using them to collect riches, claim magical items for herself and influence the criminal gangs. Small magical gems implanted into the flesh of the urchins allow the witch to see through their young eyes, hear through their ears, speak with their mouths and even draw upon their life-force should she need it. Once the children grow too old to control them the crystals shatter to pieces, cutting the poor urchins apart from the inside. There has been many such unexplained deaths in recent years...but who cares about dirty street rats anyway?

There are many ways our heroes can stumble upon this terrible trail. Maybe they are actually investigating the recent urchin deaths. Maybe they find themselves shadowed by small figures one too many times and try to interrogate the little spies, only to see them bleed out from within. Or maybe they come across the witch's plans in the course of a different adventure, especially one involving the underworld of a large city.

Should the heroes try to kill Mother Nigura the horrible witch will draw upon the lives of the urchins under her command to heal herself, killing many. When she is slain all crystals shatter, leading to hundreds of small corpses in the streets...unless someone finds a way to break Nigura's evil magic even before attacking her head – on.

GM NOTES:

Street urchins are of course not particularly dangerous opponents for high level player characters, but they can make their lives miserable in different ways. Poisons and traps can be nasty, especially if the children strike at a moment where our heroes are already fighting different foes. But the real terror is information. The urchins are everywhere, and they can witness dirty deeds, spread rumours, endanger allies and more. The emotional impact of this plot on players and characters who are soft hearted can be quite severe. But maybe that is exactly what you want...

33. REMEMBER YOU ARE MORTAL

HIGH LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

For several generations the white rose has been a powerful symbol in the city. To some it stood for liberation, vengeance and justice, to others for murder, lawlessness and the forces of evil. For the white rose is the symbol of a group of mysterious assassins that strike once or twice every decade, targeting corrupt politicians, ruthless crime bosses and nobles with ambitions that must be bought with the sacrifices of commoners' lives. The White Rose is feared by the rich but loved by many of the poor, without anyone knowing who stands behind that symbol.

Recently the assassins have struck one more time, slaying Baron Polius Milven, a figure beloved by many. The sheer fact of his being a target however has besmirched the Baron's reputation, for surely the White Rose only slays those with evil plans. That is indeed true, for Milven was involved in large scale deals with illicit substances and had plans to smuggle several shipments of terrible drugs into the city. His business associates, the Silver Palm Syndicate, are not happy with his death but young Baron Sahander Milven, son to the murdered noble, is even less happy. He was unaware of most of his father's dealings but is far from a good person himself. The sheer audacity of the White Rose has enraged him terribly. Sahander swore to make the mysterious assassins pay for their many crimes, to finally drag them into the light of day and tear them apart. Thus he has spent a lot of money on powerful hirelings, our heroes amongst them, who are sent to find and destroy the assassins. The fact that the White Rose is preparing to come after Sahander next, for he will soon start to take over his father's dealings with the Syndicate, complicates things...

Will our heroes find the assassins who are living as a well known and popular family of woodcarvers in the heart of the city? And if they do, will they attempt to take down the White Rose, who have trained in the art of the blade since birth? Or will they side with them to get rid of another threat for the city in the unconventional, brutal way the Rose is famous for?

34. ECHOES OF THE DEAD

HIGH LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Over a hundred years ago the wizard – tyrant Derezar was overthrown and slain by a group of heroes led by the knight Sir Pender. This battle between good and evil has now inspired the great actor and playwright Avonis to create his best work yet. The premier of his play “Derezar”, starring Avonis himself in the role of the dread wizard, shall be performed in the largest theatre of the city within a couple of weeks. Many rich and influential visitors are expected, tickets sold out incredibly quickly. The whole population is talking about it. Avonis has in the meantime immersed himself in portraying the terrible Derezar. He has gone so far as to acquire several items that were once in the tyrant's possession, to adorn his costume with them and help him get into the right mindset. Sadly he got more than he bargained for...

One of the pieces, a snake – shaped talisman, is a magical artefact created by Derezar himself, holding a small part of his mind. Now that lingering splinter of spirit is starting to influence Avonis more and more. The actor occasionally loses control over his body without being aware of it, and the spirit has used him to assemble a group of cultists, descendants of the tyrant's servants. Together they want to strike during the play, killing many members of the ruling class as revenge for Derezar's death. Even before the actual play weird things start happening. Several members of other theatre troupes who had tried to damage the premier of “Derezar” and pull Avonis' reputation into the mud disappear suddenly. The harshest critic in the city is burned alive as his house catches fire. Urbin, director of the largest theatre, is getting worried that such weird occurrences might threaten the success of the play. He hires a group of mercenaries, our heroes, to look into the whole thing.

35. TO THE SMARTEST THE SPOILS

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND DIPLOMACY

Several millennia ago the god of trickery walked the world as a mortal, playing cruel jokes on all he encountered. During this time he created an artefact known as the “coin of fate”, a weirdly shaped thing of silver giving everyone who possesses it incredible luck. He then cast the coin out into the world. It reappeared several decades later in the hands of a man who was to become the King of Thieves, richest outlaw who ever lived. Ever since then the coin resurfaced every thirty or so years, sparking a mighty contest over its possession. The coin cannot be taken by force and will destroy anyone who attempts to do so with a string of horrible misfortune. It can only be given freely or taken by deceit or trickery.

Now rumours are about the coin of fate has been seen in the city, in the possession of an old thief named Lester. Sadly the old one is found murdered soon after, only for a gang of cut-throats calling themselves the Alley – Wolves to be destroyed in a series of terrible accidents a few days later. That is confirmation to those who have heard the legends and many thieves' guilds and other criminal organizations are now on the hunt. The city watch, interested in stopping any outlaw from acquiring such a dangerous magic, also send their own agents after it. And a temple hires our heroes to obtain the coin for them, for they wish to seal it away for good. Soon the lower parts of town are engulfed in a flood of deceit and trickery. Only the most cunning can win the luck of a god...

36. NO REST FOR THE WICKED

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

For many years certain parts of the city were rumoured to be haunted by the spirits of criminals who were sentenced to death. Folk stayed away from the hanging trees, blood fields and the hill of the decapitations after dark, and all was well. For a few weeks now however sightings of grim spectres in other parts of the city have been growing increasingly frequent. These tormented souls are only unsettling at first, unable to inflict harm upon the living. But their grip upon this world seems to grow stronger with every passing night, and some of them have been seen during daylight hours as well. The watch is helpless and the population on the edge of panic. Our heroes are hired to investigate and find the source of this evil magic. They will realize that the appearances of the spectres are closely tied to the area around an old prison. This is indeed where they come from, for the building is the headquarters of a religious cult calling themselves “the Judicators”. The wardens, all part of the cult, use a magical artefact made of black chain to curse the criminals of the city, forcing them to experience terrible agony instead of passing to the world beyond. Only if the Judicators are destroyed or convinced that their ways are wrong will the spectres stop coming.

37. TAINTED WARES

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Sullden, a local blacksmith, has always been moderately successful, the quality of his wares acceptable to most of his customers. Recently however he has started bringing forth incredible pieces of weapons and armour. These are highly coveted, and Sullden finds himself a rich man within a few short weeks of hard work. Other blacksmiths are jealous and suspicious...how did the mediocre fellow increase his skill in such a short amount of time? All attempts to find out the secret fail, for Sullden has used some of his riches to hire a group of muscular bodyguards protecting the privacy of his shop and house. But there are other troubles. Several rich men in the city develop a mean streak, insulting their peers and abusing their servants. When Sir Illono, a well – known knight, beats a man to death in a simple argument, one of his peers, Sir Kendrick, hires our heroes to investigate. They will soon find out that all those who seem to be slipping into evil or madness have recently acquired weapons or armour from Master Sullden's smithy. Indeed all those items are tainted by dark magic, for the smith has made a deal with an incubus to increase his skill and the fiendish creature has added something of its own essence into every product.

38. THE ORBS OF POWER

EPIC LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

There are several influential magic circles in the realm, but few are as influential and as despised as the wizards calling themselves “The Cirlet of Light”. They are extremely powerful and superbly arrogant, meddling in the affairs of others whenever they see fit. Their magic however does not come from a natural source. They siphon it from five powerful orbs, one for each wizard. These artefacts allow them to draw upon the energies of Mellandis, a sleeping god.

Just a week ago a hidden cult, ancient servants of Mellandis, have discovered the secret Sanktuarium of Balthasar van Plinis, one of the wizards. They broke into it and stole the orb hidden there. This has devastated the Cirlet of Light, shattering their feelings of invincibility. They were unaware of the existence of any cults of Mellandis and have realized that they cannot use their magic against these “Sons of the Dream”.

Balthasar has very little magic remaining, for he has been putting his trust in the orb for too long. He is afraid he knows exactly what is happening...and he is right. The Sons of the Dream can use the orb to unleash powerful magic, and they are also using it to track the other four orbs. Should they acquire them all they can raise Mellandis from his sleep. This would not have many consequences for the realm, for the god is not an evil one and does not like to meddle in mortal affairs, but it would bring a terrible fate down upon the five arrogant wizards who dared steal from him. Balthasar knows this and in his desperation he will try to hire our heroes to assist him in recovering the orb. His arrogant personality and the fact he will be feeding them a lot of lies about saving the world from an evil demon king might eventually bring our heroes to side with the Sons of the Dream. That is not very safe either, for the four other members of the Cirlet of Light can still unleash extremely powerful magic. And they hate being betrayed...

39. GEMINI

MEDIUM LEVEL LONG ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION, DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

The realm has been plagued by the criminal organization that call themselves “Gemini” for many years. They have their fingers in every pie, be it smuggling, drug – selling, illegal arena fights, burglary, fencing or outright assassination. Our heroes have clashed with the members of Gemini many times and have heard of their leader, a figure called “Blackmask”, who is rumoured to be immortal and have all kinds of weird magics. Now they are hired to take Blackmask down once and for all. After managing to find his hideout in the depths of the sewers and defeating the dangerous villain they discover a weird red crystal embedded in the interior of his leather mask, just to watch it fall apart and crumble to dust before their very eyes.

Sadly for them just a few days later Blackmask re-emerges, leading a group of cut-throats to take revenge upon his killers. But this time there is a women under the mask. After her defeat Blackmask is soon “resurrected” again. More and more outlaws flock to Gemini, impressed with the fearsome reputation of immortality. In truth Blackmask is not one person, but five mighty underworld leaders playing the same role. They are magically connected trough the crystals in their masks and even share memories with one another. This magic has addled their brains, and they see themselves as immortals. They will not stop coming after the heroes until at least four of them are slain...

40. JUSTICE IS RED

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION, DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

Until a few years ago Edrick Starin has been a great hero to the city, commander of the guards and bane to smugglers, thieves and cut-throats. Then his family died as unexpected casualties of a war between different outlaw groups. Shaken with grief Edrick lay down his badge and disappeared. Now he has returned, and his heart burns with hatred. Having acquired even more impressive skills in a distant guild of assassins Edrick is ready to bring his crusade to the very streets he once patrolled with his men. He starts butchering criminals, slaying them in the most gruesome fashion and leaving their bodies behind for other outlaws to discover. Soon he goes even further, targeting petty crooks and small-time thieves...and then he starts going after their friends and families. There is no mercy left in the heart of Edrick, only the fires of hatred.

The city is heavily divided by his deeds. Some cheer the dark avenger on, others are appalled by his doings. The guards cannot catch him, for he knows all their tricks. And the underworld is panicking more and more with every day...Our heroes are hired by Captain Martis, once close friend and protégé of Edrick, to stop the brutal killing spree one way or the other, before the city completely loses its head in the chaos.

41. FLICKERING DEATH

HIGH LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION

In an old ruin unveiled by a landslide close to the city a mysterious crate is discovered. Within it are thirty or so ancient candles, beautifully wrought from dark wax, adorned with runes of silver. These candles are sold at an auction within the city, several rich families acquiring a few each. About half the candles are bought by Targyn, a pious merchant preparing to celebrate an upcoming holy day with a large gathering at his manor.

Just a few days after the auction the family of Chevrin, one of the richest landowners, is discovered butchered in their house. Guards, servants and even pets have also died, literally torn apart. Only the day after the old widower Baron Jeran and his butler are discovered in the same state, killed in a closed room with no signs of forced entry. Soon the city is awash with the mutterings about dark magic...especially after the merchant family of Granos is found slaughtered at a feast table, servants and all. Now the rich are starting to panic, hiring extra guards and willing to offer anyone who can stop the murders quite the substantial fortune. Enter our heroes...

The slaughters are committed by an evil spirit, a powerful magical entity bound to the ancient candles. It is summoned every time the candles are lit, but without the right incantation it is not bound to obey the summoners. The more candles are lit, the more powerful the creature is. If Targyn the merchant is not stopped before the holy day celebration he will light all candles, thus summoning the spirit with enough power to destroy half the city in its rage. And that much blood spilled by its hands might finally grant it freedom. Already the amount of death it has caused allows it to whisper in the dreams of all those holding some of its candles, and it has persuaded Targyn that he has to light all candles during the holy day at any price, for the benevolence of his god will surely come to him then. The poor fellow might be harder to persuade than expected, and he will spend a lot of money to get the candles back if they are taken from him.

The waxy artefacts are protected from harm by a powerful magic. The only way to destroy them is to burn them down to nothing...which is obviously quite a dangerous solution.

42. QUESTIONS OF FAITH

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION,
DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

The faithful of the city have long followed two religious leaders: Father Canderus and High Priest Nestor are both high ranking, pious men, strong in faith and advocates of all that is good and pure within the human soul. Recently a string of disappearances have shaken the city, and many flock to the two temples to hear their leaders speak of hope. And for a while they did, until one fateful evening just about a week ago, when both Father Canderus and High Priest Nestor told their respective congregations they had discovered who was behind the disappearances. They accused each other of being corrupted by evil, tainted by the touch of dark magic. This leads to confusion and outrage. Quarrels break out between their followers, and soon there are fistfights in the streets. The city guard tries to intervene, but is helpless against the mobs, especially because they do not want to hurt too many of their fellow citizens. The city council turns to mercenaries to solve the problem and hires our heroes to investigate.

There is not much time, for the situations grows more dire by the day. The two holy men are locked away, protected by their most devout of followers, for there have already been attempts to arrest them both. And the violence in the city streets grows every day. Soon the first deaths will come, and then a torrent of terror might be unleashed, as neighbour clashes with neighbour and brother tries to kill brother. Chaos will reign. And that is exactly as intended...

Both priests have been abducted by cultists, held imprisoned deep underneath the city. The cult, calling themselves "Bringers of Freedom", seeks to cause as much mayhem and chaos as possible, forcing the people to shake off the chains of civilization and do as nature intends them to. They have summoned two shape-changing demons to take the place of the two holy men, and these demons take great joy in throwing the mortal world into savagery.

43. A SHOW OF STRENGTH

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON COMBAT AND INVESTIGATION

Count Senius of Wrend is attacked on a hunting trip. Outlaws slay his bodyguards and abduct the old gentleman. His family receives a letter just a few days after. They are to pay a huge sum of money, otherwise the count will be returned piece by piece. Instead of doing so however Obedin, eldest son and heir of Wrend, swears revenge upon the evildoers. He uses his family's riches to hire mercenary groups and reach out to the city guard. Together they fund a massive crackdown, attacking crime bosses and thieves' guilds. Soon the underworld is desperately trying to find whoever holds Count Senius, forcing his release. But their investigation is unsuccessful, and the crackdown continues. Now Keral, leader of the River Lords gang, reaches out to our heroes, begging them to find the old count and stop the impending civil war...for the other underworld bosses are organizing all – out attacks against the city guard. Keral does not wish to see that much bloodshed, and he doubts the guard and their mercenary allies can be beaten.

No members of the underworld know where Count Senius is, for he has not been taken by criminals. His abduction happened at the hands of the Wolfbrothers, a brutal mercenary band working for his son, Obedin. Together with Ulldar, an ambitious young captain in the city guard, the heir to Wrend has put together a plan. He can get rid of his father, acquire a fearsome reputation for himself and help his friend advance further in the guard. And along the way they can eradicate the scum of the city, maybe even once and for all.

Count Senius is still alive, despite the Wolfbrothers receiving orders to kill him. Their leader, a dangerous fighter calling himself Luparo, decided to keep the old noble imprisoned in a secret camp just outside the city, holding him there as a secret ace should Obedin try to turn on the Wolfbrothers during any stage of his complicated plan.



44. THE WRATH OF GENTLE MEN

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND DIPLOMACY

After hearing rumours of hidden riches in the local monastery of the god of healing a group of thieves break into its walls, eager to steal whatever is there. Things do not go according to plan, for the thieves are discovered. Reacting with shocking brutality the monks and nuns attack and slay them on the spot. Only one, a wily girl known as Leaf, escapes the assault. The tale spreads through the underworld like wildfire, soon reaching the ears of more law – abiding citizens as well. Weird rumours circulate the city streets, and many are superbly curious as to what is going on. The monastery meets all inquiries with silence. The abbot Coltan is apologetic, saying his people had to defend themselves, but offers no further explanation. After several curious citizens try to find out more the gates of the monastery are closed and only the very sick or severely wounded are allowed entry.

Our heroes are hired by a young scholar, an extremely curious man by the name of Perivan. He wishes to know the secret behind the monastery and the monks' behaviour, willing to offer good coin for any answers. He suspects the monastery to be a font for some type of criminal organization and sees himself as a hero when he presents proof of this theory to the city guard.

The truth is much darker. In an ancient chamber deep below the monastery dwells a creature known only as the “Black Touch”.

It is a powerful plague demon, imprisoned in this holy ground many centuries ago. All monks and nuns of the monastery have sworn to guard the secret and the prison with their lives and have obtained combat abilities of surprising skill – and a hidden cache of weapons – to do just that.

45. THE FINAL STING

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON COMBAT AND INVESTIGATION

Within a few days several men are attacked and slain by mysterious creatures that leave their body bloated and disfigured. Soon the culprits are discovered: giant scorpions, as big as a man, exotic beasts not native to this part of the world at all. The city watch manages to kill several specimen, but after a short break even more attacks follow. The murders seem random, but there are other rumours circulating the city's underworld...most of the victims were in some way connected to one or another local gang, either outright members, informants or people owing them some sort of favour. The Red Crowns are hit especially badly, two of their leaders and their richest client falling prey to the terrible scorpions.

Despite several more creatures being killed the attacks do not seem to end. The watch is searching for some type of nest, but cannot find it. Our heroes are hired by a merchant called Ulric. One of his sons has been killed by the creatures, and he wants the menace ended. That however is only half the reason. Ulric is the richest fence in the city, with ties to most of the gangs, and he fears for his own life.

Soon our heroes will discover that the gang profiting the most from these attacks, taking quite a bit of territory from the ones weakened by the scorpions, are the Roof-foxes. Indeed the one behind the attacks is the leader of the foxes, a sly woman by the name of Melania. She has recently brought an exotic sorcerer into town, a red – skinned man called Xiku. He is breeding the scorpions and controlling them with his magic, directing them where to strike. Many of the Roof-foxes suspect their leader is somehow connected to the attacks, but only the highest ranking ones actually know.

46. THEFTS WITHOUT A TRACE

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

A series of thefts shakes the confidence of the local nobles. Several expensive items are stolen from heavily guarded locations, all disappearing without a trace. Some whisper of evil spirits hungering for riches, others suspect a group of well – connected burglars who have obtained magical help.

And there is also the rumour of “The Fox”, a master thief who has supposedly appeared in the city a few weeks ago. While the city watch pursues these rumours two more thefts happen in the same manner, valuable objects disappearing without a trace.

Now our heroes are hired to investigate. Clearly the watch is completely useless, and several nobles have become quite enraged. No matter if spirit, gang or lone master thief, they want the culprit punished and their property back.

The explanation for all those things is much simpler: corrupt guards. Many of the private guards in the city, protecting vaults and nobles alike, were once members of the Lightning Blades, an elite mercenary company that dissolved about ten years ago. They were persuaded to commit those crimes by a man called Nesril, once known as “Goldeyes”. He was quartermaster of the Lightning Blades and still has many rich contacts from that time. Now he has become a very successful fence. Nesril has contacted his former comrades, promising them enough riches to retire with and drawing them into his scheme. Soon enough he will have sold the stolen items to buyers from far away cities for a substantial fortune. Should he be discovered Nesril will grab the money and try to run, leaving all his former associates behind to take the fall.

47. TIME TO PAY

LOW LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON COMBAT

As our heroes sit in a bar they hear a scream coming from the back door and witness a blonde, skinny man being stabbed by several hooded individuals. The assailants flee as soon as someone else gets involved, leaving the severely wounded victim behind. Before he dies (or falls unconscious, assuming the heroes can somehow stop most of the bleeding) he will reveal his name, Gerwin, and beg his rescuers to protect his brother, for the knife-wielders are after him next.

Both the victim and his brother Herwon are craftsmen, running a small shop only a few streets from where the incident happened. They have both amassed gambling debts with the wrong people and have been struggling to pay for the past several weeks. Now Orweth of the Blackthorn gang, a local crime boss, has sent the tough guys to collect...and if the brothers cannot pay they will be made into an example for all other “clients” in the area.

Herwon is already on the run, several thugs looking for him. Several more are in the shop, holding his wife and young son hostage. The lowlifes will not be happy when our heroes stick their noses into the whole business.

48. THE UNBREAKABLE VAULT

HIGH LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Count Aldrik has always been a weird fellow, more interested in occult studies and ancient books than the company of his fellow nobles. Now his eccentricity seems to have reached his peak, for he has spent most of his money on the construction of a massive vault underneath his mansion. The vault, so say all sources, is protected by layers upon layers of traps, mechanisms and magical contraptions. Count Aldrik declares it impregnable and offers a large sum of money to anyone who can successfully breach it, no questions asked.

Soon several well known thieves in the city disappear, with rumours abound that they fell afoul of "Aldrik's Riddle", as the whole thing soon comes to be known. Master locksmiths, burglars and even a few wizards come from neighbouring cities to take up the challenge. But while this is happening several other vaults are attacked, their riches plundered. The city watch investigates with great effort, for they have several angry nobles breathing down their necks, but it seems like no one in the underworld knows anything. Baron Querin, who has lost some extremely valuable works of art, hires our heroes to open up their own investigation.

The cracked vaults seem the handiwork of several well – known local master – burglars like Obrin the Cat and Hogun Twelfefingers. Only trouble is: Obrin, Hogun and several others that might have the skill to pull off that sort of thing have not been seen in a few months, ever since they attempted to breach Aldrik's Riddle...

In truth there is no such thing as the impregnable vault. It is but a story concocted by Count Aldrik himself. During his occult research he has found the formula to create a ring of powerful mind control. Unable to resist he spent most of his wealth and nearly all of his time on the formula. He was successful after several months of difficult work and finally obtained what he had always wanted: magical power. Armed with the ring he set out to reclaim his wealth. He concocted Aldrik's Riddle, inspired by an ancient legend, and drew skilled thieves to him using the rumour of the vault as bait. Now all these thieves are mind – controlled, waiting for their next task in the count's basement. Aldrik has seen the ring's amazing potential and has decided to amass such a large fortune that he can finance enough expensive studies for several lifetimes...even if he has to dominate all outlaws and beggar all his peers in the city to reach that goal.

49. A NIGHT OF MASKS

MEDIUM LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

Adventurers are sometimes hired by less scrupulous members of the city guard because their faces are mostly unknown to the local underworld and they can act outside of legal boundaries if the need arises. That is exactly why our heroes are contacted by young Lieutenant Morten. He has received a tip about an imminent important criminal transaction. Two crime bosses, Degan One-eye and Morak of the Greencloaks have organized a meeting during a celebratory ball held in the mansion of the eccentric Count Nikodemos. They will be in negotiations about the fate of a very valuable golden mask which Degan wishes to procure from Morak. Both criminals are under the count's protection, therefore untouchable to the city guard. But if our heroes can organize costumes and masks for themselves, infiltrate the ball and acquire the mask, any cooperation between the two crime lords would be stopped for the foreseeable future.

Security on the ball is very secure, most weapons and armour are prohibited. The heroes need to be both charming and cunning to avoid causing trouble with any of the extremely wealthy and influential guests, find the criminals and manage to sabotage their meeting. And then there is the problem of the mask, for it is an old artefact holding strange magics...and the heroes are not the only ones after it. Several cultists, led by the maniac Baron Lugos, have also infiltrated the ball and will strike if they see an opportune moment, throwing the whole thing into chaos.

50. SINS OF OUR KIN

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

Sir Eliven and Master Remus are both amongst the greatest heroes of the realm, having proven their valour on the battlefield and their faithfulness to the crown many times over. But they are also both hotheads, putting extreme importance in their honour and good name. And they both have younger brothers not quite as noble as themselves. Ullven and Perik are the black sheep of their respective families, heavily involved with the local underworld. Ullven works with the Knifehands, Perik is part of the Lions. And those two gangs, both on the rise to power, are about to clash in a violent street war for dominance of the eastern quarters.

The wealthy Thalir, a concerned citizen who knows both families quite well (and is also an agent of his majesty's information gathering network) is worried. Should Ullven and Perik injure or even kill one another it could lead to a clash between their brothers. The realm does not want to lose neither Sir Eliven nor Master Remus. Therefore our heroes are hired to take care of the two troublesome younger brothers in whatever non – violent way they can and make sure nothing bad happens to them. If they can stop the gang war from erupting along the way, even better.

This task is not as easy as it might sound, for both Ullven and Perik are slippery individuals, not particularly likeable and difficult to find in the first place.

51. FOR THE GREATER GOOD

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND DIPLOMACY

For several months now bodies have gone missing from the local cemeteries. Freshly dug up graves are discovered, and the population fearfully whispers of ghoules and similar creatures. In truth a duo of body – thieves is responsible for the whole mess. Manfred and Will are two unsavoury individuals, greedy and not particularly bright. Therefore they are soon apprehended and killed by the city watch after a short and brutal fight. This deed is highly valued but brings its own repercussions. The thieves were working for Kendler, a highly respected physician. Kendler is a quiet man, kindly and well – loved by everyone he treats. He is the personal friend of several minor nobles, whose lives (or the lives of family members) he has saved. At the same time he treats the poor free of charge on one evening every week.

Despite all this Kendler has a darker side. He is eager to know how the human body functions, therefore working with the thieves to acquire fresh objects of study that he cuts apart in his basement. Now, with Manfred and Will dead, he has run out of supplies. And there is a voice within the doctor that whispers of the endless possibilities lying within the studies on living people... Soon Kendler has started abducting young, healthy individuals. He drugs them and hides them in a basement deep under his physician shop, where he performs terrible experiments, cutting their flesh. Every discovery he makes turns Kendler into a better physician, able to help and heal more people. But is this all for the Greater Good? Or does Kendler just satisfy a dark part in his own soul?

Our heroes are hired to investigate the recent disappearances by the worried family members of Kendler's latest victim. But even when they track him down the doctor is a hard man to touch...there are too many who like him or feel to be in his debt.



52. HANGING TIME

LOW LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY

Simmon, an old friend of our heroes, sends a message asking them for help. They will soon realize that the poor man has been imprisoned by the city guard. And not only that, he has been charged with the murder of a cobbler. Simmon protests his innocence and says he was asleep at home when the deed happened, but no one believes him. His execution is in a few days...

Asking around our heroes will soon find that several witnesses were present during the attack and clearly saw Simmon's face. Only a lone beggar was really close to the whole thing however, and he swears the attacker spoke in a weird, unholy sounding tongue. While searching their friend's house the heroes will find an old chest filled with broken, ancient looking pottery. This is an antique vase Simmon recently acquired. Sadly the vase broke when he wanted to pull it out of the box, and the evil spirit imprisoned within it entered Simmon's body. It was this spirit that killed the cobbler, and it delights in the misery of its host. Only if it can somehow be tricked into revealing itself in front of the guards will Simmon be acquitted and the spirit expelled by local priests. Otherwise the poor man will hang, and the creature is free to seek a new host...maybe the executioner, or one of the people watching from the first row.

53. THE SPIRIT OF THE GAME

LOW LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON COMBAT AND DIPLOMACY

A mayor sporting event is coming up in the city, with the two best known teams facing off for the first time in three years. The "Reavers" have the reputation of fighting hard but fair, attracting a rough fan base of poor folk who toll day to day in honest, backbreaking labour. Their adversaries, the "Golden Falcons", are last year's champions and their arrogant, stylish ways are beloved by many. Their fans curiously come from merchants, craftsmen and the seedy underbelly of the city alike. The atmosphere starts boiling up several days before the game, fans clashing in taverns and markets. At first these conflicts are mostly verbal, but soon violence threatens to get out of hand.

The city guard is getting nervous, especially as several stores close to the location of such fan – clashes are discovered looted and empty. There seem to be criminals hiding amongst the fans, and each fan base blames the other for initiating the aggression. In truth a gang called the "Three Forks" has hatched a plan to make as much money during the time before the great game as possible. Agitators hired by the gang whip both sides up into a frenzy and the thieves use the chaos as cover to fill their pockets. The wealthy elements of the city are pressuring the wardens into action, and soon the city guard and the fans might brutally clash in the streets.

Our heroes are drawn into the whole thing either as members of one of the fan bases or as hirelings of a city councillor who wishes the violence contained to a minimum. The best way to de-escalate the situation is to catch "Don" Fabio, the cunning leader of the Three Forks, and several of his followers, forcing them to openly admit their crimes.

54. FLAME IN THE HEARTS

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION, DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

The situation within the city has grown from slightly unstable to something darker in the last couple of weeks. An unpleasant sickness spreads in the poorest quarters, a plague of rats streams forth from the canalization, leading to a shortage on food, and now the bodies of several poor women are found butchered in side alleys. While the lower classes struggle and get angrier by the minute the local ruler, Lord Bardin, has closed the gates of his fortress, refusing to listen to the plights of the poor of his city.

But it gets even worse. Yerdan, a charismatic agitator, is speaking out against Lord Bardin in the lower quarters, blaming him for his failure to act and openly speculating that the murders have been committed by a member of the nobility. His speeches draw a larger and larger crowd by the day, and hired strongmen protect him from any attempts of arrest. The unrest grows with every day, and open rebellion might be at hand very soon.

Hired by Lord Bardin's sister, who is not quite as deaf to the suffering of the poor as the ruler himself, our heroes are drawn into this powder keg. And if they are not careful, they themselves might be the spark... Moving amongst the lower classes can be quite dangerous, especially if they are recognized as agents of the rich folk. Yerdan is planning to incite brutal rebellion soon, and has ordered two of his foulest thugs to murder women to exactly that end. He is an agent of Count Orwella, ruler of a neighbouring city, who has long waited for a chance to take over once Lord Bardin is out of the way, and the agitator's means are quite substantial...he will do whatever necessary to ignite the flame of rebellion in the peoples' hearts.

55. FAMILY MATTERS

MEDIUM LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION

For many decades the merchant family of Teugenis has been at the head of the most successful financial undertakings of the city. Their wealth and business skills are legendary. But recently the family has been hit by a string of misfortunes. Ever since the death of Urwil Teugenis, who passed the seat over to his younger brother Merten, many of their businesses have lost value. Merten, once having the reputation as a skilled businessman, has made some terrible losses, gambling with much of his families' finances...and gambling badly. He has also insulted several important business associates, even going as far as assaulting one of them during a gathering over a perceived insult. Rumours are now circulating that Merten might be mad.

Our heroes are hired by Illger Teugenis, a younger cousin of the family head, who wishes them to find out what is really going on. They will soon realize that Merten is acting shrewd and professional most of the time, but erratic and rude, even violent, during some occasions. He also spends some time nearly every night at his brother's grave, making his way there stealthily under the cover of dark. After these visits his behaviour is especially weird, as he draws up bad business contracts, abuses his servants and is terribly rude towards even his closer friends and family.

But it is not Merten who is doing this, for he is possessed by the spirit of his dead brother. Urwil, who was poisoned by Merten, has returned to take his revenge upon his family. With his dying breath he has sworn not to find rest until the legacy of the Teugenis is completely destroyed, and his treacherous kin have to live in the streets, prison or worse...

56. HEART OF NIGHT

MEDIUM LEVEL LONG ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Sir Saviar, who stands amongst the most decorated knights of the realm, has recently been appointed high commander of the city watch and has sworn to take down every single of the local criminal organizations and bring their leaders to justice. Soon his campaign starts in earnest, dozens of arrests are made. The common folk, in awe of Sir Saviar's reputation, are suddenly eager to help the guard, giving information freely. Within a few months most of the crime families are severely threatened and start fighting back in earnest. Our heroes are drawn into the struggle, hired to assist the watch in this new undertaking, and will clash with desperate criminals. At the same time corrupt members of the local elite are starting to become exposed, their dealings with the crime families brought to light. Sir Saviar is without mercy, convicting rich and poor folk with the same unwavering sense of justice. Despite the damage his reputation is suffering amongst the more influential members of society Sir Saviar's command is extended, now including leadership over the guard organizations of several other towns and cities nearby. Our heroes, by now valued members of his fellowship, lead attacks on many outlaws and thieves' guilds.

During this time they will not only fight ruthless criminals and corrupt officials trying to make their lives harder, they will also find rumours of a new underworld organization that has sprung up to fill the void left by the fall of so many crime families.

This group, known as the "Black Mirror", seems extremely well connected and is growing at an alarming rate, taking over the territories of many shattered gangs. They are led by a mysterious genius known only as "Glassmask", a figure who seems to have entirely too much information about Sir Saviar's plans. After a long game of cat – and mouse our heroes might discover the truth...Glassmask is Sir Saviar himself. The knight has been cursed by an evil power he had brought low several years ago. During his sleeping hours a dark part of his soul takes over his body, a part eager for riches and domination. Thus Glassmask came into being. Sir Saviar in his waking moments has no memories about his dealings with criminals, and will never believe a tale of his own dark deeds. Can the heroes find a way to take out Glassmask without also destroying the noble knight, or will a new criminal empire be born from the ashes of the ones they destroyed?

57. THE CONTRACT TWICE-DAMNED

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

Fifteen years ago Lord Kerrick of Helvar became terribly ill. After several months of suffering, with his wife pregnant and himself losing all hope, the lord made a bargain with a man called Ezghar. This warlock offered to save Lord Kerrick's life in exchange for the right to cast an enchantment upon the lord's unborn son. Extremely desperate the noble agreed, and thus the deed was done.

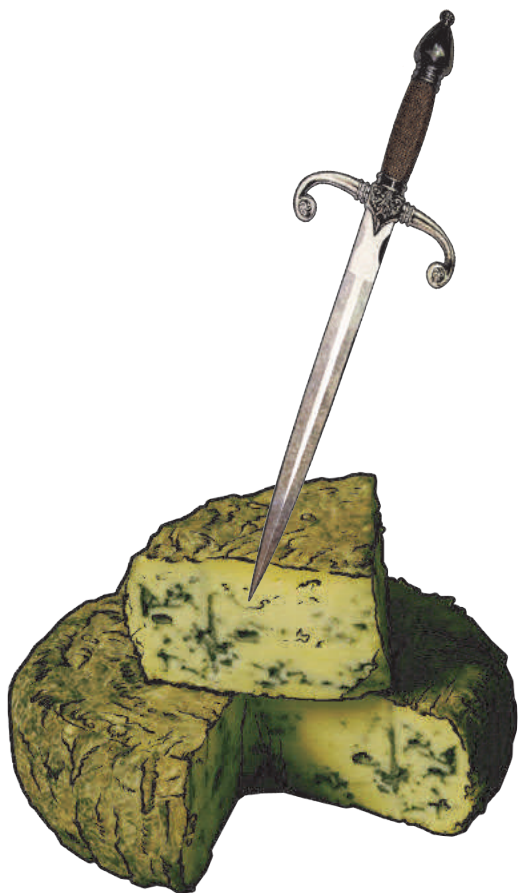
At first nothing was amiss. Lady Helvar gave birth to a healthy boy who was named Roland and grew into a fine young lad. Then, on the boy's thirteenth birthday, Ezghar the warlock reappeared in Helvar castle. He demanded sanctuary from a group of knights that were pursuing him. Lord Kerrick refused, and gave Ezghar over to his enemies. As they tried to cut him down however, each wound the warlock suffered also appeared on young Roland's body. Lord Kerrick, going nearly mad with grief, ordered his retainers to cut down the knights, protect the evil Ezghar and keep quiet about the whole issue.

Ever since then the warlock has been terrorizing the area around the city. His dark machinations have led to the deaths of many, as his powers are growing. Ezghar has made many deals with the forces of hell, sacrificing innocents to extend his magics. All the while he was protected by Lord Kerrick's soldiers, who had all grown to love young Roland as much as they hated the warlock.

Our heroes will stumble upon Ezghar's deeds while investigating the disappearance of a merchant's daughter who is intended for sacrifice. Can they somehow break the evil spell that protects the warlock, or will they have to cut through decent men and kill a good – natured young noble to stop Ezghar's reign of terror?

58. SECRETS OF THE KITCHEN

LOW LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE,
FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT



Every year a large food festival comes to town. The “ten-day-feast” is an important business opportunity, drawing lovers of fine dining from many of the surrounding areas. Butcheries, cake shops, breweries and many other places are getting ready to do their best work of the year. Some have prepared for it ever since last year's festival. Many are especially excited because a famous meat master named Bovaris has opened the gates of his grandest food – temple but a few months ago. He has promised an unforgettable experience and some new, never before seen creations for the festival.

Sadly there is also a shadow that has fallen upon the town, for in the last couple of weeks people have started to go missing, Bovaris himself and a number of his rich clients, feeling the festival they have staked so much money on being threatened, hire several teams of investigators, our heroes amongst them, to look into the disappearances. The meat master insists he is kept up to date with all the information that is uncovered. And he has a good reason for it...for he is behind the disappearances.

Bovaris is a follower of the dark powers, head of a sinister cult that consists of about two dozen members. These all work for Bovaris, and they have all come into town with him. They abduct beggars and travellers, keeping them in the disgusting catacombs deep under the newly opened butchery, the “food temple”. After being seasoned, fed with specific herbs and drugs for a while, these poor souls are devoured by the cultists. Some of their finest parts are even sold as delicacies to the rich people of the town. Bovaris delights in this horrible deed and has big plans for the festival. He is terribly ruthless when cornered, and will gladly tell everyone what exactly happened should he be captured alive...thus destroying the appetite of many people and maybe forcing a quick conversion to vegetarianism for most of the town.

59. GREY HANDS OF DOOM

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

“Greyhand”, a dangerous new drug, is starting to spread through the city. It leads to moments of strong bliss and strengthens the muscles of those who use it for a short amount of time. Sadly prolonged use leads to a rapid loss of appetite and weight, pushing the spirit of the addict into apathy or depression. They wither away rapidly. Others, taking larger Greyhand doses, find their mind overstimulated and prone to extreme reactions of anger or fear. Several murders have already been committed by people under the influence of the foul concoction. When the son of a prominent merchant is arrested after severely hurting several of his friends in a public quarrel the wealthy father approaches our heroes to have them investigate, for he does not trust the – in his eyes – incompetent city watch.

The creators of Greyhand are not easily found, for they have designed a network of middlemen to distribute the substance throughout the city. Several fingers point at a small gang of cut-throats, calling themselves the “Alley Kings”, but even they are mere pawns in the game. The actual drug has been concocted by a spiteful alchemist named Berdiram, who is working with a weird creature, a sentient mixture of man and fungus, that lives hidden away in the basement of his house.

Berdiram has used parts of this creature to create Greyhand and he is the only one who can also create an antidote. If he is not taken alive – and he is well prepared for an eventual attack, his house riddled with traps – death will find many people in the city soon enough.

60. RED POWER

HIGH LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION, COMBAT AND DIPLOMACY

Over the last couple of months a new gang has risen rapidly through the ranks of the underworld. They are the “Redeemers”, red – clothed killers led by a trio of men, the Winter brothers. There has been a spike of activity against the local gangs, and many of the Redeemers' rivals have been taken out. These successes by the watch are mostly possible through additional funding they recently received, for several young sons of wealthy families professed a sudden, strong interest in law and justice. One of them, Kester, son of Baron Morat, has even insisted on leading several raids against the criminals himself, and proved an incredibly good fighter.

Sadly there is a dark power behind these deeds. The Redeemers have managed, over the course of long months, to come into contact with the heirs of many noble and merchant houses, offering them a powerful concoction. This “True Wine” leads to great ecstasy and extremely increases a man's strength and speed, but is also highly addictive. In exchange for further supply of True Wine at least half a dozen rich sons have used their families' fortunes to help the Redeemers in their rise to the most prominent of crime organizations in the city. But there is more trouble on the horizon...

The Winter brothers do not know about a nasty long – term effect of the drug. It makes those who partake in it more and more vulnerable to sunlight, leading to pain in the eyes and ugly, burn – like rashes on the skin. Soon there are weird rumours in the city concerning a group of young rich men... And the rumours are not entirely wrong. True Wine is wrought from the blood of a vampire, the creature imprisoned in a hidden basement under the headquarters of the Redeemers. The monstrosity, calling itself Gorgios the Undying, has been captured by the Winter brothers through treachery, for they were once its servants. Now they are making use of their former master's power.

They, however, do not know of the arrival of other servants of Gorgios, fanatics that will do whatever necessary to locate their master and liberate him. And they, too, will soon hear the rumours surrounding a group of rich youngsters...

Our heroes are hired to look into the rise of the Redeemers, maybe even by the very minions of the vampire himself, and will soon realize that the whole situation is far more dangerous than a mere war of criminal gangs.

61. THE HEALING TOUCH

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON COMBAT AND INVESTIGATION

Usually diseases start in the poorer quarters, but the most recent malady in the city seems to have started on the opposite end: several nobles have fallen ill with terrible symptoms, sweating blood and losing weight with every day. Healers seem incapable of stopping the disease, although they do manage to stop it from spreading. Soon the duke himself orders the nobles to be put under house arrest. Then a group of pious monks arrives in the city, promising that they have dealt with such a disease before. In their desperation the afflicted nobles accept the help of these strangers, and indeed their health seems to improve rapidly. Nonetheless the nobles do not show their faces outside of their homes, with the monks taking over the duties to guard them and not letting anyone through.

Ordinary guards and most other people are too afraid of the disease to approach, but some are starting to ask questions about what is going on. When several children from afflicted noble houses disappear our heroes are asked to look into the whole thing.

It will soon become clear that something sinister is going on: small demons, invisible but malicious, stalk the streets, leading to all kinds of accidents. More powerful fiends protect the noble mansions themselves. And within those mansions, all built upon the ruins of ancient temples, the strange monks spend their time preparing for the final sacrifice that will bring their masters through into this world...

62. THE NATURE OF SECRETS

MEDIUM LEVEL LONG ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Peace has reigned in the lands for many months, but now that peace is threatened. Several nobles and rich merchants have recently received letters entailing some of their darkest secrets, talking about secret lovers, perversions in the bedrooms or even literal skeletons in the closet. They are forced to send agents into the nearby forest and have them bury large sums of money at specific locations. Of course these powerful men and women are not used to being threatened, and several have hired mercenaries to find the blackmailer and get rid of the problem once and for all. Sadly all this has accomplished so far is clashes between confused groups of hired muscle in the forest, leading to several dead and making the blackmailed rich extremely suspicious of each other. Now Count Opulus, willing to pay whatever it takes to have his secrets preserved – for he has poisoned his elder brother years ago to inherit the title – has hired our heroes to investigate.

They will soon realize that magic is involved, but magic of a very specific kind. The forest close to the city is filled with the power of nature, many bushes and trees resonating with it. Lamera, an elderly druidess, has put strong enchantments into place, and she is able to survey the whole forest easily, looking through the “eyes” of plants. Lamera is known as the owner of a floral shop in the city, providing many noble manors with decorative plants and wonderful flowers...and by using her magic on those plants she has acquired the secrets of many a powerful family. The druidess is the blackmailer, collecting funds to acquire large portions of the land around the city and preserve it against the encroaching of hunters, woodcutters and the like.

63. CHILD'S LAMENT

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Carnival has come to the city, and with it hundreds of strangers looking for a good time. No other time of the year is as filled with revelries, laughter and the clinking of many, many coins falling into the city's coffers. Mayor Andalos has made it clear to every member of the city watch that he will let nothing disturb the celebrations. He does not change his mind even when he is warned by several of his wizards that something terrible will happen during the festival.

Soon after the start of the festivities children start disappearing. The mayor, unwilling to stop carnival, cannot spare any city guards for a search, He is sure the brats are fine. But sadly Andalos is mistaken... Our heroes are approached by a small group of panicking parents, begging them for help, saying that the watch is unwilling to assist.

Our heroes do not have much time, for a dark creature calling himself “the Harlequin” has arrived in the city. With magical music he draws children away from their parents, assembling all of them in an old basement. There, at the height of the festival, he will order them to kill each other, leaving the bodies for their parents to find. Even if our heroes track down the creature – which will not be easy, for he is just one mask amongst many – they will have to witness knife – wielding, mind controlled children attacking them. Only destroying the harlequin's magical flute will break the spell and allow our heroes to finally get to the foul creature.

64. SHINING KNIGHTS

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY, INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

After being very close to a breakthrough in their fight against organized crime in the city, captain Orwenn of the watch had to witness most of the criminals disappearing from their usual hiding places. He suspects spies in his own organization and starts actively looking for the traitors.

At the same time several people disappear on a road east of the city, and our heroes are hired to look into what is going on. They might find some weird tracks and blood on the ground. Trails might even lead to a small keep nearby, but entry is prohibited by the knights living there.

A young man named Rolyn, a squire in the order of the Flaming Sun, is probably our heroes' best bet to find out what is happening. Rolyn has witnessed several strange things in the keep on the eastern outskirts of the city. Wagons are coming and going at weird times of the night, hooded figures walk through the courtyard, and a few of his fellow squires have even disappeared! He does not know what is going on, but is terrified.

The explanation to the whole thing is fairly simple: greed. The newly – elected master of the keep, an ambitious knight by the name of Macon, has been offered a very handsome bribe by local underworld bosses. He allows them to use his keep as base of operations for all kinds of shady business. He has threatened or bribed most of his fellow knights into silence, and some of them are even willing to work as hired muscle for local gangs. Late night travellers on the eastern road saw things they should not have seen and were swiftly taken care of.

Even though our heroes will very early have strong suspicions against the Flaming Sun knights it is extremely hard for them to make a move, for the keep is well guarded and the knights are highly respected, mostly due to the actions of their predecessors who stopped an invading army twenty years ago. No one will consider taking actions against them without definite proof of their evil deeds, and neither the word of a young squire nor the confession of some random street criminal is considered real “proof”.

65. GAMES OF WAR

HIGH LEVEL LONG ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION, DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

Tensions have been rising for a while between the rivalling crime families and street gangs of the poorer quarters, but now a brutal underworld war seems inevitable. Petras, son and heir to Gerald the Butcher of the Bloodhand gang, has disappeared. The Silnar family, rich smugglers and drug lords, are frantically searching for Monella and Marius, twin – children of their leader, Elbara Silnar.

The Black Coins, most powerful gang on the docks, are rumoured to be behind the kidnappings. They, however, have their own problems. A few of their most promising junior members have not been seen for several days...

Our heroes are hired to look into the matter and hopefully prevent a massive conflict on the city streets. They are not to be associated with the guards, but will nonetheless have to step very carefully, for all the gangs are very much on edge, and it is getting worse every day. Soon investigations will reveal that the sons and daughters of gang members are not the only ones abducted. Children under the age of fourteen have been disappearing from the slums for weeks, but nobody was interested in their fate. That is about to change...

There is a lot of danger in this investigation, for the perpetrators are very dangerous. Gelvan the Arcane and Elva Silverstaff, two of the most powerful mages in the city, are behind the disappearances. They have started an underground fighting ring, pitting children against each other in games to the death. Many rich creeps are paying extremely handsomely to come and watch the weekly shows, and betting on the outcomes is already involving incredible sums. The sons and daughters of criminals, street gangs and other villains are extremely highly valued in these matches, and therefore the two mages have used summoned creatures of darkness to abduct them and bring them to the secret arena under the mansion of the powerful Baron Veldemir. If our heroes draw too much attention to themselves they might not only start a vicious gang war, but they will also find themselves at odds with several perverted nobles and two powerful wizards.

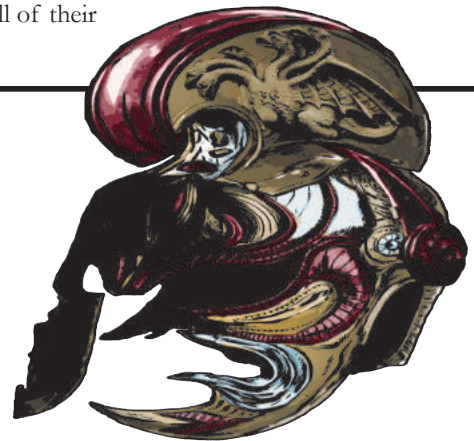
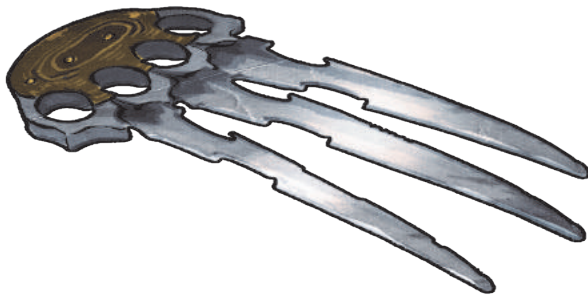
66. A REAL STEAL

LOW LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

With the local city watch understaffed and kept busy over a rivalry between carpenters' guilds that is turning dangerous the underworld has earned a breather. This lull in the action is used by Merkando Heavyhand, leader of a smuggling ring called "Mist Brothers", to organize an illegal auction. He has supposedly amassed some very interesting items over the course of the last couple of months, amongst them some highly skilled pleasure slaves. Merkando wants to leave town and sell as much as he can, starting the bidding at very low prices. Or at least that is what he says...

Many other underworld bosses are very interested in Merkando's wares and will be coming. But someone has also tipped off the city watch, and thus our heroes are hired to infiltrate the whole auction and keep a close look on things, reporting what they can to the watch commander.

Sadly the whole affair is going to end bloody, for the "pleasure slaves" Merkando has prepared are actually skilled mercenaries hired by him to get rid of most of his competition in the city, and they have sharp weapons close at hand. Our heroes will, one way or another, be caught in the crossfire. Let us hope they didn't hand over quite all of their weapons at the entrance.



67. WRATH OF A FATHER

HIGH LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND DIPLOMACY

High mage Esperik Ullwar is known for his riches and vast magical power, but not for his patience or diplomatic skills. His son Temos is far more likeable, and also a fairly capable wizard himself. Now however, on his latest visit to the city, Temos has disappeared. His father has brought some of his magical power to bear to find him, but to no avail, and is terrified that something might have happened to his only heir. Thus Esperik has contacted the authorities and told them to bring his son back by all means...or if he is dead to find and present him those responsible. Should they fail Esperik will treat them all as accomplices of the crime. They have three days.

Guardsmen are starting to tear the city apart, antagonizing both criminals and ordinary citizens. While nobody – yet – knows what exactly is going on, it will only be a matter of time before the secret is leaked to the public. Our heroes are hired by Magistrate Holder, an honourable man who is terrified of the consequences of failure and has little faith in the competence of the city guard. They need to find out what happened to Temos, and the clock is ticking.

In the course of the investigations our heroes will find out that the young mage was prone to the vices of society, including gambling and other excesses, and they will have to negotiate with several crime families to gain information. There they will learn of the appearance of a beautiful woman (or man) on the side of Temos. They seemed quite happy together.

Sadly the whole love affair is a charade. Temos' lover has taken him to a secret – and magically concealed – hiding spot within the city, where they are protected and spend as much time together as possible. In his bliss Temos has forgotten the passing of time and the potential feelings of his father. His paramour, however, has not, for it is all part of the plan. Seducing the young mage and getting him out of the picture for a while to unleash master Esperik's wrath upon the city is exactly what is intended by Baron Irwine, an old enemy of the mayor. He has sent his own ruthless agents to guard the two love-birds and their hideout, and these same men and women will try to stop whoever gets too close to finding them by any means necessary. They initially shy away from actually hurting Temos, for Irwine is terrified of the high mage's wrath, but will try to finish him off if the situation becomes too hot for them.

68. BLOOD IN THE WATER

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Recently the city docks have been witness to a series of brutal murders. Victims are struck late at night and savagely butchered, likely torn apart by some kind of animal. Even a small patrol of watchmen meets the same grisly end. Now stories of demons and some monster crawling out of the water are spreading, and people are extremely nervous. The city is losing money as merchants and ship captains choose to take their vessels elsewhere.

Our heroes are hired by a merchant whose business is severely threatened by the situation. They will soon discover that few people know much and also realize the stevedoers' and dockworkers' guild, probably the most powerful faction in that part of the city, has been trying to suppress information about the murders...and they have partially succeeded, for the watch is unaware of at least half a dozen attacks. Pressed for answers – which can be dangerous, for the dockworkers defend each other and many of them are curiously well armed – members of the guild will unveil that they are only trying to stop the tides of panic. And indeed that is what many of them believe, but it is not the truth at all.

Several weeks ago a strange traveller arrived to the city with his boat, the “Fogmaster”. This man, calling himself Fendar, posed as a successful merchant and asked for a meeting with the highest representatives of the guild. Then, at that meeting, he infected them all with the curse of lycanthropy.

Now five of the most powerful people on the docks harbour terrible, bloodthirsty thoughts, urges that they can only control during the day. Two of them, Velmar and Jorina, have already shape shifted several times. So far they have focused their attacks on strangers – and are protected by their families who think them sick and have not yet realized what is truly going on – but soon, with the full moon approaching, all five of them will turn, prowling the harbour with uncontrolled bloodlust and infecting many members of their own families. And in the meantime the real monster, the ancient lycanthrope, is sitting on his ship and laughing, getting ready to enjoy the show.

69. WINGS OF THEFT

LOW LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION

The city is struck by a bizarre crime spree. Several times birds – falcons, hawks and crows – have swooped down onto merchant stands, stealing small trinkets and even a few precious pieces of jewellery. Now there are whispers of dark magic, and several hotheads amongst the merchants and city guards blame a group of travelling gypsies who recently arrived in the city. At least one local merchant, a young chubby man by the name of Clowan, is not convinced. He hires our heroes to look into the thefts.

They will soon discover the trace of the most valuable trinket stolen, a brooch inlaid with a small ruby. Ister, a local fence, is trying to sell this particular piece, but has so far been unable to find a buyer. Rumour in the underworld is that Ister knows the “Bird-Master”, the man who is behind these crimes. And indeed he does.

Ister, who poses as a wine merchant, and whose shop is well guarded by thugs, has a brother named Unat, who lives in a hut not far from the eastern gate. This Unat, a foolish and simple man, has a daughter, the fifteen year old Josefa. All her life she has been raising different types of birds in a small aviary just outside of town. There she has taught her friends to soar above the walls and swoop down on shiny things. Josefa, who dreams of becoming the greatest thief that ever lived, is not dangerous by herself, but Ister will not hesitate to have anyone too curious about his affairs severely beaten, maybe even murdered.

GM NOTES:

While running this adventure I found it quite effective to introduce Josefa early on, having her run into our heroes while they are investigating an entirely unrelated matter. I portrayed Josefa as a innocent young girl with fairy - tale like dreams of thrilling adventure, who does not realize that what she is doing might be hurting other people...and could very well end up hurting her and her family as well.

To spice up the adventure, I introduced another crime syndicate as additional antagonists, who were also after the "Bird-Master" and the trinkets she stole, thus turning the whole thing into a three way battle.

The most important part of the adventure is having the heroes sympathize with Josefa. That will add an interesting spin when it comes to the decision whether to hand her over to the authorities or not.

70. WITH LACK OF PROOF

MEDIUM LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

Several weeks ago a terrible crime shook the city. The wealthy Tiberian, one of the foremost merchants in the community, has been brutally assaulted within his own mansion. Tiberian himself, his wife, two sons and several servants were killed, many valuable objects taken. Only the young Perrik, fifteen and heavily wounded, survived. While he has theoretically inherited all his families' wealth there is a large group of lawyers, uncles and "friends" who want to advise him and control the businesses of Tiberian until Perrik comes of age.

From his sickbed, still recovering from horrible wounds, young Perrik calls for our heroes. They arrive in the middle of the night, with only a single trusted servant leading them. There Perrik, who has heard of their reputation, unveils his dilemma to our heroes. He has clearly heard the murderers of his family talking about their employer as they thought everyone dead. They were mercenaries working for Lord Brunis, one of the foremost philanthropists of the city. He ordered them to murder the family and take several priceless heirlooms to him. Now Perrik, who told everyone that he can hardly remember anything during the attack, wants revenge, and he is ready to pay whatever necessary.

Our heroes are supposed to break into Lord Brunis' mansion during one of his many parties, where high-standing citizens mingle with dressed-up lowlifes, get the family heirlooms back and generally cause as much damage as possible. They do not have much preparation time, for the party is the day after tomorrow...

71. THEY WILL PAY

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Lord Berden, once a famous and feared general in the armies of the realm, has retired several years ago and seems to be content with enjoying his wealth in peace. Not so his son Planius, an adventurous young man who craves the thrill of danger and the chance for fame. He has already made a bit of a name for himself with strikes against the local underworld, and would ideally already be known, and liked, by our heroes. But now Planius has gone missing, disappearing on his newest quest for renown. And just a day or so later a letter arrives at Lord Berden's gate, demanding a massive sum of gold in exchange for his son's life. The old general is furious about what he perceives as an attack upon his honour. Not particularly attached to his "foolish boy" Lord Berden shares details about the abduction with the whole city, and promises a massive reward to those who can bring him the kidnappers alive...and supposedly he even wants his son back in one piece! The promised sum is extremely tempting, and many criminals start looking for the kidnappers themselves.

Can our heroes find the Black Hood gang and their lair under an abandoned windmill just outside of the city walls before any of the other bounty hunters and criminals? For only they are likely to worry about Planius' well-being, while Lord Berden worries about his precious reputation.

72. THE FALCON SINGS

HIGH LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON COMBAT AND DIPLOMACY

The infamous "Red Falcon", a powerful outlaw leader, has finally been captured by soldiers under Count Nervan. The Falcon has murdered the count's brother about a year ago in a robbery gone wrong, and he is set to be publicly and brutally executed very soon. In the meantime he is held in the Obsidian Keep, most heavily guarded dungeon of the realm.

Our heroes are hired by the powerful wizard Bluestone to break into the keep, which stands on an island in the centre of the river (or harbour) of the city, and talk to the Red Falcon. Bluestone is after an artefact called the "Orb of Salir" that was in the outlaw's possession until a few year ago. He wants information about its current whereabouts, but the Falcon's prize for sharing them will be his freedom. At the same time his own men, ruthless outlaws one and all, are starting a rescue mission to free their leader. And the count's guards know they are coming...

73. DESPERATE TIMES, DRASTIC MEASURES

LOW LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Once Alderith the merchant was wealthy, all his businesses doing well. Sadly this has changed in recent years, more and more ventures failing and tearing apart his riches. Now Alderith only has a couple of small shops and about a dozen workers left, and even those are in a significant amount of debt. In this time of desperation the merchant was visited by a man named Melger, leader of a small network of drug dealers and smugglers. He offered to wipe away all of Alderith's debts within a couple of short months, if the gang is allowed to use the merchant's remaining infrastructure and his good name – for Alderith is known to be an honourable businessman – for their own purposes.

A deal was made, and everything went well for several weeks. Alderith saw his debts shrinking and dared to hope the whole thing would end well. Then Uldo, one of the older clerks, stayed in his office for too long one evening and saw some men carrying suspicious boxes. He came to talk to Alderith about it on the next day, and the old man made the mistake of telling Melger about the conversation. Just a few hours later the bodies of Uldo and his wife were found in the river, probably having had too much to drink, stumbling and drowning..

Uldo's son, Uldo the younger, is not happy with this explanation, knowing that his parents hardly ever had alcohol, and he will hire our heroes to investigate. Alderith, shocked by the whole circumstance, will try to seem cooperative but secretly do his best to stop, discourage or even sabotage the investigation, although his heart is heavy. He does not want even more of his long – term employees to suffer accidents..but he also needs the money pretty badly. And Melger has made it clear that his men would take out the factory workers quickly and efficiently if too many outsiders ever threatened to find out about the little business deal Alderith has made with the gang.

74. BEASTLY AFFAIRS

LOW LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON COMBAT

Count Fandrol is not only known for his extravagant tastes, but also for his massive belly. Now, to honour his fortieth birthday, he has commanded his chefs to prepare an exotic feast the like no one has ever seen. To ensure the freshness of the ingredients there is a caravan of wild beasts from exotic lands approaching the city, to be slaughtered, prepared and eaten. The same caravan is also carrying fruit that has never been seen before and many spices from distant realms. The whole city is talking about the spectacle. Our heroes are amongst the hired helpers needing to make sure the caravan can pass through the city to Count Fandrol's estate. Sadly the task will not be as easy as expected, for not only will the excited crowds make the caravan move very slowly, but several small groups of thieves have also decided to try their luck and steal whatever they can, for surely these exotic goods will prove very valuable. But there is an even bigger problem. One of the fruit, a large, orange, spiky thing, has a very distinct odour once it has started rotting (and it has)...and that specific odour can drive many wild beasts into aggression. Soon many of the handlers, including our heroes, will chase escaping animals through panicking crowds. And that is when the thieves will strike...

75. DARK ROOTS BENEATH

LOW LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON EXPLORATION AND COMBAT

The shop of Peldiran, a young herbalist, is doing extremely well recently. He is capable of offering all kinds of concoctions, potions and herbal remedies very cheaply, undercutting all other alchemists and herbalists in town. Several members of the guild are angry, and they hire our heroes to find out Peldiran's secret. Surely the young man is in league with criminals, or has some other means of acquiring goods at an illegal rate.

Peldiran himself is always accompanied by two skilled mercenaries and his shop is also guarded day and night, by both men and watchdogs. There, in his basement underneath the shop, is the reason to his success. The young herbalist has acquired a small group of slaves cheaply on the black market, recognizing them as skilled labourers who can prepare the potions and other materials for him without being paid. Should this secret come out Peldiran would be ruined, even prosecuted, and he will try to apply threats, bribery, even outright violence, to stop it from happening.

76. THE STORM CRYSTAL

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE,
FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Our heroes are summoned by the mage Silvenar, learning about a break – in into his tower several days ago. The thief somehow managed to shut down several arcane traps and made off with the Storm Crystal, a powerful artefact used for controlling the weather in the region. Silvenar has used magical means to track the intruder and found out his identity: a man by the name of Kresst, member of the thieves' guild in the nearest city. Silvenar is prepared to pay handsomely for getting the crystal back, and extra if our heroes can bring him the thief alive.

Tracking Kresst will prove a little tricky, for the leaders of his guild know nothing about his whereabouts and would, in fact, be highly interested in learning about him accepting a high – profile job without giving the guild their cut... They can however provide the characters with information about Kresst's wife Lenya, who has disappeared about a week ago.

The thief himself has gone into hiding but can be flushed out with the help of the guild or by applying enough pressure in the right places. Poor Kresst, who will try his best to escape any violent confrontation, does not have the crystal anymore. He has given it over to a wizard named Engol, a rival of Silvenar. In fact Engol has forced Kresst to steal the Storm Crystal for him, and provided him with an anti – magical dust capable of disabling arcane traps. In the meantime Engol's thugs hold Lenya hostage, and refused to hand her over even after receiving the Storm Crystal, for they might have need of Kresst's skills again sometime in the future.



77. PAYMENT DUE

LOW LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY

While relaxing in a tavern our heroes are approached by a man introducing himself as Gedmor, a local “businessman”. He seems a bit depressed and is looking for help after his usual crew ran out on him, joining a competitor who offered higher rates. Gedmor is a moneylender, and he is facing bankruptcy if three of his main clients do not pay the coin they owe him. All three have declined his offers and refused to pay. He is happy to share a third of the earnings with the heroes, if they are only able to help him. The difficulty is: they have but a single day to collect.

The first debtor, Quentin, is a boot-maker who was once fairly wealthy, but recently lost most of his shop to a fire. He can offer goods as compensation, but Gedmor will not be happy with a bunch of shoes. Quentin is also lying. While there was indeed a fire most of his shop is not very damaged. He exaggerates to save coin and potentially get out of his contract.

Ulrug, the second debtor, is a fence who lost most of his money gambling. He is hiding in one of the seedier taverns of town and will lead our heroes on a merry chase if they try to apprehend him. The whole thing could turn dangerous, for Ulrug knows quite a few thugs, who are more than happy to get rid of strangers sticking their noses into local business...

The third debtor, Cedric the carpenter, legitimately has little to give. His business has fallen on hard times and what little he earns goes into feeding his family.

If our heroes do not at least get two of the three debtors to pay Gedmor will be very unhappy with them and refuse to give them their reward. He might accuse them of trying to keep most of the money for themselves and even try call the guard on them, if he thinks he can get away with it.

78. THE STREETS RUN RED

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE,
FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY, COMBAT AND INVESTIGATION

Just a few weeks ago a tragedy has struck the city. Sir Ondrick, a wealthy knight, and his wife have been found murdered in an alleyway. Their son Tanry, barely sixteen, was not present at the scene. He has now inherited all the family wealth, and there are even some who whisper the hot – tempered boy might have something to do with his parents' demise...

These rumours are untrue however, and Tanry will be willing to duel anyone to the death who dares repeat them to his face. While the city is whispering about him the young man is seething with anger and the need for revenge. Together with his wealthy cousin Andros, son to the Baron of Merran, he has decided to take justice into his own hands. He is spending money in large quantities, even going so far as to sell the family manor. With the amassed riches Tanry is hiring mercenaries, bounty hunters and killers. He does not trust the city guard and sees it as his personal quest to once and for all cleanse the city of all low – lives.

Now a bloody war during the dark hours is under way. Street gangs, thieves' guilds and even petty criminals are being assaulted, beaten, sometimes even killed outright. The underworld of the city is ready to defend themselves, and soon innocents are caught in the crossfire. There are many ways for our heroes to get involved. They could be hired by either side to help or even by a third party that wants the violence to end. Either way, their task will not be an easy one, for both sides of the conflict are ready to fight dirty and unwilling to show mercy.

GM NOTES:

During the course of this adventure a Gamemaster needs to make sure the heroes find out the "villains" motivation. Tanry and Andros are righteous young men, privileged but fairly clear - eyed. They have seen that justice within the city is not to be trusted, as rich and well - connected people can easily avoid punishment by the judges and guards.

While the two young men can be fairly ruthless, they only stay that way as long as they do not need to see first hand the bloody work their hired blades are doing. If that were to happen, their resolve would quickly falter. Nonetheless, characters who are mainly interested in a more brutal form of justice might easily become trusted allies of Tanry and Adnros, and could even work for them for a while.

79. FUNERAL FOR A STONE

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Bellin Elvan, one of the richest merchants in the city, has died after a long and painful illness. Hundreds attend his funeral. The mahogany coffin is carried by the best soldiers of the watch. Sadly one of them trips over and the coffins falls, opening up and revealing...rocks! There is no body, and everyone is shocked. When even after two days of searching no one can find out what happened to the body Bellin's widow Kerrina, sick with grief at the thought of someone stealing her husband's remains, pays our heroes handsomely to help out.

During the course of the investigation it will be discovered that master Elvan had established quite the double life, on the one hand well known as business man and philanthropist, on the other connected to some quite...shady individuals, amongst them Querros, the best – and most ruthless – smuggler in town, known for being able to procure all kinds of illegal goods. Our heroes will soon run into bounty hunters led by the warrior Edric. They are looking for Bellin as well, hired by certain of his former business rivals who think he might not be quite dead.

And indeed they are right, for Bellin faked his own death. After contracting a seemingly incurable illness he joined an illegal death cult whose members are using forbidden magics and exotic substances in their search for immortality. The former merchant is hidden away deep under the city, in fancy lodgings built into ancient catacombs, and is being prepared for his final journey out of this life and into undeath. The cult, whose members are generally coming from the lower layers of society, are led by a death-mage named Ferdic, and they will be more than ready to take out anyone who tries following their trail.

§0. FURY OF THE WILDS

HIGH LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

The city is shaken by a series of weird accidents. Seven days ago Councillor Trelwayn was kicked to death by a horse in the middle of the street. Four days ago Baron Lokar was killed by his favourite guard hound. Three days ago the merchant Pergrin only narrowly avoided death when some sort of bird of prey came screeching out of the sky and nearly tore his eyes out. And yesterday a tiger, of all things, was seen prowling the gardens of Lady Minsella's manor. The beast fled when it was discovered, but now the rich are getting extremely agitated. Mansions are turned into fortresses, extra guards are everywhere. Rumours of dark magic are abound. Our heroes are amongst the many mercenaries hired to investigate the attacks and put an end to them.

The trail is difficult to pick up, but there are underworld rumours about a black alchemist newly arrived in town. Others say that several of the best assassins of the city have not been seen ever since the attacks began...

The only people who have the answers are the members of the local assassin guild. Their master, Seldania, has indeed lost control of her three best pupils. She usually prefers less public assassination attempts, but some of her most talented subordinates disagree. They have cut ties with the guild and have been making use of killing methods unknown so far. Djosre, the black alchemist, has come from an exotic land, bringing all kinds of trinkets and skills with him that no one else in the city possesses. His potions can make people faster and stronger, but his most expensive elixirs allow for a transformation into animals. The three rogue assassins have accepted many contracts from different sources and are making extensive use of Djosre. Tracking them down will be extremely difficult, but Seldania and her more trusted pupils might actually help our heroes if they perceive them as skilled and trustworthy.

That leaves one last problem: Djosre, who has made his lair in a tower at the edge of the city, protected by a massive amount of nasty magical surprises both inside and outside of the walls.

§1. THE BUSINESS OF VIOLENCE

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY,
INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

The stevedoers' guild, controlling all harbour workers, and the coachmen' guild, controlling most land transport in and around the city, have been business rivals for decades. This rivalry has, over the years, led to many disputes and some small acts of violence, vandalism, fistfights and the like. Up until a few weeks ago however, both groups were relatively peaceful. In recent times several incidents have happened, with a warehouse burning down, horses being poisoned, two men severely injured by masked attackers, and prominent members of both groups receiving anonymous threats.

It is clear for nearly everyone involved that the two guilds are getting ready for a final confrontation, trying to push the other side out of the city once and for all. Violence is in the air, and people are getting nervous. The city guard is watching everything with eagle eyes, for they have been instructed to bash as many heads as necessary if the situation threatens to get out of control.

Our heroes are hired to negotiate between Gelron Goldwheel, Primus of the coachmen, and Adan Fourfingers, head of the stevedoers. Both men stubbornly refuse to believe their own people started the attacks and are blaming the other group, and they are both ready for violence to protect their followers.

The whole thing is more complex than expected. The Black Hood gang was behind the initial attacks. Their new leader, the rich merchant Unbile, has recently arrived in the city and is hoping to win all transport rights from the council. To achieve this he is ready to kill, and his followers have found several disgruntled members of both stevedoers and coachmen willing to work for them in exchange for good money.

§2. WOLF AMONGST SHEEP

HIGH LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Three months ago a terrifying creature has attacked several villages and smaller towns in the vicinity of the city. Refugees have arrived in their hundreds, trying to find shelter behind the stone walls, but they are causing chaos and pushing the local resources to the limit. Already food is becoming more and more expensive, and tempers are flaring. Yet no one knows where the creature will strike next. Until the first mangled bodies start appearing..

Very soon people realize that the monster is amongst them, using its shape shifting capabilities to hide in their midst. Fear and suspicion grow with every day, and many mercenaries are hired to find and kill, or at least drive out, the beast. Our heroes are amongst those hired, and they will soon learn of the unfortunate fate that has befallen some of their colleagues. With the city full of strangers and the locals expecting each of them to be a monster in disguise, it will only take a small spark to engulf everything into the fiery flames of civil war. All the while the beast is watching, waiting and laughing at the trembling human cattle, devouring them one by one.

§3. PLAGUE SHIP

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

An exotic ship arrives in the harbour, yellow flags raised on board. News spread through the city streets with alarming speed. Plague! A plague ship has arrived! The local authorities force the ship to stay in quarantine, having to remain three hundred yards or more from the docks at all times. Crossbowmen and ballistae watch over it, ready to kill all those who dare approach further.

At the same time bad things happen in the city: people are disappearing in the poorer quarters, and several magic users sense an evil presence growing somewhere close by.

The mages are right with their concerns: the plague is just a ruse. The newly – arrived ship instead hides several warlocks and well prepared ritual circles. It is a floating temple designed for sacrifice and the summoning of otherworldly entities. Drugged captives are smuggled onto the ship in the supply boxes sent over by the city watch, for one of their number, Captain Bartolom, has made a lucrative deal with the warlocks several months ago. He thinks that the ally scum and criminals are being used as slaves, and will be sold in distant lands later. If the city is cleansed of these unsavoury elements and he and his men also earn a hefty penny while doing it...that is a win – win situation in his book. What he does not know, of course, is the warlocks' endgame, a night of demons and death that will scar the city for many years to come.

§4. THE KISS OF FIRE

LOW LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION

Recently the town has been threatened by several fires. It is high summer, and heat drives everyone a little insane. Such fires can easily get out of control, and thus people are worried. The city watch believes the fires to be natural occurrences, but not everyone trusts in such a simple explanation.

Our heroes are hired by a shopkeeper named Jenna, a woman whose home is close to two recent fires. She thinks there might be an arsonist loose in the city. And she is not wrong... There are several hints towards arson. The fires nearly always start at night, and they are mostly centred around a specific area of town. In addition to it at least two witnesses can report seeing a large man with a red beard leaving the area of the fire just before it was discovered. Then again, there are a lot of people around in a city, even at night. While the investigation is ongoing Jenna's shop goes up in flames. If our heroes are not quick about it the poor woman will lose most of her meagre wealth. At the same time they will find remains of oil canisters at the scene...and might catch a glimpse of the red – bearded fellow.

The arsonist is Ognis, a former blacksmith whose shop caved in a few weeks ago. He is considered dead by his family, but in truth he has survived the accident by falling into a cavern deep underneath the city streets. There his arrival awoke Hesh, a minor spirit of flame that had been slumbering in an old temple for many generations. Ognis became the first priest of Hesh, offering it flames to feed its glory, and starting to convert others to the cult. If Ognis and his first few disciples are not found and arrested the whole city might experience a large amount of fires before the summer ends.

§5. BLOOD OF A DAUGHTER

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION, COMBAT AND DIPLOMACY

Tilleda, the favoured daughter of “Lord” Bruzoni, most powerful crime boss in the city, has been murdered. Her lifeless body is discovered in a back ally not far from her father's headquarters, bearing multiple stabbing wounds. Bruzoni is mad with grief, demanding the killer to be found by all means. His men are tearing the underworld apart, aggravating many other crime families, and even clashing with the city guard. His two sons, Svendo and Ludico, are at the head of these attacks, obeying their father's will with cold ferocity.

Soon there are rumours abound...Tilleda was murdered by her former lover Nerviss, son to Baron Eskani. Others point fingers at Ubaldo, the ambitious leader of the Bloodhounds, saying he was using Tilleda's death as a message. Both Nerviss and Ubaldo are well protected, but soon targeted by Bruzoni's men. Violence threatens to erupt in public. Our heroes are hired by the city watch as special agents to go where watchmen cannot and find the truth, thus hopefully defusing the situation.

That truth is a dark one. Tilleda was murdered by her own brother, Ludico, the eldest child of the family, who discovered that Bruzoni had intended to leave his empire to her after his death. Ludico could not forgive such an insult, and decided that both sister and father had to die. He is using his father's rage to distract him and is preparing to take over the family business quite violently.

§6. TRUE HEROES

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY AND INVESTIGATION

Some young, arrogant nobles have too much time and money on their hands. Blue – bloods like these often dislike people with a reputation greater than theirs, especially if such people are from the lower classes. This is what happens to our heroes. Massimo, son to the wealthy Count Vander, and Ullanis, heir of the fortune of the de Veer family, have heard of their good reputation and have, in their petty envy and arrogance, decided to teach those upstart adventurers a lesson.

The two young nobles hire agents to spread rumours about the heroes, besmirching their honour and prowess, accusing them of all kinds of misdeeds. They further pay ruffians to intimidate or beat up any supporters and allies the heroes might have, and even prepare a small team of elite mercenaries to pick a fight with them and publicly humiliate them, beating them into submission.

Should our heroes heavily injure or kill any of these agents Massimo and Ullanis will not hesitate to take them to court, bribing officials to give them harsh, or at least humiliating sentences. The two arrogant shits will find the whole situation hilarious, all the while hiding behind capable bodyguards and the power of their fathers, nearly impossible to touch.

§7. WHEN A LADY DIES

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Karina, beloved wife to Baron Endris, known for her many charitable deeds, has died after a terrible sickness and a massive funeral is being prepared in her honour. Sadly the occasion is overshadowed by weird rumours, of people seeing the lady in the back allies of the city or long – time servants hearing her voice whispering dark things in the shadowy corridors of the mansion.

Our heroes are hired by Baron Endris, who is beside himself, and does not wish to see the memory of his wife or her good name besmirched. He is sure one of his political enemies must be behind it, trying to hurt his reputation or out for some petty vengeance.

Sadly there is much more to it. Lady Karinna has not been killed by a disease. She was slain by foul magic, the death – curse spoken by Engetha, a powerful witch who hated the good deeds of the lady with great passion. Now Karinna's spirit is wondering the streets, twisted into a hungry ghost, slaying people with spectral claws during the funeral preparations. Engetha, in the form of a black cat, large bat or crow, stays close to the spirit, taking great joy in the terror her curse has wrought.

The spirit cannot be truly destroyed and will return every night. Only a powerful divine blessing or the death of the witch herself can break the curse.

§8. STALKING THE WEAK

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Children are disappearing in the streets! Several middle – class families have not seen their offspring for several days. Since the city guard – as usual – is fairly useless in anything not involving beating up drunks and taking bribes, our heroes are hired to investigate.

They will very soon find out that the disappearances have been going on for several weeks in the slums, with the total number of vanished children going into the dozens. But as long as only the offspring of the poor and street urchins were affected no one gave a damn.

People do not seem to know much, other than some rumours about weird noises and mysterious shadows in alleyways. Our heroes will have to find the few remaining street urchins to figure out what is going on. This will not be easy, for the little ones are terrified and extremely suspicious of all adults. If one wins their trust Galmy, one of their leaders, a scrawny boy of eleven, who has seen more darkness than most veteran soldiers, will be ready to lead them to the source of evil.

There, in an old orphanage on the outskirts of town, a group of slavers calling themselves “the Gentle Ones”, operate their disgusting business. They are led by a man called Qwar, a bloodmage of significant ambition. His minor demons of wind and shadow snatch the children from the street. The pretty and strong ones are kept in chains, ready to be smuggled out of town. The ones that cannot be easily sold are...used by Qwar in his experiments, and most of them are already dead.

§9. SHATTERED MIRRORS

HIGH LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Dechus Silvertongue, most powerful wizard of the city, is also a well – beloved philanthropist who never misses a good party. The feasts he throws in his mansion are legendary, as are his many good deeds to help out the poor. Dechus is beloved by all. Only Terwin, youngest of his apprentices, has a very bad feeling about his master...He comes to the heroes with a plea for help. If Terwin is to be believed his master Dechus has been acting strangely for a few months now. Secret meetings are held in the middle of the night, with hooded visitors entering and leaving the tower. Certain chambers have been forbidden to all the apprentices, and whenever Dechus is not in public he becomes brooding and quiet, spending most of the time in his own chambers at the very top.

Terwin is on to something...but there are far more nefarious things going on than even he suspects.

Six months ago Dechus acquired an ancient artefact, the Shattered Mirror of Hersuun. Studying its depths he was hoping to catch glimpses of the future. What he found instead was the demon Orgon, a creature imprisoned a long time ago. Orgon manipulated Dechus into exhausting his mind more and more, until he could finally risk a direct attack. Now the wizard is imprisoned in the mirror, and Orgon the demon lives within his body.

Over the course of several months the creature has enchanted several of Dechus' more promising disciples and also dug his deceitful claws into the minds of several rich and influential people in the city. With this group of cultists at his command Orgon has begun slowly but surely taking control of the city. As his lackeys are filling positions of power and his own personal magic grows the demon sees his plans coming close to victory. Once Dechus' soul has expired within the mirror there will be no one powerful enough to oppose him, and Orgon can rise to rule once more.



90. A BLISSFUL DEATH

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION

Melagros the wine merchant, Ondias the jeweller and the wealthy landowner Porrik all die within the same week. There doesn't seem to be anything unnatural about the deaths, other than the three men knowing each other well, being quite rich and all three corpses having an oddly blissful look on their faces. Odelia, widow to Melagros, is not convinced. Her husband had been secretive as of late, and she wants to know what is going on. Our heroes are hired to investigate.

Soon there will be connections laid bare. All three men left behind some rather faithful servants, recently hired and skilled in many ways. All three used to disappear to “secret business meetings” about once every week, returning exhausted sometime late at night. All three seemed to be unusually fit and strong for their age, despite Porrik and Melagros being known as fairly sickly up until a few months ago.

These facts lead to a secret club, the “Lodge of the Open Gate”. Ironically the meetings of the lodge happen behind closed doors in a well – secured mansion just outside of town. Here the members of a pleasure cult are enjoying hedonistic tendencies of all kinds. The newest “attraction” acquired by Gellia, mistress of the Lodge, is a rare elixir known as the “Red Tear”. It brings great stimuli and gives even aged bodies strength and vigour. Sadly this elixir will lead to death in most cases of prolonged usage, and if it is not destroyed the three dead men in question will not be the last rich corpses with a blissful expression...

Gellia is mostly innocent. She is aware of some vague danger, but has never stopped to really think about it. After all, her clients – both male and female – are all adults, all know what they are doing and are also paying her very well.

91. A GANGSTER'S LOVE

MEDIUM LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON EXPLORATION AND COMBAT

Our heroes are approached by “Hooknose” Brendar, one of the city's minor crime bosses. His wife Orvella has fallen ill. No doctor can cure her, and she is rapidly losing strength. Brendar has heard about a magical elixir capable of healing almost all diseases, and it might be his Orvella's last hope.

The only problem is: the elixir is owned by the wizard Tablar, and he is unwilling to part with it.

Tablar is a ruthless man, hiding his riches – including said elixir – in an underground vault guarded by magical constructs and protected by traps. Brendar begs our heroes to help him past these defences. He swears he only wants the elixir...and he is even telling the truth. Sadly things are not quite as simple as expected. Not only are the magical constructs formidable opponents, Brendar's right hand, a sharp – faced woman named Londa, has convinced a significant part of his followers that their boss has grown soft, and that they should take all the riches as soon as the path into the vault is open, no matter what Brendar says.

This whole situation can become quite tricky, with our heroes and potentially Brendar facing off against Londa and the “crew” in the middle of the vault. Which is when the angry wizard Tablar arrives with a whole new batch of constructs, willing to destroy all intruders, no matter what kind of excuses they give...

92. THE LIVING MANSION

MEDIUM LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON COMBAT

Baron Godwin's household wizard, Cedric, is known to be a bit of a buffoon at times. But this time he has seriously outdone himself! A ritual gone wrong has animated every household object in the mansion. Now things are completely out of control. Shears, brooms, tables and curtains are flying and crawling through the rooms, attacking everyone trying to stop them. Several guards have been injured and Cedric himself is severely wounded. The baron, his family and most of the retainers have locked themselves in an empty basement room, with no way out.

The city watch has surrounded the mansion but has failed to defeat the animated objects. Our heroes are called to help. They can either destroy every single object by hand or try to get to the tower and tear the magical scroll that gives them life a part. But things are about to get really dangerous, for the magic has reached the baron's armoury...

93. DEATH OF A BARD

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON DIPLOMACY AND INVESTIGATION

The population is on the edge of rebellion. Several days ago Pandriel Lighttongue, most famous and most beloved of bards, and his whole family have been murdered. No one has seen the killing itself, but Pandriel's last popular work was a scathing critique of mayor Randin's new taxes. To add fuel to the fire there are rumours circulating that a dagger from the mayor's personal guard has been found at the crime scene. Now the people are demanding a full – scale investigation. Sadly mayor Randin and his guards have not handled the situation well, arrogantly insulting the public and ignoring their wishes. In their minds the death of a musician is hardly an important issue.

Yesterday Pandriel's brother, the carpenter Orwen, and a few of his friends had an altercation with the city watch and were severely beaten. That heats the situation up even more. A mob of enraged citizens attacks the mayor's son and his bodyguards, injuring them all. Randin is terribly angry and orders the full mobilization of the watch, prepared to bring a regiment of soldiers into the city to quell any riots if necessary. A violent clash is very close.

All the while the mayor's assistant, Lady Jashina, and her own guards, who were actually behind the murder of the Lighttongue family, watch and laugh, for Jashina sees her own influence rising as the wretched fool Randin is finally showing what a pitiful creature he is.

94. BLOOD IN THE SEWERS

LOW LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

For several months now a number of minor monsters – giant rats, lizards, snakes or the like – have made the local sewers their home. The presence of these creatures has become a nuisance, and the council hires well – armed mercenaries to get rid of the infestation.

The monsters are dealt with easily enough, but while down there our heroes find several heavily mutilated bodies that look fairly fresh. And their wounds are not caused by the monsters. Bloody trails lead from the bodies to a secret underground room, secured with a heavy iron door. This chamber lies under the mansion of the wealthy merchant Morwo. He of course pretends to know nothing about it, and will in fact send hired thugs after our heroes if they investigate further.

Going to the city watch with the information does not yield more than some half – cocked promises. The secret chamber is an underground arena, and here captives are forced to fight to the death at the behest of several rich spectators. All the fighters are local criminals who had disappeared from the streets after being taken into the custody of the guards. Morwo has “bought” them from a Captain named Elwig, and they are both earning some significant money with the whole scheme.

The local underworld though is getting angry about the disappearances, and our heroes might very well find allies amongst the gangs if they choose to investigate further.

95. GRAVE TROUBLE

MEDIUM LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON EXPLORATION AND COMBAT

The Court of Peace Eternal, the oldest graveyard in the city, is under attack! Several fresh graves have been reopened, the bodies stolen, one of the gravediggers has disappeared, and now even the priest himself, Brother Merkin, is missing! A group of city guards posted at the graveyard at night reports seeing weird things and hearing terrible noises from the darkness. Superstitious fear strikes the town, rumours of angry spirits and undead creatures abound. Our heroes are hired to help.

The town is right to fear, for a group of hungry ghoule has moved onto the cemetery, taking it as their territory. Tunnels dug by the monsters are criss-crossing the whole area under ground. For now the creatures are content with eating the fresh corpses, but those will soon run out. And their hunger will then lead the ghoule to attack townsfolk, digging into their basements and abducting them to be devoured in the middle of the night.

96. TIES OF BLOOD

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION, DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

Over the last couple of months several brutal murders have shocked the city. Victims are torn apart, slashed over and over with a blade. Some people believe a lunatic is responsible, maybe even possessed by demons, others think it is an outright monster doing the killing. Now someone close to our heroes, a family member or long – time ally, has been murdered. Blood has stained the house, and many friends of the victim are in shock.

Only a few hours after the murder large men in well – worn armour appear in the neighbourhood, asking questions and trying to intimidate people into silence. The local guard is suspiciously absent. When confronted the mercenaries will admit to working for Count Kanfer, one of the city's most powerful men, who wants the murderer stopped. They claim full jurisdiction over the affair, not allowing anyone else to investigate. Indeed they will take several people away in a large, armoured coach, one of them reportedly a well – dressed man covered in patches of dried blood.

Many locals will be intimidated, but beg our heroes to bring the killer, who has already struck several times over the last six months, to justice.

While investigating the trail of these mercenaries will become quite clear. Count Kanfer shows an unusual interest in the whole affair, having ordered the city watch to stand aside on multiple occasions, and his men are rumoured to have taken the murderer in more than once...

The trail leads to an old tower not far from the city walls, a tower owned by the count and protected by mercenaries. Here the murderer Axilan, Count Kanfer's deranged son, is being held in captivity.

He is being treated more than well and guarded by hard men. Despite this Axilan, who is a genius in his own way, manages to slip away every now and then, returning to the city to continue his killing spree.

97. DEAD OR ALIVE

MEDIUM LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION

While plundering the tomb of Quonik, a recently deceased merchant, grave robbers discover the sarcophagus to be empty, with weird arcane markings inside of it. Soon there are rumours abound in the underworld that the old man has returned from the grave, stalking the streets as some sort of beast. Some even say they have seen a pale man looking like Quonik, with red eyes and tattered clothing, hiding in alleyways. The whispers of “vampire” fill the city.

Many do not believe these rumours. One of them is Rovid, a powerful local crime boss.

The deceased merchant Quonik, a notorious and notoriously bad gambler, owed him quite a lot of money, and Rovid is starting to think Quonik is not quite as dead as people believe. Thus our heroes, who are hired to look into these rumours of a vampire, might very well run into Rovid's thugs who are asking the same questions and might react badly to potential rivals.

Our heroes will also discover the wizard Pendilan, an illusionist hovering around the area of the vampire sightings. It is he who creates and spreads the rumours, and also he who added the fake arcane markings on the inside of the sarcophagus. Pendilan was hired by Quonik to fake his death and help the merchant disappear. The illusionist is the only one who knows his client's current whereabouts: in a basement chamber close to the docks, waiting for a ship to take him and a lot of his wealth to exotic lands.

98. A BITTER STING

MEDIUM LEVEL SHORT ADVENTURE, FOCUSED ON INVESTIGATION AND COMBAT

Dagger – wasps, aggressive and cunning creatures, nearly as big as a man's head, are the bane of many exotic islands. Now a shipment of them, including a queen capable of reproduction, has been smuggled into the city. Sadly the dagger wasps escape, leaving the smugglers dead. They hide in an underground chamber not far from the docks, emerging at night to seek food. Rats, cats and dogs are found dead in ever increasing numbers, as the queen is starting to produce more and more wasps. Their weird buzzing sounds are starting to frighten the people, and soon the first human bodies are found dead and swollen from the poison.

Our heroes are sent to investigate. They need to find the nest and destroy it before all the new eggs can hatch and the city is in serious danger. A lone wasp is not a worthy adversary to a well – armed warrior, but killing one of them draws the others to you and forces them into a murderous frenzy. And fire is the only thing they fear.

99. THE POISONED HEART

LOW LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUSED ON INVESTIGATION

Our heroes are approached by Harmon, a local merchant, who asks them to investigate two murders that have happened in his vicinity. Both his cousin and a business associate have been the victims of deadly stabbings within the last fortnight. Harmon is suspicious, does not trust the city watch, and wants to know what is going on.

Soon the investigation will run into trouble. Members of the local Greenbrand gang are trying to stop our heroes from asking too many questions. They dislike people sniffing around on their territory, or that is what they say at least. Truth is they have received direct orders from Irkan, their leader, to stop people from looking into the whole affair. They are not to hurt anyone too badly, but intimidation and a few punches are not out of the question.

Irkan has been paid by Germenis, brother to Harmon, the more successful of the siblings. He is a well – respected businessman and will not be easy to get to. Should someone treat him rudely he will call his bodyguards and refuse to speak to our heroes from then on. Germenis knows what is going on. It was his brother Harmon himself who committed these murders, although he does not remember it. He has been cursed with a terrible temper by Hyrd, a local warlock (who himself was paid by the smuggler Durmik, who covets Harmon's wife), and has murdered both people while not truly being himself. Germenis has agents working on a counter spell but until it is finished he does not wish his brother to be hurt or imprisoned.

100. THE POWER OF HEALING

EPIC LEVEL AVERAGE ADVENTURE, FOCUS ON INVESTIGATION,
DIPLOMACY AND COMBAT

Over the course of the last decades many lives have been saved by herbal concoctions and magical potions of healing sold by one of the many associates of the Vanderbeld family. More recently however some of their patients, amongst them powerful men and women like Countessa Gariva, have begun experiencing strange side effects. They feel weakened even after fully recovering from whatever malady they were treated for, and have strange cravings for vices never experienced before. This whole affair becomes dangerous when Baron Iven kills his son in a very uncharacteristic fit of rage and his friend Lady Gerenna is discovered to have murdered several serving girls over the course of the last couple of weeks. They were both treated with Vanderbeld products shortly before they committed their crimes, as our heroes will discover when they are asked to investigate by family members who are shocked and cannot believe this extremely uncharacteristic behaviour.

Because the Vanderbeld family hides behind different associates, and their names are only known in certain circles of master herbalists and apothecaries, it will not be easy to pick up this trail, but applying pressure in the right places will lead to Gerion Vanderbeld, the city's best alchemist. Gerion will refuse to speak with any investigators, simply having his servants explain that their master is busy and certainly has nothing to do with the “perversions” of the rich.

How powerful and ruthless the Vanderbeld family is will be revealed bit by bit, as lawyers, then thugs, then assassins are sent after our heroes should they persist to look into the matter. Even several minor nobles, heavily indebted with the family of alchemists, will approach and try to stop the investigation.

This is all happening because the Vanderbelds have a large secret to hide:

Fifty years ago Ignacio, head of their family, made a deal with a powerful demon by the name of EshVartu. In exchange for knowledge of many kinds he promised to do the creature's bidding once fifty years had passed.

Now Ignacio, an old man who has made his clan extremely rich and extremely powerful, has no choice but to follow his patron's commands. This demon wishes for influential people to be corrupted and driven insane and has therefore made some changes to the Vanderbeld recipes...which does not only threaten the city's healing supplies, but also hides a grander plan. EshVartu has approached several of the stricken nobles and offered to help them and supply them with power should they help with the construction of a secret temple beneath the city streets. Once the building is completed EshVartu and his servants will be able to descend upon the world and force their will upon the realm.