CITYBOOK™ III

Deadly Nightside

a game-master's aid for all role-playing systems

18 nightside businesses and cultural establishments, and more than 60 fully developed non-player personalities with scenario suggestions, for use with any role-playing system

Produced by **BLADE** a division of Flying Buffalo Inc.
Distributed by **TASK FORCE GAMES**

All-System Catalyst Series

#8513

CITYBOOK™ III

Deadly Nightside

a game-master's aid for all role-playing systems

18 fully-described business and cultural establishments for use with any role-playing system including over 60 completely developed non-player personalities to interact with your players' characters in City adventures

edited by Michael A Stackpole

Cover & interior art by Liz Danforth

maps in 2nd edition by Randall G Kuipers

Citybook, is one in the Catalyst series of booklets, a line of game master aids for use with any role playing game. Each book in the series provides a "catalyst for your imagination" (tm) - something to give your imagination a boost toward better gaming. Catalyst is Flying Buffalo's trademark name for its entire series of game booklets designed for use with any role-playing game. CityBook is Flying Buffalo's trademark name for those Catalyst game booklets which describe businesses, personalities and scenarios for city-based play.

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First Printing February 1987
Second Printing March 1991

PRINTED IN USA

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Nightside Introduction

Welcome back to the City! I'm sure many of you thought *Citybook II: Port o' Call* was the last time you'd see the city, but we all got our re-entry visas stamped and are very pleased to bring you *Citybook III: Deadly Nightside.* This is the book that contains all the horrid folks you need to make the nasty side of town worthy of its reputation.

As with all *Catalyst* books, everything is described in "generic" terms. That means there are no game-specific numbers and statistics. *CityBooks* are written to provide a variety of people, places and things for your games. It is up to you as the Game Master to add the numbers that will fit these into your particular game system and world. The coding system, explained in the section entitled "GM Guidelines," should make this easy, and you should feel free to modify, edit, expand and otherwise change things to fit your game system.

Our first *Citybook* presented common establishments and *Port o' Call* did its best to flesh out the seaside businesses found in every port in the world. *Deadly Nightside* is a dark and dangerous excursion into the seedier section of fantasy cities. *Nightside* is organized a bit differently from the other books, but the changes should not surprise or create difficulty for you. In the past we've grouped establishments by function, i.e. listing all the taverns in one section, but here we've listed them by *layers*. Because *Nightside* deals with the more insular and covert side of town we've chosen to present the establishments in the rough order characters would be likely to encounter them. In short, unless you've got a very jaded gaming group, you're not likely to hit an opium den right off the bat. We hope the arrangement will let characters get used to the social structure in *Nightside* before they decide to kill Danny O'Grunnion and from the Steel Man for the murder.

This *Citybook* includes a number of "organizations" in addition to straight establishments. Two, the Haansfolk and the beggars' Undercity, really represent sub-cultures. The Sackers and The Steel Man are a vigilante gang and an "Assassins' Guild" respectively, but if you expect to know, from those labels, what they really are and how they work, you'll be pleasantly surprised when you read them. These oranizations include a bit of their history to set them up, but that's mutable and they should slip into any city easily. *Nightside* has its beggars, thieves, assassins and crooks, but if you expect them to be the "same old thing" you've seen in every other fantasy campaign, you've come to the wrong place.

In the past, folks have wondered when we'd publish the "whole City" and they've made guesses at what city mentioned in other Blade projects this was. We've always tried to maintain the modular nature of the establishments so they can be used independently of each other, yet you've always picked up on the clues threaded through the descriptions and establishments and made the connections we've only hinted at. In this *Citybook* we've gone ahead and named the names instead of hinting at who might actually have done something. Get used to the names Danny O'Grunnion and Garowin "Sheets" Eddrad. Both are crooks, evil and more so, and they've got a hand in almost everything that goes on in Nightside. You'll see their names sprinkled around everywhere but you'll only find them described in the Big Fish Gang.

Of course this means those of you who use *Citybook* to fill out cities you've already created are stuck, right? Come on, have we ever done anything like that to you before? No. If you already have an underworld boss and you want him to be the silent partner in the Cock and Bull Gaming Club instead of Danny O'Grunnion, fine, change the name. If you don't have a city built upon the ruins of other cities, just have the beggars tunnel their undercity out the same way prairie dogs do. If you never had an empire 2,000 years ago to give rise to the Steel Man and the Shadow Riders, add a story about a sunken continent to your world, or just bring those two establishments more up to date with your world's history. That's even easier than figuring out the numbers for these characters.

The people and places in this book are yours to play with, change, warp, reform, deform, defame, and kill. You can do anything you desire with them, and no one will scream that you've ruined a piece of "art". This CityBook is yours to enjoy and get lots of play from.

If you like this book, please take a look at the other Catalyst books: the *Grimtooth's Traps* series, the *Elves of Lejentia* books, *Treasure Vault* and the other *Citybooks*. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, feel free to write. If your local store doesn't carry all these books, ask for our "Blade" catalog. An SASE is always appreciated. BLADE, c/o Flying Buffalo Inc, PO BOX 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252.

All of us sincerely hope you enjoy *Deadly Nightside*. May the gods be with your characters, the ale cold and the wounds clean. This *is* quite probably the place you will be caught dead.

GM Guidelines

Since *CityBook III* is a generic role-playing aid, no game-specific statistics for NPC's or monsters have been given. However, as an aid to the GM who must convert our descriptions into game mechanics, we have provided the following guidelines to help you in adapting *CityBook III* to your favorite game system. Keep in mind, however, that this is now *your* book; if you wish to change anything, go ahead!

GENERAL ATTRIBUTES

It isn't necessary to give each non-player character in *CityBook III* complete attributes such as Power, Luck, Wisdom and so forth. However, should you choose to do so, you will note in the character descriptions such phrases as "very strong," "quick," "stupid," "beautiful," etc. By noting these phrases and reflecting them in the NPC's attributes, you should come out with a fairly accurate set of statistics for the person in question.

FIGHTING PROWESS

At times, player adventurers will probably get into fights with non-player characters. We have provided a six-level coding system to describe how well a particular *CityBook III* NPC can fight. In some cases, the combat ability of an NPC is given in terms of a specific weapon or weapons (e.g. Ningal Arawaza is Very Good with a Broadsword, and Good with a self-bow, but Average otherwise). In other cases, the fighting prowess is overall (e.g. Kother Lansend is poor overall).

There are two ways to randomize for the fighting prowess of an NPC. You can roll 1d6 for the attribute (6 means the character is an Excellent fighter) or you can roll 1d100 and use the percentages given after the ratings to determine the NPC's skill level. Remember, the percentages refer to how well that NPC stacks up in relation to all other fighters in your average world. Therefore, a "poor" fighting prowess would account for about 40% of all fighters met, and an "excellent" prowess would only fit about 4% of the fighters. If you put a "poor" fighter into your campaign, we expect that 60% of the rest of the fighters in your world can soundly thrash him.

These are the codes for prowess:

◊ **Poor.** Unfamiliar with combat arts; can be easily wounded or killed. *(01 - 40%)*

◊ **Average.** A run-of-the-mill type, but certainly no mistaking him for a hero. *(41 - 59%)*

◊ **Fair.** Better than average and will acquit himself adequately. *(60 - 74%)*

◊ **Good.** Can go one-on-one with seasoned veteran fighters. *(75 - 84%)*

◊ **Very Good.** This person can cause a lot of trouble in combat. *(85 - 95%)*

◊ **Excellent.** If blood is spilled, it's not likely to come from this character... *(96 - 100%)*

MAGIC ABILITY

To determine the expertise with which an NPC uses magic power, *CityBook III* employs a six-level system similar to the one for fighting prowess. This is listed in the NPC descriptions as "Magic Ability," and will be followed by a listing of the particular areas the magic-user might be competent in (see "The Eight C's of Magic" below). If an NPC has no Magic Ability listed, then none exists. The codes for Magic Ability are:

◊ **Poor.** A hedge wizard or apprentice. Might very well turn himself into a frog. *(01 - 40%)*

◊ **Average.** Competent, but hardly a world-shaker. Only a few spells at his command. *(41 - 59%)*

◊ **Fair.** A wider range of spells. Effective, but not powerful. *(60 - 74%)*

◊ **Good.** Knows numerous spells in many categories, and is versatile in their use. *(75 - 84%)*

◊ **Very Good.** Knows powerful spells in most of the Eight C's. Formidable. *(85 - 95%)*

◊ **Excellent.** Not a person to cross. Can easily command almost all the known spells, and might be able to turn the party into anchovy paste with a single gesture. *(96 - 100%)*

Given the diversity of magic systems in fantasy gaming, it is impossible to assign specific spells or powers to any magic-using NPC in *CityBook*. However, spells or powers can be broken down into categories of magic, regardless of what game system you use. Thanks to Mike Stackpole, *CityBook* has the "8C's System" to give some idea of what type of magic a particular NPC might wield.

◊ **C1. Combat Magic.** Any spell used primarily in an offensive/defensive manner in combat.

◊ **C2. Curative Magic.** Any spell used to heal wounds, cure diseases, stop poison damage, etc.

◊ **C3. Clairvoyant Magic.** Any spell used to detect things: secret doors, magic, hidden or trapped items, etc.

◊ **C4. Conveyance Magic.** Teleportation, levitation, flying, telekinesis spells, etc.

◊ **C5. Communication Magic.** Any spell used to communicate: telepathy, translation, hypnosis, magic reading spells, etc.

◊ **C6. Construction Magic.** Any spell which uses matter or energy to "build," e. g. wall spells, protective fields, stone-shaping spells, etc.

◊ **C7. Concealment Magic.** Any spell which serves to hide or misdirect, e. g. invisibility, illusion, shape-shifting spells, etc.

◊ **C8. Conjuration Magic.** Any spell which produces a condition or entity, e. g. light spells, weather control, demon-summoning spells, etc.

Keep in mind that a character with Magic Ability need not always be a sorcerer. An NPC could possess certain magic abilities as a result of owning some device or from some form of supernatural intervention. You can also use the Magic Ability Chart randomly by rolling either 1d6 or 1d100 (as was suggested for the fighting prowess chart) to judge the level of a magic-using character, and 1d8 to determine what areas on the "Eight C's" list the character is competent in.

LOCKS

Light-fingered thieves and pilfering rogues are ever-present in the world of fantasy, and run rather thick in this *CityBook*. To help the GM deal with these types, *CityBook* uses a system to code the difficulty of any locks encountered. These codes appear in the text when a reference is made to a chest,

door or similar locked item (e. g., "locked^3," which means the lock is "fair"), and usually on the maps themselves in reference to doors. The codes for locks are as follows:

◊ **1. Poor.** An orphan with a hatpin could open this lock. *(01 - 40%)*

◊ **2. Average.** A little tougher to jimmy this open; just adequate. *(41 - 59%)*

◊ **3. Fair.** Takes some effort to open. *(60 - 74%)*

◊ **4. Good.** Particularly tough. Probably will require special tools to open. *(75 - 84%)*

◊ **5. Very Good.** Will take even a master thief a long time to open. *(85 - 95%)*

◊ **6. Excellent.** Could require magic or a howitzer to open easily — unless you have the key. *(96 - 100%)*

Again, the percentages here refer to what percentage of such locks exist in an average cross-section. Many locks fall into the "poor" category, and there are only a few truly "excellent" locks. Indeed, most doors are not locked at all.

You could also use the percentages to indicate how many thieves could jimmy the lock. For example, at least 60% of all thieves could jimmy a "poor" lock, while 4% or less could undo an "excellent" lock. The GM will have to determine how well a particular thief character does when confronted with a certain level of lock (i. e. a very poor thief would have lots of trouble with even a "fair" lock). Once again, a GM can randomize on this lock system to learn the nature of any lock.

MONETARY GUIDELINES

Prices in this *CityBook* are usually given in overall terms (i. e., "low," "reasonable," and "expensive"). You should use common sense regarding these terms; a reasonable price for a broadsword would be outrageous when applied to a single arrow. Where prices are actually listed, *CityBook* assumes this standard: 10 copper pieces = 1 silver piece; 10 silver pieces = 1 gold piece; a gold piece represents approximately $1 in U.S. Currency. This currency system obviously must be altered to fit your own economic system.

TIME FRAME

CityBook uses a standard 24-hour day as its time frame. If your world operates under a different system, alter the times given to fit it.

NON-HUMAN RACES

For color, we've included some non-humans and a few halfbreeds. If it doesn't fit into your campaign to have a hobbit wizard, simply make him a small human. Several of the characters in this *CityBook* have unusual looks because of magic but, as with anything else in here, you can adjust it to make it fit your world.

WORLD HISTORY

Several of the establishments in this *CityBook* mention events that took place long ago, far away or some combination thereof. While most of the details are hazy enough to slip them into any campaign as rumors, some of the events might conflict with established campaign history. In this case the GM should change the historical events to something parallel in his own world or slowly let the players "discover" these new facts as needed.

Explanation of Maps

The multitude of symbols on the opposite page shouldn't panic you. You should find most to be self-explanatory in conjunction with the text.

The maps are intended to both show what the room would look like, and what the room contains. The views are taken as though you were looking down on the building with the roof removed; if there is more than one floor, each is provided on a separate map.

The key will provide you with the meanings for the various symbols used to indicate a room's contents and furnishings. Most objects are shown by a reasonable facsimile of their actual shape. However, certain items have been stylized for easy recognition. For instance, a bed in a fantasy world does not necessarily look like the symbol used to represent a bed on the map — but when you look at the symbol, you *know* it's a bed.

In simplest terms: read the text and look at the map which accompanies it. You should find it reasonably clear and easy to understand. If you still have trouble figuring out part of it, check back here for the key.

Note that most of the maps in this book are oriented so that, when read normally, North is at the top of the page (exceptions to this are noted on the maps). An explantion of symbols unique to a particular establishment is provided with each map. Different scales have been used, and each map has its scale noted on it for easy reference.

OTHER IDEAS FOR THE GAME MASTER

Binding this and other *CityBook* or *Catalyst* projects together into a full-fledged city is not as difficult as it might seem. The most daunting task is to lay out the city, and staring at a 36" x 36" sheet of blank graph paper is a good way to decide the whole thing isn't worth it.

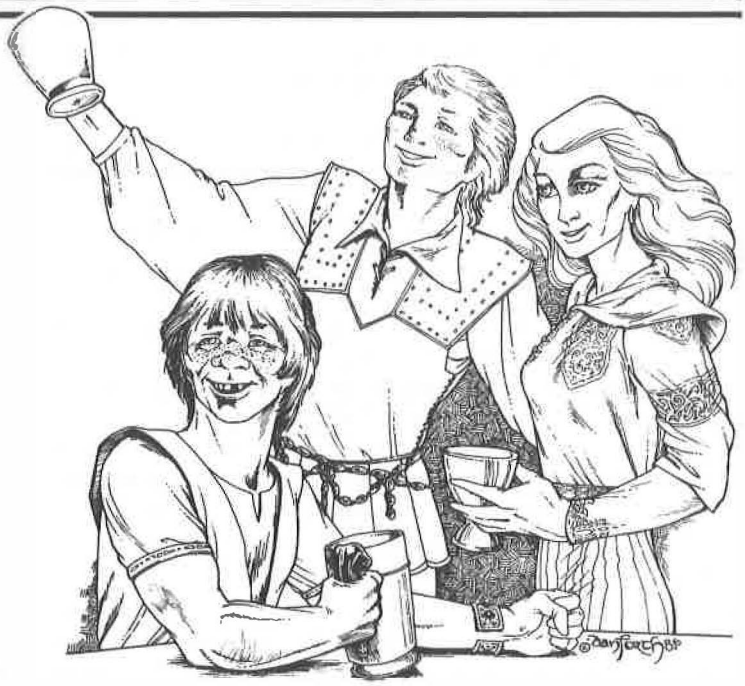
Luckily, your local libraries should be able to help you out. Most have books known as Pictoral Archives. These are massive tomes full of illustrations that used to grace the pages of magazines a century or more ago. All of them are copyright free, so you may use them as you wish, and they often include small city maps that are perfect for your city's model.

Make a copy of a map and start renovating it by deciding where the rich and poor sections of the town are. Remember that Nightside is probably in an older quarter, and the rich folks are in the newest area. If you have an open market it probably should be centrally located, and the area around it might well be home to lots of other shops.

Change the street names to reflect people and events out of your world's history. Circle or color little buildings and make a note of what establishment in which *Citybook* they represent. In no time you'll have a working city you can later transfer to that sheet of graph paper. Even better, you can copy and alter your small map to hand out to your players so they can find their way around town.

You can also use other pictures from the archive to illustrate your adventures. Most of the books include animal and monster pictures, so visual aids to your games are easy to get your hand on. Good luck!

The Singing Frog Sanctuary



Adventurers seem to spend the half of their lives outside dungeons in any tavern available. As long as the ale is cheap and the food tastes better than trail rations, they pay little attention to their surroundings because they know nothing odd can go on in such a safe and ordinary place. Those adventurers, while appreciating the Singing Frog Sanctuary for its food and drink, will dismiss the tavern's most important offering.

The sign on the thick stone archway above the door has a circular emblem depicting a croaking frog sitting on a dark rock surrounded by a glistening pool of gently rippling water. Below the emblem is written:

The Singing Frog Sanctuary
You may come in to talk or listen, or simply sit.
We would appreciate it if you would also sample our fare.
Ask Kother about our specialties.
All weapons must be checked at the door.
The Singing Frog Sanctuary is open from sunset until dawn.

SPECIALTIES OF THE HOUSE

The Singing Frog features four special drinks: Whitewater Rush (5 gold pieces), Nightstorm (3 gold pieces), Deep Pool (3 gold pieces) and Frog Grog (2 gold pieces). Whitewater Rush is a drink which creates a sensation of high spirited well-being; the after effects are vision which blurs three hours after imbibing and remains that way for a period of 2-12 hours. Nightstorm makes the drinker alert for the next 24 hours. Sleep will be impossible during this period. Once the 24 hours is up, the character will collapse for a full eight hours sleep, and will feel nauseated for 24 hours upon wakening. Deep Pool is a dark blue drink, one which brings calm to the mind and relief from pain of the body. People who drink a Deep Pool will not care much about anything which happens around them until the drink wears off 4 hours later.

The final, and most popular, special drink is Frog Grog. It is a powerful mixture of rum and herbal waters which in no way lessen the potency of the alcohol, though they do reduce the severity of the hangover. Frog Grog has the additional — but known only to the host — property of enabling Kother Lansend (host, see below) to easily read the mind of the imbiber. If Kother senses that the drinker is an adventurer in trouble — most folks drinking these things are doing so to forget something! — he will take the character aside and offer help or even the use of the hiding room (E). Other telepathic characters will find reading the mind of Frog Grogged characters easier than normal for the 1-6 hours after a drink is downed.

Other drinks; beer, ale and wine; are available at prices ranging from 1 to 3 silver pieces. The basic meal offered here is a loaf of bread and a bowl of soup, which costs 3 silver pieces. Meat may be added to the meal: 1 gold piece for half a chicken, 2 gold pieces for a leg of lamb or portion of pork, and 15 gold pieces for a whole joint of beef.

The people who frequent the Singing Frog Sanctuary are, if not generally respectable, at least on good behavior while in the tavern. Kother Lansend has fostered an image of the Singing Frog Sanctuary as being a place of refuge from the considerable perils of Nightside. The regulars gratefully help Kother maintain that image.

ACTIVITIES AND DIVERSIONS

Debates. The debates are an important form of amusement in the tavern. The topic for the debate is always a question which can be answered yes or no. The questions range from the silly, "Should all seas and oceans be converted into beer?", to the serious, "Will organized militia companies help reduce crime?", and those which could be either, " Is tar and feathering a sufficient punishment for a tax collector caught in the act?"

Kother Lansend or Ningal Arawaza determines the question. A purse of 300 silver pieces goes to the victorious team, and the losers have to buy everyone in the house two rounds of

Greg Gorden is a highly talented game designer from Chicago. Best known for The Q Manual and The DC Superhero Game, Greg is one of only a few repeat offenders: he had another great establishment in CBH. Greg is currently the game reviewer for American Fantasy.

drinks (excluding the specialties). Each team consists of five volunteers from those gathered at the tavern when the debate question is read. A character volunteers by raising his hand and stating "Yes" or "No"; if he states "yes" he joins the team which believes the answer to the question is yes and vice versa. Once the debate starts, all the spectators are given two wooden tokens they may redeem for their free drinks. Anyone not present when they are passed out does not get to drink on the losing team's tab.

Kother maintains order during the debate, makes sure the debate runs not much longer than an hour, and then explains which side he feels has the stronger argument. A show of hands by the audience determines the actual winner, and the vote agrees with Kother about 70% of the time.

Debates are held as often as Kother can afford them because he generally loses a bit of money on each of them. On average they take place once a week, and Kother would not mind letting someone else put up the victors' purse if he is free to select the question to be debated.

Drinksing: The Drinksing is an activity peculiar to the Singing Frog Sanctuary. Maisler (see below) starts by singing a series of drinking songs, most of which are very familiar to his audience. He periodically stops beside a patron and shouts, "Sing!" If the patron sings the next verse of the current song (or makes up a reasonable addition to the song on the spot), the whole tavern applauds, and Maisler buys the patron a drink. If the patron bobbles the verse, or is not very creative in his invention of a verse, a unison shout of:

Yo Ho! See that sot!
We drink it down fast
To get where he got!

erupts from the clientele. All of the patrons take a drink and the person who sang incorrectly must buy Maisler, or a person of Maisler's choice, a drink. Maisler generally picks his victims from the central tables so regular patrons who sing worse than frogs take refuge at the tables along the west wall. Maisler generally respects their wishes, but newcomers at those tables will have no immunity.

Friday Fish Fly: Once a week this peculiar test of strength, dexterity, and endurance (to strong odors) is held. The object is to bounce a fish off the rebounding board (see **A3**) toward the one open side of Scufflehiss' cage. If the fish rebounds within reach of Scufflehiss 2 poins are scored; if the fish flops into Scufflehiss' cage 5 points are scored. One additional point is scored for each pound the fish weighed; the weight bonus may only be claimed if the throw would otherwise score points. Betting is encouraged and fish fly teams are common. Participants must bring their own fish.

The game consists of five tosses for each contestant. The record score for a single toss is 11 points (a 9 pounder which just flopped within reach of Scufflehiss) and the single game record is 30 points (by the Fearless Sons of Æther just before they went off on a Jihad and were slain to a hobbit).

Froghairs: A night of tall tales, of sleight of hand magic, and threepenny con games. The object is not to enrich oneself, but to enjoy befuddling your peers, or perhaps expand your repertoire of tricks to use elsewhere. Side bets are not unusual.

LAYOUT

The building measures 64' from east to west and 112' from north to south. The tavern is 14' high at the tallest point, and it has a gently sloping roof which lowers the ceiling height to 10' near the outer walls. The walls are made of stone with a greenish cast to it. There are two entrances/exits, each locked[3] when the tavern is not open. All windows are barred with 1 inch thick brass bars. The windows are set flush with the outside wall about five feet above the ground.

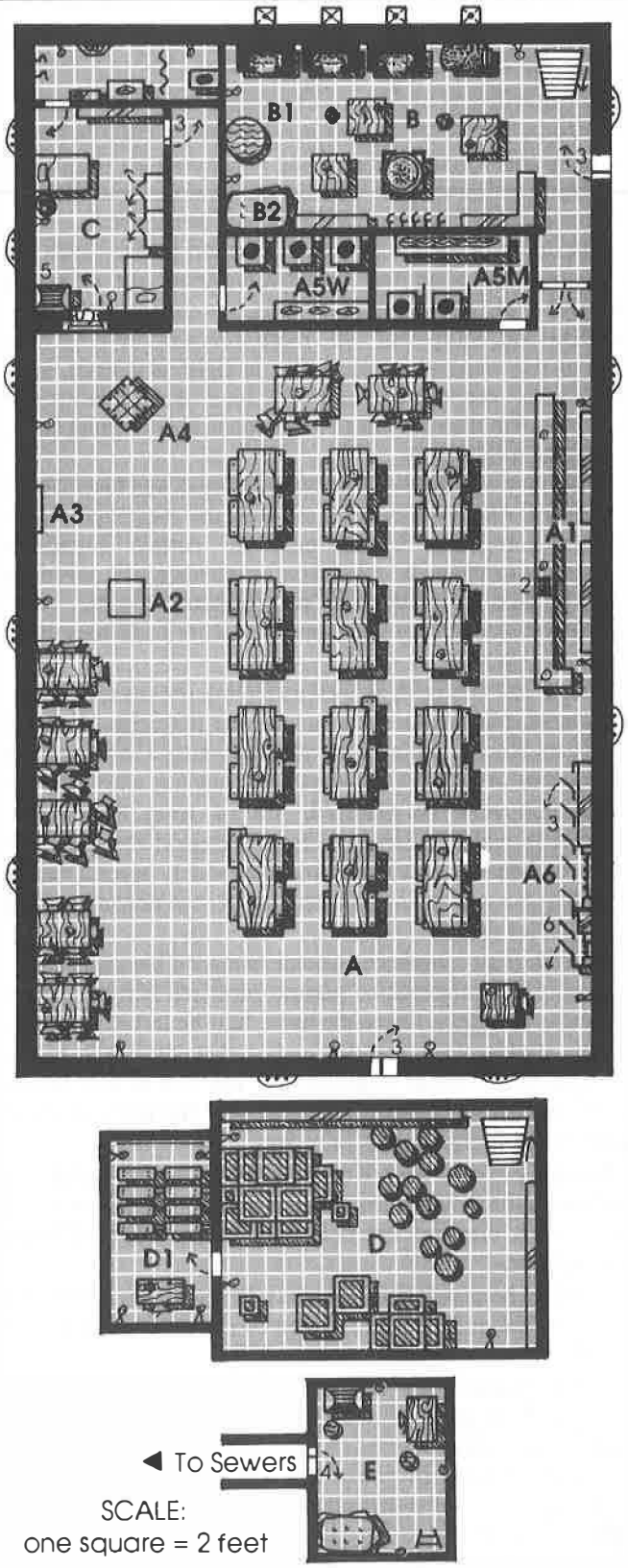
A. Customer Area. (60 x 80') The total seating capacity of the Singing Frog Sanctuary is approximately 150 people, although upwards of 250 people have packed themselves into this room. The bar is at **A1**; all drinks are served from the bar. Enough liquor is kept beneath the bar for most occasions, and the cashbox[2] is located here as well. The square at **A2** is the scratch box from which the contestants hurl fish for the fish fly, toward the rebounding board (**A3**) and onto Scufflehiss' cage (**A4**). The privies are located at **A5**, ventilation being provided by small barred skylights less than a foot square. The weapons lockups are located at **A6**. The larger cabinet is for normal weapons; in it is a piece of enchanted glass which glows yellow when a magic item is placed adjacent to it. If a weapon causes the glass to glow, the tavern worker placing the weapon in the cabinet will place it in the second, more secure, lockup instead. The normal lockup has a lock[3], while the more secure cabinet has a lock[6].

B. Kitchen. (42' x 20') The kitchen has three hearths and a baking oven along the northern wall. Worktables, shelves and utensil racks take up much of the rest of the space. There is a large kettle over a firepit; this is the vessel in which the tavern's soup is almost always cooking. The washbasin is at **B1**, while **B2** is a pile of sleeping mats used by the live-in servants. The servants usually sleep in the kitchen. The stairs lead to the larder. The doors leading into the common room (**A**) cannot be locked. The outside door is always locked[3] unless someone is entering or exiting.

C. Bedroom (16' x 20') Kother and Ningal sleep here. There are two beds, two armoires, a bookshelf, and a bedside table next to Kother's bed. An adjoining privy has a washbasin, a mirror, and a ledge on which to set a lamp. There is a large oil lamp hanging from the ceiling, and a smaller lamp on Kother's nightstand. The shelves are lined with the classics of literature. The chest[5] lying against the south wall contains two months' revenue from the Singing Frog Sanctuary. This amount ranges from 1100 to 1600 gold pieces. The door is locked[3] whenever Ningal or Kother is sleeping in the room. The doors and windows are warded so anyone who enters the bedroom without permission of Kother or Ningal will be temporarily blinded. The blindness is a complicated form of illusion.

The secret compartment in the south wall contains a ladder which leads to the hidehout (**E**) below.

D. Larder. (34' x 26' and 12' x 20') Beer, ale and wine are stored closest to the stairs, while other food items are kept further back. Still farther west are the hard goods needed to run the tavern: tools, extra kitchen utensils, nails, tacks, buckets, spare bowls and plates protectively wrapped in protective linen. The room noted **D1** is the classroom in which Kother



(and now Ningal) teach their workers. There is a slate board, chalks, benches, practice slates, and a desk with quill, ink and parchment. Two lamps hang from the ceiling; if they are both lit the rooom will fill with smoke within 90 minutes due to the inferior ventilation.

E. Saferoom. (14' x 18') Kother Lansend built this room especially to house adventurers in need of a place to remain inconspicuous for a few days, or even weeks. If Kother likes the adventurer(s) involved he will rent the saferoom for a gold piece per day per person. This price includes food and drink, though anything excessive will have to be paid for separately. The maximum charge is 100 gold pieces a day per person; this he will charage anyone he moderately dislikes and who is being sought on legitimate charges or for a valid reason. If Kother more than moderately dislikes a character, the character will not be offered the saferoom. Kother, Ningal, and Maisler know of the saferoom, however none of the workers do. The other door in the saferoom leads to a crawlway which exits into the sewer system. It may be locked[4] from the inside only.

The room has five sleeping pallets stacked along the south wall, a writing table, water jars and a chest which contains washcloths, two lamps, four flasks of oil, plates and eating utensils. There are niches in the walls for lamps; these niches have flues which carry the smoke from the lamps to the chimney of one of the hearths above. Ventilation is provided by four small shafts which run up the outer walls to camouflaged ports in the roof. The privy consists of a chamber pot which is supposed to be emptied into the sewer at the end of the crawlway.

The walls have complicated designs and mystical signs which serve as wards. Any magical search of the saferoom will reveal nothing; only the image, aura, or feeling associated with dirt and earth will be detected. Kother must replace these wards periodically.

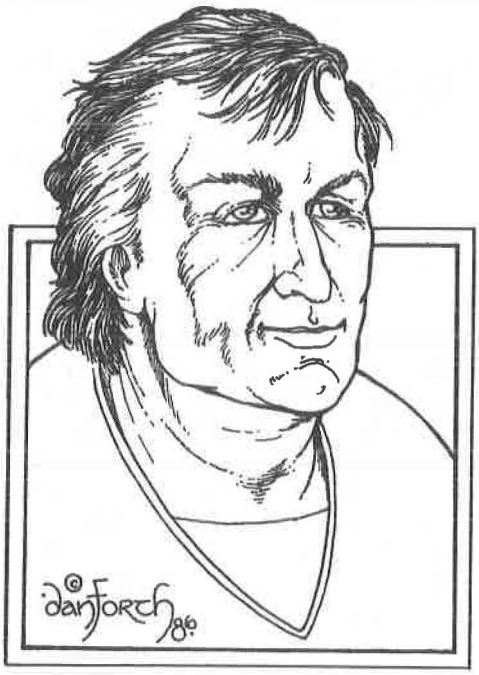
PERSONALITIES

Kother Lansend. *Human, Ht. 5'10", Wt. 155#, Age: 39. Fighting Prowess: Poor. Magic ability: Good: C3, C5, C7; Average: C1, C2.*

Kother Lansend has dark black hair with wisps of gray beginning to appear. Kother is squarejawed, clean shaven, and his eyes seem to be a bit too close together. He is a lively speaker, his voice resonates in clear, crisp tones. Kother is fond of good conversation, and is often willing to give a free meal to anyone with a particularly interesting tale. Kother has notable damage in his right hand: it still looks like a hand but is capable of only gross movement. His faithful clientele noticed the damage occurred some months ago, but Kother has not and will not share how or where he was injured.

Kother Lansend has changed much since he left his home village nineteen years ago. The village elders had requested Kother to stay and use his abilities on behalf of the village; his reply was that teaching frogs to sing would be a more rewarding use of his talents. Nearly sixteen years of adventuring followed his departure from the village. While he was making his reputation Kother met Alathea of Mardon and her swordsister Ningal Arawaza. The trio became the heart of a very successful adventuring party. Success created a need within Kother for greater gains, gains for which he goaded the party into taking questionable risks. One such outing slew everyone except Ningal and himself.

Kother spent the next year in flight from a vengeful Ningal Arawaza. Finally he decided to stop running and to try to rebuild his life. He built the Singing Frog Sanctuary with the



—Kother Landsend—

monies he had left. In addition to the usual tavern services Kother built the hiding room described above; he also started the debates as a method for teaching some of the points of public speaking, as well as introducing concepts known only to the literate elite. Lansend also taught some of his hired help the rudiments of the written language. All of these activities are done with discretion, or in the case of the debates, with well-concealed intent. Kother is wise enough to realize there are some powers who would not approve of his activities.

Kother still practices his magic, but he now only works with less than lethal spells. He might be willing to share his knowledge with a character who appears friendly, patient, and willing to part with a reasonable sum of money, but a price somewhat less than what the open market demands.

Kother will not adventure again, unless it is to join Ningal on an adventurer she is committed to heart and soul.

Ningal Arawaza. *Human, Ht. 5'6", Wt. 120#, Age: 36 Fighting Prowess: Very good with broadsword and with scimitar, Good with self-bows, otherwise Average.*

Ningal has an olive complexion and a slightly oriental cast to her features. Her hair and eyes are coal black. Her gaze, which is fierce and unwavering when directed at someone who appears suspicious, seems to impact with very physical force. When engaged in conversation her partners seem somewhat ill at ease; an especially perceptive character will note at least one cause: Ningal only blinks a tenth as often as a normal person.

Ningal will often listen to the debates which are held at the Singing Frog Sanctuary, will sometimes comment upon a point made by a debator, but will never participate in the debates herself. Arawaza will not suffer fools, and she will barely tolerate those who make flippant remarks throughout the course of a conversation. Ningal treats all the patrons of the Singing Frog Sanctuary with courtesy, attempts to know none of them intimately, and expects reciprocity on the part of the patrons.

Ningal will never intervene in a situation except if requested to do so by one of the parties involved or unless it is obvious the party she is considering aiding is temporarily incapable of requesting assistance. She would consider unrequested aid to be a serious breach of honor, whether given or received.

Ningal Arawaza and Alathea of Mardon pledged each other as swordsisters when they were twelve years old. At that age they had already completed six years of training on the care of weapons and equipment. Six more years of training taught them to use weapons proficiently, to fight as a team, and to know what the other would do in a confrontation. The swordswomen then set out to accomplish a deed great enough to land them titles.

Then they met Kother Landsend. Ningal was fascinated by magic, and Alathea was intrigued with the magician's tales of great treasure that waited only for certain enterprising individuals to claim it. What was an alliance of convenience soon became a permanent arrangement, leading to the destruction of the party when one of Kother's schemes did not proceed as planned.

Ningal felt betrayed, as well as feeling the tremendous loss of Alathea. Ningal Arawaza hunted the magician Kother for two years before finding him at the Singing Frog Sanctuary. Facing him in the wet snow of early winter, she listened to Kother tell how he changed, tell of what he hoped to accomplish with the Singing Frog Sanctuary; then struck his proffered hand of friendship and maimed it beyond healing. Preparing herself against Kother's sorcerous defenses, Ningal moved in for the kill.

Instead of striking back, Kother extended his other hand in friendship. The unexpected gesture surprised Ningal and gave her pause. She did not take the hand, but she left Kother where he lay slumped against the wall rather than kill him. A fortnight later Ningal returned and listened in full to what Kother had to say. Two nights after that she returned to take up residence in the Singing Frog Sanctuary.

Ningal supports what Kother is trying to accomplish with the Singing Frog Sanctuary. Ningal and Kother are once again partners, but they are still not quite the same type of friends they once were.

It might be possible to persuade Ningal to go adventuring again, but the quest would have to be compelling before she'd even consider it.

Maisler. *Human, Ht. 5'7", Wt. 135#, Age: 20. Fighting Prowess: Average with a dagger, Poor otherwise. Thieving Prowess: Average.*

Maisler is slim, of above average agility and speed, but maintains a front of a still-uncoordinated youth. He could be described as handsome but for his nose, which is a size and a half too large. Maisler's hair is curly brown, his eyes luminescent blue. His features have begun to plane off from the rounded look of his younger years. His speech is boisterous, and he will tell bawdy stories to the patrons whenever Ningal is not in the room.

Maisler provides some of the entertainment for the Singing Frog Sanctuary. He is a troubador of average skill, specializing in drinking songs in which the audience is expected to, and in

which it does, participate. Ningal and Kother know of his larcenous methods of income supplementation, and have extracted a promise of abstinence from Maisler which extends to every moment during which he is in the Singing Frog Sanctuary. In return Maisler gets to hide in the saferoom (**E**) whenever things heat up too much elsewhere in the City.

Maisler loves to participate in the debates. He paces the room in an exaggerated gliding stride whenever it is his turn to speak. He spices his arguments with humor and is a popular teammate in the debates, though he often chooses the more ridiculous side of the discussion to defend.

Maisler is responsible for the presence of Scufflehiss. The basilisk represents Maisler's most daring theft to date. The itinerant magician from whom Maisler stole the creature spent weeks searching the City for the beast and Maisler. It is rumored that although the magician has left off his search, he would pay well for information about the basilisk and the person who snatched him.

Maisler has a pair of opaque goggles which he straps on Scufflehiss when he takes him out for a walk. Maisler walks Scufflehiss during the day, as much as a way to increase his prestige with the neighbors as to exercise Scufflehiss.

Maisler could be convinced to go adventuring by anyone who asked him at any time other than when he is hungover from a lengthy bout of drinksinging the night before.

Scufflehiss. *Basilisk, Ht. 1'6", Wt. 45#, Length 4'7", Age: old. Fighting Prowess: Very good versus fish out of water and bashed against a board, Average otherwise. Magic Ability: Excellent with glance.*

Scufflehiss is a very old basilisk who was captured shortly after he was hatched. He spent many years as a test animal for a mentally unstable alchemist and, consequently, suffered a rather rapid (for a basilisk) deterioration of health. A magician purchased Scufflehiss and cast spells to return a portion of the creature's physical well-being. Other spells were cast to insure Scufflehiss would remain somewhat docile. These spells protected the magician, but they also allowed Maisler to steal the basilisk.

Scufflehiss approves of his change in lifestyle: no prodding, no poking, no stinking potions, no needles or spells, and lots of fresh fish once a week. This young guy even takes him for a walk every once in a while. Pretty cushy.

Scufflehiss lives in a covered cage at **A4** during business hours. Kother has trained him to look at any specified object which Kother indicates by a telepathic command. Scufflehiss has so far demonstrated his stone-gaze prowess on a rat. The rock rodent now sits on the bar and has sufficiently impressed enough people that Kother needs no bouncers. Kother or Ningal will only uncover the cage if there is a clear danger to themselves or their customers while Mailser might be tempted to use Scufflehiss as part of a showdown with a character.

After business hours Scufflehiss' cage is dragged around in front of the corridor leading to C. The cage faces out into the common room.

Tavern Workers. The staff generally consists of 6 serving persons, 2 cooks and 3 cleanup personnel who, in addition to keeping the Sanctuary clean, fill in wherever they are needed (cooking, running errands, etc.). The cooks and cleanup people live in the Singing Frog Sanctuary, the servers do not. The live-in help are the ones Kother is teaching to read and write, but they do not know about the saferoom.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

Scenario 1: Scufflehiss is loose! Perhaps the cage was not properly closed, or the spells keeping him docile have worn off, or maybe it was one succulent fish on fish fly night which landed just out of the basilisk's reach and drove him to burst from his cage; whatever the reason he is no longer confined. Kother will offer a reward for Scufflehiss' recapture. The reward will be enough to interest the characters, and might be added to by having Kother offer them the plans to one last expedition he was planning. If you add agents hired by the magician to recover the basilisk into this mix, as well as panicked area residents, you can produce a mad race through Nightside to find a creature that no one in his right mind would want to find!

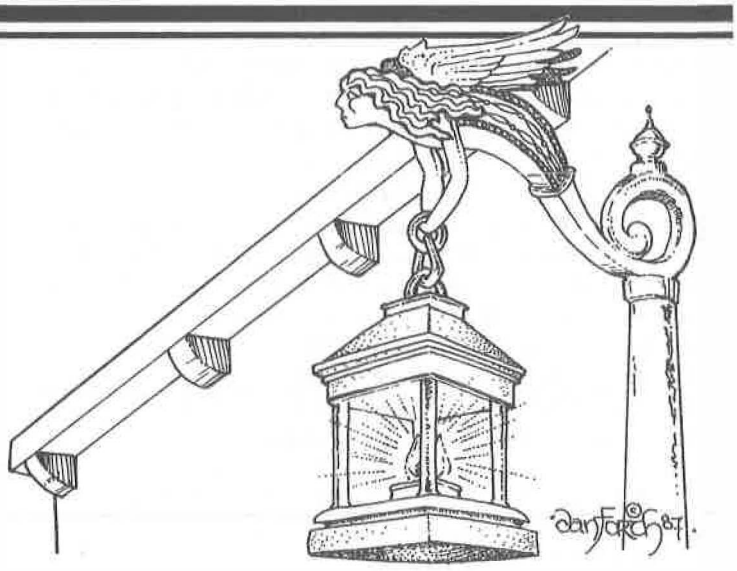
Scenario 2: City authorities discover Kother's subtle plot to educate the people of Nightside and feel very threatened by his actions. They have heard Kother came to the City to hide from the swordsister of a women he caused to die, yet because of Ningal's apparent partnership with him they do not realize she is that swordsister. In an effort to stop Kother they send for a pair of swordsisters trained in the same school as Ningal and Alathea and happen to get two women who knew and did not like Ningal. The swordswomen burst into the Singing Frog Sanctuary on a night when the characters are present and Ningal is in the common room.

Though they had intended to slay Kother outright, Ningal's presence is a problem they had not anticipated. They denounce Ningal Arawaza as a dishonorable wretch who failed to avenge Alathea, and challenge her to a complicated duel to regain her honor or die defending it. Ningal, as is her right when challenged, claims all of Nightside to be the arena for the battle, and approaches any martially competent female character to act as her partner.

If a running battle within Nightside against two swordsisters rated as Very Good or Excellent with their weapons would not be enough, the rest of the party discover the terrified nobles have recruited a crew of ruffians (perhaps Karig's group) to aid the swordsisters, destroy Ningal, and raze the Singing Frog Sanctuary! Nightside takes care of its own, and the mercenaries will find plenty of impediments to their efforts presented by the citizens, but it falls ultimately to the characters to act within the shadows (so Ningal will not feel shamed by their aid) to stop the mercenaries and keep the Singing Frog intact.

The Singing Frog Sanctuary is an excellent starting place for adventures, or a safe haven in the maelstrom of Nightside. The beer is cold and the comraderie is warm, so just about anyone can find something of interest here. And, for troubled characters, or characters who are looking for intellectual stimulation, the Singing Frog has a great deal to offer there, as well.

The Prodigal's Lantern Mission



An adventurer's life is one of fortune — both good and bad — and the city is full of poor souls experiencing a temporary run of bad luck, as well as the more permanently destitute. It is for those unfortunates that the Prodigal's Lantern Mission was founded. A warm meal, a clean bed, and spiritual comfort can be found there — and sometimes adventures beckon...

The Prodigal's Lantern Mission is owned and operated by the Temple of Banistal the Divine, in accordance with one of the most important tenets of the Banistalic faith — Charity. Banistal's followers constitute one of the larger "good" religions in the pantheon, though by no means the largest. Their policies of extensive charity work, befriending the unfortunate, and leading by example, while very admirable, attract only the most devout and committed. Those looking for glamour, adventure, or convenient Sunday forgiveness for weekday transgressions usually wind up somewhere else.

The mission gets its name from the prodigal son story common to many good religions; the lantern refers to the light hung on a pole outside the rich father's tent, in hopes the wayward son would see it and come home. The mission keeps a small lantern outside the front door, on top of a 12-foot pole. Despite vandals' attempts, driving storms and even the lamp oil shortage of four years ago, the lantern has never gone out — proof to the believers of Banistal's power.

The mission is run by Rev. Daniel Mildmon, a hard-working, dedicated priest. His assistant is Walter Binxtave, and there are two permanent members of the kitchen crew: Head Cook Sam Delarosa, and his aid, Mitch.

Note to Game Masters: If there is no room in your campaign's religious structure for a deity like Banistal, you can substitute any "good" religion that would logically do this kind of charity work. It's quite possible that one of the players, particularly a good cleric, priest or monk, could be a follower of Banistal, or whatever god you use in his place.

Scott Haring is the man who edits **AutoDuel Quarterly** and somehow manages to keep the Car Wars universe on an even keel. Scott's enthusiasm about doing the Mission is accurately reflected in Mildmon's devotion to Banistal.

The mission has two main functions. One is to provide for the day-to-day physical needs of the bums, winos and street people of the neighborhood. The second is to convert as many of them as possible to the religion of Banistal the Divine. The preaching is often very inspirational, but the most effective recruiting tool for Banistal's faith is the simple, everyday charity exhibited by the workers of the mission.

From the street the mission looks very much like the other hovels in the area. This is because the mission site is the gift of a former slumlord who converted to Banistalism. Inside, the mission is not particularly large or well-appointed, but it is meticulously clean — an apparent miracle considering the condition of most of the clientele.

If the players are truly destitute (or merely look like it), they will be welcomed with open arms, fed, and offered a clean bed and a simple, unheated bath. Every step of the way the players will be reminded that everything is provided by Banistal the Divine, and the players will be constantly told of the great works, power and care of Banistal.

The mission provides a simple breakfast of hot cereal for as many as will fit in the eating hall, with no strings attached. A lunch of dried meats and cheeses is also served, but those who enjoy the midday meal also get to hear an hour-long lesson taught from "The Outpouring," Banistalism's holy book said to be the direct communication of Banistal to his faithful. (Most students of religion, including players with religious training, will know that the contents of "The Outpouring" tend to change from region to region, and is mostly common sense advice laced with high moral exhortations based on charity and the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."). Leaving before the lesson is over is heavily frowned upon, and this disapproval is reinforced by a closed front door and two burly "helpers" blocking the only way out.

Dinner consists of a surprisingly tasty stew or soup, and bread. Like lunch, eating the free meal means one must stay for a fiery, impassioned preaching session by Rev. Mildmon in which the destitute are encouraged to put their faith in Banistal and work to improve their lot in life. After dinner, the doors are opened for one hour — at the end of which the doors

are barred for the night. Those inside get to hear another sermon, then are allowed to sleep in a relatively clean, relatively comfortable, secure bed. It should be noted at this time that spending the night in the Prodigal's Lantern Mission is a near-perfect alibi.

If the players appear to be more than common street bums — that is, if they look like they have money — they will get a full tour of the facility lead by Rev. Mildmon. As Mildmon shows the players around, he'll thank them over and over (and over and over) again for showing an interest in "his humble work" in the service of Banistal, working in not-so-subtle requests for donations throughout the tour: "We hope to add twenty more beds, brothers and sisters, and the need is great, but Banistal — in His wisdom — has asked us to be patient..." or "I'm sorry about the thinness of the soup, dear friends, but as you can see, there are so many hungry, and there is *so* little in our pantries..." This will keep up until the players make a donation (at least a gold piece or two per party member — more if they players feel guilty enough). If the players have come to the mission looking for information or a favor, they won't have much luck until they make a donation. This is not deliberate on Mildmon's part — it's just that his fanatical, befuddled head is so single-minded about keeping the mission going he can think about little else.

LAYOUT

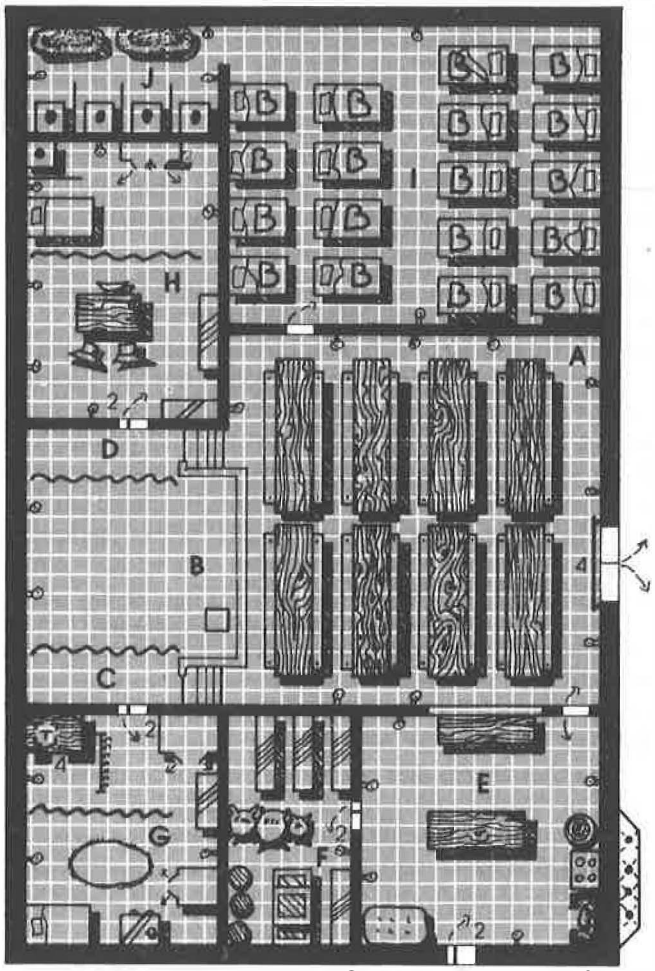
A. Central Meeting Room (40' x 40') This is a very plain room, with murals painted on the walls depicting scenes from the story of Banistal. There are eight 16' long tables in the center of the room with benches on both sides of each table. Nearly 100 people can be fed here at one time, and there is room along the walls to seat others on the floor if necessary. The doors out to the street are large double doors, and are open most of the day. During lessons and sermons they are closed, but not locked. At night a large wooden beam (which requires three people, or Mitch, to move) bars[4] the door from the inside.

On the west wall is a swinging door into the kitchen, and a serving bar. People line up at this serving area to get their meals. On the north wall is the stage, which extends into this room by three feet. There are also doors on each side of the stage, but they are usually locked[1]. On the east wall is a door leading to the sleeping area. It is never locked.

B. The Stage (20' x 23') A simple raised platform (ten inches high) is where the Rev. stands to deliver the daily lessons and sermons. Occasionally singing groups or drama troupes entertain here, but they are visitors from other Banistalic churches and only perform religious material. The east and west "walls" of the stage are just curtains.

C. and D. Stage Wings (C. is 7' x 20' and D. is 5' x 20') Area C stores a few stage props and an out-of-tune *fractachord*, (use a piano if you don't have fractachords in your world) but the primary use for either wing is as a hallway to Mildmon's or Binxtave's quarters respectively.

E. The Kitchen (25' x 25') This kitchen is perfect for its job of turning out large quantities of very simple food. Along the south wall is the oven, stove and cauldron, all fed by a common firepit. There is a door on the west wall leading to an



alley for accepting deliveries, but the door is usually locked[2]. At night a simple tripwire-and-bell trap[2] is set at this door to catch anyone trying to leave the mission early. The bell, and the fact that Mitch sleeps in the kitchen, generally discourage any attempt to slip out through this door at night.

F. The Storeroom (25' x 15') The storeroom rarely holds anything of value aside from bulk foodstuffs, but the door is kept locked[2] as a precaution against pilfering.

G. Binxtave's Room (25' x 20') The east half of this room is actually a storage area for the various religious accoutrements of the mission — robes, vestments, ritual books, etc. Binxtave lives in the west half of the room, a small but well-appointed area with a small bed, dresser and wardrobe. The door to Binxtave's apartment is always locked[2] — Binxtave and Mildmon both have keys.

In the northeast corner of the room, behind a rack of priestly robes and under a heavy-looking (but actually quite light) table is a trapdoor. The trap door is always locked[4] and Binxtave carries the only key with him at all times. The trap door leads down into the sewers and no member of the Mission's staff, aside from Binxtave, knows it exists.

H. Mildmon's Room (30' x 20') Like Binxtave's room, this room is divided into two parts. The west half is actually the mission office, with a desk and chair for Mildmon, bookshelves, and two chairs for visitors. The walls are adorned

with religious paintings, and a tapestry divides the "office" from Mildmon's apartment. The desk contains all the records for the mission, was well as its current cash surplus — 132 gold pieces. The cash is in a locked[3] strongbox in the locked[1] bottom drawer of the desk. The door on the west wall is also locked[2] whenever the room is empty, or when Mildmon is asleep. Mildmon and Binxtave have keys for all three locks.

Mildmon's apartment is simple, spare and much less fancy than Binxtave's room. It does, however, have a private privy that dumps into the sewers below the mission.

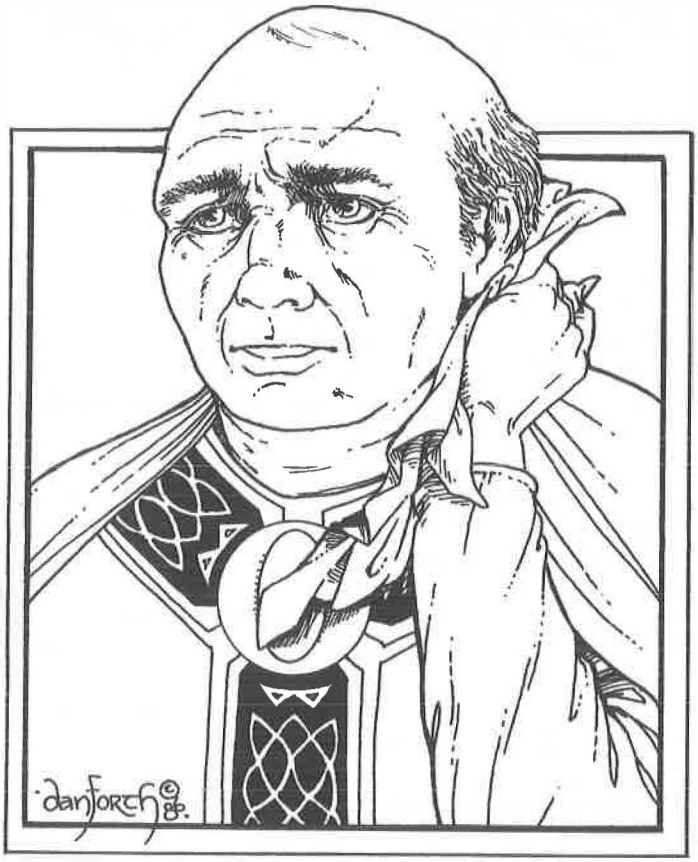
I. Bunk House (30' x 40') The 18 bunk beds go to the first 36 people lucky enough to ask for room. Overflow demand is handled by letting people sleep in the meeting room and the floor. A door in the north wall connects to the privies. There are no windows, but a number of ventilation holes around the room near the ceiling do keep the air from becoming too stale.

J. Privies (20' x 20') Rough privies take care of the needs of the mission's clientele. The room also features two tubs for cold baths but, despite the repeated urgings of the mission staff, very few of the patrons take advantage of them.

PERSONALTIES

Daniel Mildmon *Human, Ht. 5'7", Wt. 175#, Age: 51. Fighting Prowess: Poor. Magic ability: Poor, C2.*

Even in a church that emphasizes service to the poor and works of charity and kindness, there is a sort of natural pecking order: the bright, young, hard-working types get promoted, and the others get sent to run missions. Mildmon is the epitome of mediocrity, though he certainly means well.



— Daniel Mildmon —

His balding head always shines with a layer of perspiration, despite his continual efforts with a handkerchief to keep it dry.

Midlmon is dedicated, pious and single-minded about his work — he's just not very bright. The staff loves him and would do anything for him, with the exception of Binxtave, who has nothing but contempt for the man.

Walter Binxtave (pronounced Bin-KSTAH-veh) *Human, Ht. 5'3", Wt. 115 #, Age: 28. Fighting Prowess: Fair with daggers, otherwise Average. Magic Ability: none.*

Despite not doing very well in seminary, Binxtave is a very bright young man — bright enough to recognize the dead end he's been assigned to at the Prodigal's Lantern Mission, at any rate. Small, wiry, and with a hard-to-define sneaky look about him, Binxtave was a natural communicator with his new, slightly shady, congregation. This only served to offend his snobbish sensibilities and make him madder, until he found a way to turn the situation to his profit.

Binxtave runs a thieving ring based at the mission. The scam is simple and works like this: the thieves attend evening services and are locked into the mision. After everyone else falls asleep, the thieves sneak into Binxtave's apartment and he lets them out through the trap door into the sewers. The thieves return before dawn, leave the loot with Binxtave, and troop out with the rest of the street folks. The thieves get a perfect alibi and Binxtave gets a percentage of their take.

Lately Binxtave has started to fence some of the stolen material himself, though he's very cautious and will go back to outside fences at the first hint of trouble. The Thieves' Guild was initially upset when they heard of Binxtave's independent operation, but the ever-resourceful Binxtave found a compromise. Two or three times a month a Guild member in need of an airtight alibi will spend the night at the mission. Binxtave gets no cut for these "special jobs," but he does get to stay in business.

Mitch *Human, Ht. 6'5", Wt. 265 #, Age: 26. Fighting Prowess: Very good with brawling and hand-to-hand combat, Average otherwise.*

Mitch is a mountain of a man completely devoted to Banistalism and the Rev. Mildmon. Ever since a fiery Mildmon oratory converted him four years ago, Mitch went from being a leg-breaker and bodyguard for Danny O'Grunnion (depriving him of his Third Pillar of Evil) and moved into the mission. At the mission he serves as the cook's assistant, chief laborer, and human doorstop. Mitch is phenomenally strong, a little slow on the uptake (but by no means stupid), and probably too trusting — especially since he's "seen the light." It's Mitch's tendancy to believe anything Binxtave or Mildmon — especially Mildmon — tells him. Because of this, he's let Binxtave get away with his illegal activities because Binxtave explains he and the thieves are united in a "silent vigil praising Banistal" when they're together. If Mitch ever catches on, though, Binxtave will have to leave fast and never come back — if Mitch gets his hands on him, he'll beat Binxtave to within an inch of his life (and, unless someone calms Mitch down, that last inch will go fast too...).

Sam Delarosa *Human, Ht. 6', Wt. 210 #, Age: 37. Fighting Prowess: Good with kitchen knives and cleavers, Poor otherwise.*

Sam is a devoted follower of Banistal who has lived all his life in Nightside and used his wits and a little luck to rise above the life of petty thievery and violent death that so many of his friends have known. Jolly and quick on his feet, he has only a fringe of brown hair left around a gleaming bald dome, despite his relatively young age.

Sam regularly works eight hours at a local bakery — 4am to noon — and then, after a short nap, heads to the mission to oversee the afternoon baking and the preparation of the evening meal. He donates his time to the mission. Same has trained Mitch to the point where Mitch can handle both breakfast and lunch (which is a credit to Sam's skill and patience). Sam takes great pride in his work, and it shows. The food he prepares at the mission is much better than it has any right to be.

Sam is street-smart and canny, and extremely dedicated both to the plight of Nightside's poor and to justice. This means he's not averse to doing something that's technically illegal if it helps someone out or is for a good cause. Sam admires Mildmon's dedication, but has little patience for fools — the result is an attitude toward Mildmon of mild toleration. Sam's true devotion is to his fellow Nightsiders and Banistal.

Sam is really the only member of the mission's staff sharp enough to figure out what Binxtave is up to — and for that reason, Binxtave is very cautious not to slip up near Sam.

Volunteers. The rest of the daily work is done by volunteers who come in from various local churches on a rotating schedule. Housewives, students and drafted residents round out the temporary staff, but should not figure prominently in any of the action.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

Scenario 1: Rev. Mildmon is called away to attend a religious council (more as a reward for his duty than for any opinion he might offer on the subject being discussed) and Walter Binxtave is left in charge. With no one to watch over him he starts adding to accepted Banistalist teachings and suggests that because Charity is so good for the soul that everyone should have something to do with it. He starts pulling the more lucid of the Mission's residents aside and instructs them to leave the mission at night and steal from the rich as a way of enforced Charity. This causes only a minor increase in crime until some of Binxtave's charges start deciding that reluctant givers don't deserve to live, and suddenly this minor problem becomes a bloodbath.

Characters become involved when hired to bodyguard one of the City's richer residents, or to hunt down the person who murdered the husband of the same person. Even worse, the characters, with their adventure-born treasure, are seen as viable targets for these fervent Banistalists.

Scenario 2: An anonymous donor presents the mission with a beautiful stained-glass window to be located in the north wall of the bunk house. It depicts the Prodigal Son on a hilltop looking down at his father's tent. The night sky is interesting in that it shows the moons (stars, whatever) in a position they only get once or twice a year. The window is magical and resists breakage, fading and dirt. The magic also does one other thing: on nights when the night sky matches the window, anyone who knows the "magic words" can walk through the window as if it was not there.

The donor is a powerful magician who bears a grudge against one of the City's rulers and he plans to use the mission as an alibi when he murders the ruler in question. Unfortunately there is a witness, but no one will believe this derelict when he says he woke up in the middle of the night and saw a bloody handed man walk through a window.

The characters join in through several possible avenues. First the derelict could be one of them down on his luck, or a comrade they had long ago lost track of. The derelict could also be a bum the characters befriended. In either case, the witness is at risk because, trying to clean his life up, he's reported what he saw to the City Guard.

The other way in is for Rev. Mildmon to approach the characters and ask them, in the name of Banistal, to donate their services as investigators to help clear the Mission's good name. Do remember, even though Mildmon will give the characters free run of the facility while they investigate, Binxtave will keep them away from the trapdoor, and possibly even get the City's thieves to give them trouble if they get too close to discovering his secret.

And you should remember the magician who really does not want a witness attracting attention to, and possibly blowing, his perfect alibi machine.

The Prodigal's Lantern Mission is also a perfect meeting place for folks who want to do a little business outside the watchful eye of the law. Players can buy information, receive "borrowed" maps or other valuables, or meet with prospective employers, all under the ever-glowing lantern that is a beacon of wholesomeness and goodness throughout Nightside. Binxtave's racket, while profitable, can't go on forever — and when things do fall apart, they'll do so spectacularly. It'll be situation where a canny player can profit, if the characters can act fast and act smart.

Karig the Stalker

When the arm of the law stops at the city limits, and dares not reach into certain quarters within the city's heart, the profession of bounty hunter becomes very lucrative. Driven by greed, and more often than not sheer bloodthirst, bounty hunters bring to justice miscreants too tough or elusive for the town militia. Though most of the bounty hunters' prey are small-time brigands and thieves, occasionally noble folk and military men fallen from favor have a price offered for their heads. Those who enjoy tracking the deadliest game are looked on by most as the scum of the earth, separated from the criminal class themselves only because they serve a purpose the society needs. And that, quite simply, is the best thing one can say about Karig Netter and his crew of bravoes.

BOUNTIES

When an infamous criminal has gone too far, or a well-born person has rubbed a powerful noble or official the wrong way, a price is put on his head. That person is then fair game for anyone who wants the reward. The amount of a bounty varies tremendously: a petty embezzler might warrant a few score gold pieces, while a barefoot farm boy who's seen a treacherous baron conspiring with enemy spies might fetch his captor a sack full of fine gems!

More commonly, the miscreant's "price" is based on two factors: deadliness and notoriety. Deadliness is measured by the hunted man's skill with weapons or combat magic, and an adjustment is made if he has guards or henchmen protecting him. As a rough rule of thumb, allow 100 gps. of reward for each level of fighting skill over "Poor" (which puts an excellent fighter at 500 gps.) Combat magic demands 200 gps. per level in bounty.

Notoriety is a measure of past deeds, connections and fame. A brigand who murdered a troupe of pilgrims might be looked upon as merely bloodthirsty, but a knight who commits the same crime would be branded an incredible maniac and traitor to the concepts of chivalry, and would shake the very foundation of the society! Nobodies or vaguely described individuals might bring very little in the way of a bounty, and perhaps even less than their fighting prowess would normally suggest. In addition, a "private" bounty offered covertly might well be higher than normal to insure the intended victim is not alerted to the danger he is in.

Stefan Jones is a multi-talented designer who also contributed to Citybook II. He has worked for Fantasy Games Unlimited in addition to Blade, and always writes with a sense of humor and sense of the heroic.

Of course, to claim the prizes a bounty hunter must "get his man." Some bounties require the hunted man or women to be returned alive; others are not so picky. Exact terms of proof vary widely: some contracts demand undamaged prey (especially when the victim is meant to marry the hunter's client, or to be sacrificed to the client's god under the next full moon). Contracts calling for the return of a live victim might pay less, or not at all, for a dead body.

Proof of a kill also varies widely. The hunter who killed "Snow White" brought back a deer heart as proof of his deed, but, with magic available, few clients are as gullible as your average wicked step-mother. A head, scalp, or portion of the body bearing an unusual mark, scar or tattoo is often enough to satisfy the client. If a bonus is offered for killing the victim in a particular way, ample proof of that deed will also be required, and the bounty hunter may have to take elaborate steps to earn the extra blood money.

KARIG AND HIS GANG

Karig Netter, called "The Stalker" by the folk of Nightside, is an enterprising and ruthless man. He and his gang of trusted fellow man-hunters have established themselves in the City to take advantage of the large number of bounties posted by zealous officials. The group is "legitimate" in that it does not involve itself with sneaky assassinations or hire itself out for gang wars. When he is in town, Karig is most often found at The Singing Frog with Lugal Joywright, and perhaps a few of his "irregulars." Though he will occasionally take a job not officially posted, the bounty hunter is virtually unapproachable "cold." He leaves murder to the Steel Man, and does not dispute the rumors of a rough truce between himself and the City's most dreaded assassin.

Anyone trying to approach Karig about an "unofficial" job must be a known noble or wealthy merchant. The prospective employer must provide Karig and his crew with a generous meal and liberally poured drinks (best arranged to take place at The House of Infinite Dreams so the "boys" can enjoy themselves while Karig talks business with his host). The jobs Karig will refuse are noted below, but others in his gang have fewer scruples and might approach the employer after Karig has turned the job down.

In the field Karig travels by horseback, particularly if he is alone. If his prey requires careful tracking, the crew will dismount, station guards with the horses, and proceed on foot so Karig and his hound, Huck, can use their skills to best

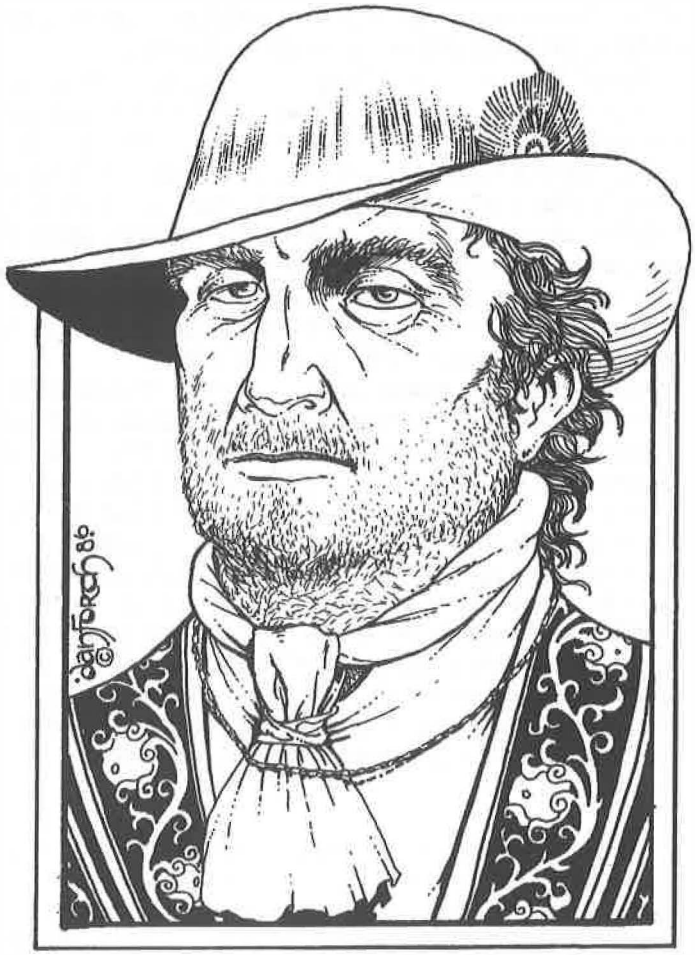
effect. Karig and his men are touchy and suspicious when "on the job" in the wilderness. They've been known to detain or pursue innocents on the off chance they are the prey in disguise, or have information concerning the hunters' target.

In the City Karig and the Big Fish Gang have an uneasy, unspoken agreement to stay out of each other's way. Karig goes after none of Danny O'Grunion's men unless an official bounty is placed on his head, and Danny has turned a blind eye when one of his men has been clumsy enough to invite such official interest. Karig's irregulars make any attempt to kill the bounty hunter difficult and dangerous for Danny, but he'd not hesitate to kill Karig if the opportunity presented itself. Karig feels the same way about Danny.

PERSONALITIES

Karig "The Stalker" Netter: *Human, 6'2", 230#, 39. Fighting Prowess: Very good with sword, Excellent with bows, good otherwise. Very good tracking ability.*

Netter is a large man, heavily built but not overly so. He has wavy red hair (with a large bald spot) and a scuzzy red beard that perpetually hangs between a "five o'clock shadow" and an acceptable brush. His skin is fair but deeply tanned on his arms and legs. Karig always wears a large, floppy-brimmed hat of greasy, stained brown felt when outdoors, but other than that his garb varies with the season or his location. In town he often sports flamboyant, well-made clothes. In the field or when danger threatens, he dons a greyish-green tunic and kilt over chainmail or hardened leather armor. In combat he wields a broadsword and a large longbow.



— Karig Netter —

Karig Netter, the "black sheep" son of a wealthy merchant family, became a sergeant in the King's army after impressing a general with his archery and hunting skills. When the army was called out to fight brigands or hunt down a traitorous baron, Karig was always on hand. He was just short of receiving a commission when he was blamed for a "dungeon-break" that freed a fanatical holy man with wizardly powers. He was accused of arranging the break to enliven a dull summer. Karig was innocent, but had known about the break ahead of time and did nothing to prevent it because he wanted to slay the shaman himself. He accepted the court's judgement rather than have a wizard sift through his mind and discover the real reason Karig had not acted.

Karig was broken in rank, then discharged with nothing but the clothes on his back. He migrated to the City and took up bounty hunting to support himself and satisfy his lust for excitement. He lives conspicuously well in the shabbier section of town and often treats his men and female companions to good wine and food between jobs.

Karig occasionally stoops to taking private jobs (i.e. bounties offered by someone other than a City official, ruling noble or the sheriff), but he has scruples. He prides himself on not being an assassin or common hired thug. The thought of being mistaken for "an effete sneak who thinks nothing of poisoning a business rival, knocking a drunk on the head or tossing a bound man into the river " disgusts and angers him. If he believes his employer has mislead him about the reason for the bounty he'll refuse the job, or be less than diligent in his pursuit until he can figure out what is really going on.

On a legitimate job, however, Karig is implacable. He becomes a steely-eyed, inhuman machine, virtually immune to bribes, pleading and, if he really wants to get the target, concerns for his own safety. Only the most "unfair" legitimate jobs are not his fare: death bounties on a wife who's fled her abusive husband or blood money offered by a "concerned" parent for the apprehension of a troublesome heir, for example. These jobs he will refuse outright, and if tricked into taking such a job on, he will be VERY angry.

Huck: *Dogiwolf, 3'3" at the shoulder, 160#. Age unknown. Fighting Prowess: Good. Excellent tracking skills.*

Huck is a HUGE canine creature, with some features of a hound, but with ample evidence of more than a little wolf-blood. His fur is an ugly patchwork of brown and frosty gray, with black ears and feet. Karig found Huck when the animal was just a puppy. As the beast grew the bounty hunter trained him and learned how to read the dog's body language. Together in the wild nothing can lose them — what Karig can't read in the tracks, Huck can scent with ease.

Huck is agreeable and "polite" in town. He usually wanders off when Karig returns to civilization. He leaves his master to wine and women while Huck plays with urchins and kills rats or smaller dogs. The animal is a well-known sight in

Nightside and is not molested.

In the field Huck is as suspicious and fanatical as his master. He is an intelligent and fierce fighter. When hunting the dog is strapped into a spiked collar and a set of leather-and-chain back-and-head armor. He doesn't like it one bit, and that makes him more irritable and even more dangerous.

Lugal Joywright: *Human, 5'9", 140#, 32. Fighting Prowess: Good with dagger, Fair will all else. Good skill at tracking.*

Lugal is of moderate height and is rather slender. Still he has wiry strength and can run, leap and climb with skill. He has long blond hair, a narrow hatchet face, and sneaky, weak-looking green eyes. Lugal wears a yellow tunic and leggings, which match his sallow skin, and a green wool cap. He is taciturn, and mumbles or angrily whispers only when absolutely necessary. On the job, though, he is bold and maniacally confident, in total contrast to his normal persona.

Lugal is the son of a "Madam" who was killed when her establishment was burned down during a battle between criminal strongarms. Lugal grew up embittered and vengeful, but there was little he could do as a child. During the day he performed drudge labor and drank his sorrows away at night. His life tortured him because he was forced to rub shoulders with the very sort of scum that had slain his mother, but he despaired over a way to strike back.

His life changed when a barkeeper in his favorite tavern read a poster hung up on the wall. It was a bounty announcement and it put a price on the head of the criminal boss who engineered the fire that slew his mother! As if possessed by a demon, lowly sullen Lugal became a driven man and hunted down the criminal. He killed the man moments before Karig arrived to collect the bounty. Their friendship, born of the fight back out of the criminal's stronghold, was cemented when each learned he was strong where the other was weak. Karig loved the wild, and Lugal was at home in the City.

Lugal has many contacts within the underworld, especially with the prostitutes and pimps in Nightside, including Garowin "Sheets" Eddrad. He enjoys hunting down and killing criminals; if a bounty calls for live prey, the target often arrives somewhat worse for the wear. Through his association with Karig he's refined his fighting skill and is a diabolical foe in the cluttered alleys and crumbling tenements of the City. He's also become well versed in disguise and mimicry, which he uses tracking crooks who know him only too well.

Off the job Lugal hangs around Karig or gambles at the Cock and Bull Gaming Club. Because he is bad at bluffing and prone to long runs of "bad luck," he is often in debt. Though utterly loyal to Karig (even to the point of leaving his beloved City to travel in the wild!), Lugal occasionally takes on a shady contract Karig has refused to pay off his gambling debts. He keeps these jobs secret from Karig.

The Irregulars: Karig has attracted the company of many folks who bask in his dubious glory. They drink his freely offered wine and listen attentively to his boasting. Some are skilled fighters while others are cruel hunters who kill solely for the sport, but all are crude and recognized as the scum of society. Those who know the wilderness accompany Karig on his missions, the others wait in town and attend Lugal on any job that occupies him. They are fiercely loyal to Karig, especially when in unfamiliar territory, and they provide him enough muscle to make the City gangs wary of attacking the bounty hunter.

At the most there are two dozen of these n'er-do-wells who follow Karig. Their fighting skills are Fair to Very Good, but none of them have magical skills.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

Scenario 1: After twelve years atop a mountain dispensing unpleasant advice to wisdom-seekers, the shaman who escaped and caused Karig's downfall returns. He's leading a fanatical band of warriors and promoting a new Messiah — a fourteen year old boy with wavy red hair and a broad build. The group has made a number of hit and run raids throughout the area to rob and force conversions. Though the actual damage caused by the raiders has been slight, the group is seen as dangerous because the Messiah's persuasive speeches are sparking interest among the City's poor and discontented. A bounty has been offered for any of the raiders.

Karig lets it be known his group will take the assignment and will destroy the raiders in the abandoned mountain monastery they've adopted as their home. He invites anyone who wants to accompany him to join his group, but he interviews each prospective warrior himself. He selects the adventurers as trustworthy individuals and draws them aside for a briefing he shares with no one in his usual group.

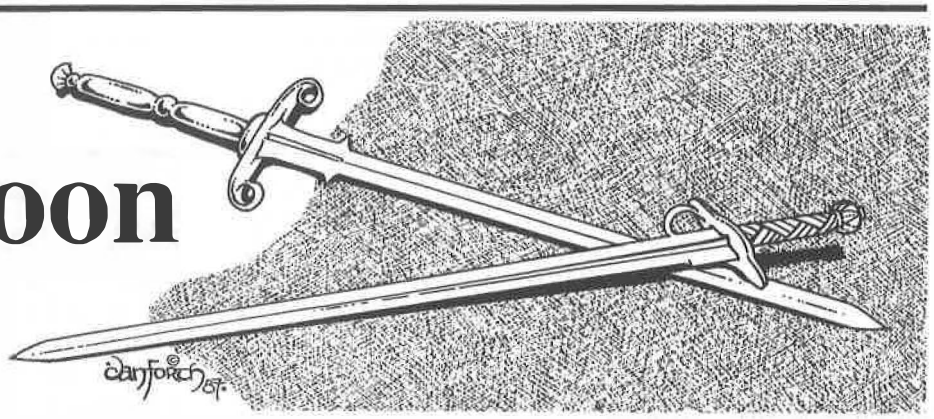
Karig tells them the new Messiah is his son. On an earlier attempt at capturing the shaman Karig met the man's daughter and fell in love with her. He took her away from her father, but the shaman recaptured the girl and refused to tell Karig where he'd hidden her. Karig hoped, after the shaman escaped, to follow the shaman to his daughter, but the army captured Karig before he could accomplish his goal.

He asks the characters to come with him and spirit his son away unharmed even though the bounty on the youth's head is greater than that offered for the rest of the raiders.

Scenario 2: Huck, Karig's lupine hound, is missing! Lugal is convinced a group of beggars captured or killed the beast because a source, Garowin Eddrad, told him he'd seen the beggars in the act. Of course Eddrad had the dog taken, and is holding it in a cell within the Gang's lab, but has laid the blame on the beggars because he sees them as a threat. He's also told Lugal that a beggar, one of the Wardregs, was the individual who actually touched flame to his mother's establishment; and in light of this "reliable" evidence, Lugal becomes positively eloquent when he explains all to Karig. Karig, whose concern for the dog is eating him alive, throws all caution to the winds and starts collecting hearty souls to, once and for all time, destroy the beggars and clean out their warrens.

Even in the darkest part of town, the forces of justice — or injustice — can intrude. When a man's got a price on his head, predators among men rise to the scent and give chase. The likes of Karig and Lugal can make life hell for any adventurer who goes too far in his quest for wealth, or who is merely unfortunate to make serious enemies of people in high places.

The Bloodmoon School



Nightside is a place where a man's best friend could be his sword, or what ever other weapon he tends to favor. Virtually no one travels unarmed, and those who seem to be bereft of weapons usually are not. But weapon skill varies, and those who talk the best game often play the worst. Loud boasts and rumored reputations are no substitute for training and experience.

The Bloodmoon School, for those who are willing to commit themselves to a strict regime of training and education, is the place where skill can be learned. Under the watchful eye of Re'esh, the school's owner and Swordmaster, even the most pathetic specimen can discover secrets that will let him kill...

The Bloodmoon School is located in one of the less decayed portions of Nightside. It was once the mansion built and owned by a prosperous merchant who lost his fortune, or perhaps doubled it, and moved on. Slowly Nightside has oozed around the grand building and tried to engulf it, but it resists the corrosive efforts of the surrounding slums and occasionally attracts people who otherwise would not normally be caught dead, or alive, in Nightside.

The building, because it sits on a low hill, has two levels: the Lower School and the Inner School. The whole building is made of whitewashed brick and is unusual in that the arched doorways contain no doors. Immobile partitions of translucent paper supported by a wooden lattice cut off sight. Despite such an open setting, few are the thieves who really want to take anything from the School. A sharply pitched, red tile roof covers the entire structure except above the garden in the center; the garden is open to the sky.

The Lower School comprises roughly a third of the building and is located down on the street level. It has no sign, but a blood-red circle painted above the wide, arched doorway is enough to let even illiterates know what the building is. Visitors are welcome and often come to watch the fights between students despite the prohibition against wagering. On rare occasions black curtains are hung over the entryway and at that time only invited individuals are allowed access to the School. Generally this happens once a month, when students graduate from one level of training to another, but rumors of more sinister reasons for the secrecy abound.

Virtually nothing is known of the Inner School. Stairs centered in the north wall of the Lower School lead up to the rock garden, but only special visitors or newly graduated Initiates ever get to see it. Of the rooms in the Inner School only the fact that Re'esh and some of his best students live there is known. A few rumors about a temple to a bloody Lunar goddess get mentioned from time to time, but they're generally ignored. Most folks assume, in addition to a kitchen and a private training area, the rest of the Inner School is given over to spartan rooms for the Master and his students.

The School opened on this spot approximately 7 years ago, but older folks who visit from afar suggest that it might have been located elsewhere first.

ENROLLMENT, TRAINING AND COSTS

Virtually anyone may enroll in the school's training program provided they are willing to commit to one lunar month (28 days on Earth, for example) of training. People with experience will be started as if they know nothing, but will be allowed to progress at an accelerated pace if they prove capable. Generally students are accepted without prejudice as the training tends to weed out the weak and rogue individuals because of its harshness. On rare occasions, in the case of individuals who wish to enroll only to test themselves against Re'esh — an act considered, at various times, anything from foolhardy to suicidal — the Master will fight with them to "evaluate" their ability before they join his school.

All clients enter the school at the lowest of six ranks: Student, Novice, Initiate, Teacher, Adept and Master. The ranks exactly parallel the Citybook rankings from Poor to Excellent. In addition, there are six colors of headbands worn by each student: White, Yellow, Green, Blue, Red and Black which denote how far along within that rank the trainee is. Within the first three ranks, passing from one color to the next generally takes one lunar month. Teachers progress one color per three lunar months, Adepts move at a color per six lunar months and a Master moves at one color per 12 lunar months. Training can go faster if the client wishes to specialize in one particular discipline, i. e. spear or sword, but no specialist will ever rise above the rank of Teacher until he has rounded

Brandon Corey produced the Bloodmoon school and was overjoyed when it made it to the book's cover. Brandon has previously contributed to Citybook I and all three Traps volumes. When he is released from the Upstate New York Home for the Criminally Insane he wants to become a writer or a brain surgeon. We wish him luck.

out his education.

Training begins at dawn and extends as late into the evening as Re'esh or a Teacher deems necessary. The usual routine begins with a three mile run through the City and is followed by stretching exercises. The School has contracted with a local bakery to provide food during the day and the first meal is a hard roll, some butter and watered wine served during a lecture that outlines the day's schedule of exercises and generally contains a philisophical message about correct mental attitude for the rest of the day. The exercises and drills through the day vary from simple repetition drills to turn thoughtful action into reflexes, to complex games of hide, seek and fight throughout Nightside. No matter what exercise ot drills they perform, the day is always finished by cleaning the weapons and returning them to the Armory, even if nothing was done with them during the day.

The students are not encouraged to swagger about town wearing their colored headbands. Doing so, in fact, has been reason for summary dismissal from the school. Still, when the students move up in colors and ranks, they are given a simple silver circle brooch to indicate their skill. A Student's brooch looks like a full moon, a Novice's has just enough black on it to suggest a moon just beginning to wane. Initiates wear a brooch with one third blacked in, and a Teacher's brooch is half silver and half black. Adepts wear a crescent moon, either as a brooch, sliver of gold cloth or a gold design when they travel outside the school and Masters wear an Onyx circle as their symbol of training. It is obvious to almost everyone that in following the cycle from full to new moon, the symbols mirror the changes in the students because the schooling they receive trains their minds as well as their bodies.

Re'esh wears no symbol at all, but no one could ever mistake him for an untrained bumpkin ripe for the plucking.

Training fees vary with a complex schedule that balances the student's innate ability with his wealth. A promising street urchin might be instructed for nothing, while an uncoordinated richling with dreams of swashbuckling grandeur would pay 1,000 gold a month. Once a fee has been established for a client it rarely varies. There are times when it might go up, especially if the character brags about his training, or might be reduced for a student who becomes more diligent and dedicated to his studies, but both are rare cases. Teachers generally earn out their fees by teaching new students, and anyone the rank of Adept or above appears to pay nothing.

LAYOUT

LOWER SCHOOL

A. Training floor (47' x 30') The training floor is a large, open area where the roof rises up two and a half stories and joins the roof of the Inner School. The floor is made of parallel strips of varnished oak and bears fewer cuts, scrapes and nicks than one might expect in a weapons school. The northeastern corner is dominated by a raised platform, and the whole western half of the room is given over to armory and dressing areas. The stairs centered in the north wall lead up to the garden (N). Over by the raised platform, about six feet above it, hangs a balcony Re'esh stands on to review the activities below. The walls are covered with paintings indicating places on human bodies where arteries rise close to the surface, or correct fighting stances for different weapons.

B. Men's Dressing area (15' x 20') The men's dressing room contains a central bank of lockers where each person may store street clothing. The school provides no training uniforms, so the students wear their own clothes, but all signs of wealth, nationality or patronage are forbidden on the floor. The lockers cannot be locked, but no one steals because few people bring anything of value with them to the school.

C. Women's Dressing area (7' x 8') Similar to, but smaller than the Men's dressing area, it provides privacy for the few female students who enroll in the school. This dressing room is roofed over with a paper and lattice covering that allows light in, but does not let anyone see into the room.

D. Armory (17' x 10') Though a small room, it is incredibly well organized and stocked with weapons ranging from bagh nagh (tiger claws) to Pikes. A Teacher (selected on a weekly rotation for this duty) is on duty at all times in the Armory — including sleeping there — and issues weapons to those who need them. All the weapons bear the school's mark and a number so the Teacher can keep track of who last had that weapon. Students must present themselves both to draw and return weapons.

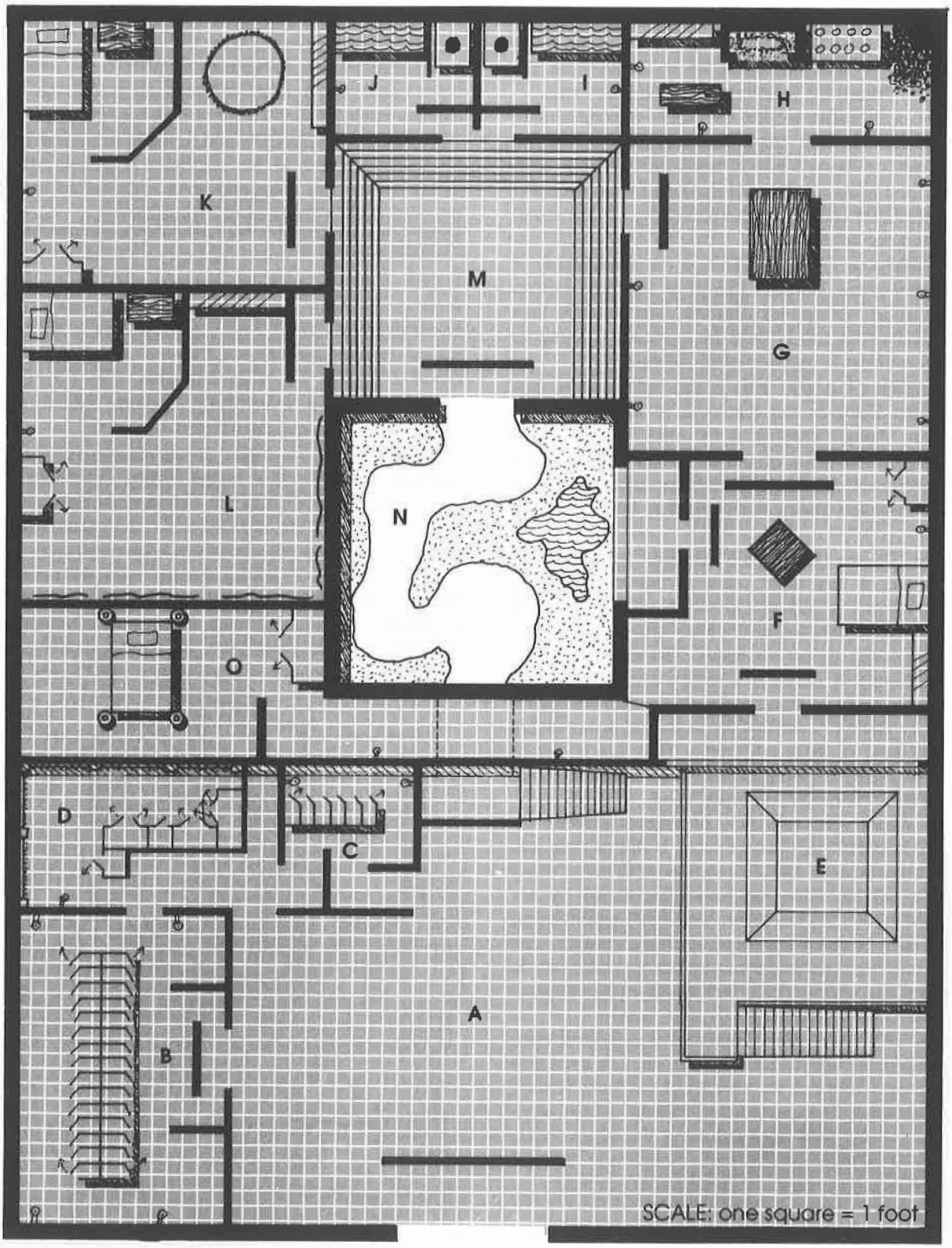
E. Pit and Platform (15' x 16') The raised platform in the Lower School's northeast corner is designed exclusively for training pit fighters. The platform rises 10' off the floor, and the pit has net mesh walls so other students can watch the fighters on floor level. While most of the Teachers view those wanting to specialize as pit fighters as little more than foolish brawlers, the school's training has produced fighters who rival the best. Pit fighting training tends to be a bit more expensive than normal schooling, but any pit fighter who wants to learn more about weapons and expand his training is given a break on fees from that point forward.

INNER SCHOOL

F. Re'esh's Chambers (20' x 20') The Master's room is spare in furnishings, but rich in feel and atmosphere. The floor is laid with parallel strips of hard wood, and the table in the center looks as if it has grown up and out of the floor. Simple pictures and narrow tapestries hang on the walls — though no one visits his room, Re'esh changes these pictures frequently. The bed is really little more than a thin mattress, but the brightly colored silken quilt thrown over it splashes lots of color into the room. The shelves contain trinkets and curios from Re'esh's world travels.

The room has two balconies. The west balcony looks out upon the garden and Re'esh is most commonly seen on it at night, staring up at the stars and moons. The south balcony overlooks the Lower School and Re'esh generally monitors the early exercises from there. He also uses it as a vantage point when pit fighting is going on. Once, when ruffians entered the school to beat loan payments out of a student, Re'esh vaulted the railing and dropped 20 feet to the Lower School floor, but he usually walks through the garden when visiting below.

The diagonal wall section in the southwest corner is mobile and allows Re'esh to pass through the narrow walkway above



the garden entrance and into Elsabeth's room. The panel is not locked, but it looks solid and could easily confuse someone unfamiliar with the Inner School.

G. Dining Hall and Mediation Room (00 x 00) This large room is overwhelmingly white. The floor is covered with several reed mats that are changed when they become worn. The southern half of the room is used as an area for meditation or other forms of introspection. On a rare occasion Re'esh or an adept might be found in here reading or cleaning a weapon.

The dining area is distinguished from the meditation room by the presence of a table. The table is only 18 inches high and all who eat here kneel or sit on the floor. Everyone,

including Re'esh, takes turns serving and clearing away meals. When Re'esh must give his adepts a verbal lesson he often delivers it after a meal, and always does so at the table. He allows nothing to disturb the sanctity of the meditation area.

H. Kitchen (7' x 20') The kitchen is simply appointed and, aside from spices and rice stored on the shelves, has no facilities for keeping food. All food is brought in fresh each day. The stove and oven are charcoal fired, and the charcoal is stored in the northeast corner. All the pots and pans are stored on the shelves on the north wall.

I. Ilianya's Bathroom (7' x 10') This is the easternmost of two bathing/privy areas. Because Ilianya is the only woman living at the School, except for Elsabeth, this room is hers almost exclusively. The tub is used for personal washing or laundry, and cleanliness is required of all Adepts.

J. West Bathroom (7' x 10') This is the bathing/privy area used by the men living in the school. It is identical to the other bathroom, though keeping it in order is a bit more difficult strictly on the basis of traffic in and out. Like the kitchen, cleaning duties are shared. Re'esh creates a schedule of weekly duty, and always makes certain his duty falls during the full moon.

K. Anistatius' Room (18' x 20') Though as clean and sparsely furnished as any other room in the Inner School, Anistatius's room has a darker, more oppressive feel to it. Anistatius likes dark colors — blacks, blues and deep maroons — and his furnishings reflect his tastes. The shelves contain countless mementoes of duels he's been forced into, or the occasional twisted piece of statuary (including one crafted by Niss "Justice" Lapidate). Anistatius keeps several books on his nightstand, but none of them are magic. They are books of dark poetry. Two are by a famous poet, centuries dead and long thought mad; the others are in Anistatius' hand.

L. Ilianya's Room (22' x 20') In direct contrast to Anistatius' accommodations, Ilianya's room is full of light and lively greens, blues and yellows. Her shelves hold many wood carvings, some she has done and some sent to her by her grandfather. She's hung several embroidered silk tapestries on the walls and they brighten the room up immeasurably. The quilt thrown over her mattress, made by her grandmother, is sewn from green silk, and bordered with elven sayings scripted in silver thread.

M. Courtyard (20' x 17') This courtyard is a central open area Re'esh uses for the adepts' physical lessons. The steps lead up to the bathrooms, east and west wings of the Inner School, and are made of cedar. The courtyard is, like the garden, open to the sky, though the roof does overhang the stairs. Aside from lessons little of note happens here, though it is rumored the stone floor got the gouge in it when Re'esh killed an intruder years ago.

N. Garden (20' x 20') The garden is open to the sky and something of a halfway point between the Lower School and the Inner School. The entire area is covered with white stones except where smooth gray boulders erupt through like islands rising from the ocean. A clear walkway meanders north to south and a pool sits beneath Re'esh's balcony. A few plants — mostly bonsai trees — add a gentle splash of color to the garden. From time to time, roughly once every four to six lunar months, the layout of the garden changes overnight.

O. Elsabeth's Room (00 x 00) Elsabeth lies on a raised bed that resembles, to her occasional horror, a bier. Four large brass candlesticks stand at the corners and the deep violet candles mounted atop each are kept burning while she sleeps. (Re'esh checks them daily and replaces those that have burned low.) The cabinet in the northeast corner is where Re'esh stores his magical notes and items. The Sword is mounted on the north wall at the head of Elsabeth's bed.

PERSONALITIES

Re'esh *Human (more or less) Ht. 5'6", Wt. 250# (though looks a lean 130#), Age: unknown to the public, but actually something close to 70. Fighting Prowess: Excellent across the board and unmatched with a sword. Magical Prowess: Very Good C1, C2, C6, C7; Excellent C8, C5, C4. Special Abilities: Virtual immortality because of extremely high regenerative rate and exoskeleton.*

Re'esh began his career as an inquisitive and skillful, if unattentive and careless, hedge wizard. His father served in a royal court well north of the City and Re'esh grew up being friends with the royal family. At that time Re'esh was a slender, handsome man with black hair and fiery green eyes. His easy smile and joking manner won the hearts of many including Lady Elsabeth. At the age of 16, convinced his father could teach him nothing more, he stole off adventuring.

The next three years were, for Re'esh, exciting because he

— Re'esh —

explored vast underground ruins with others and discovered bits of knowledge. Other adventurers found Re'esh to be a queer bird because, with a glance or mumbled spell, he could destroy legions of monsters, but he'd only use his power when the monsters intruded on or impeded his discoveries. An elf named Aranadir, Re'esh's only friend during those days, made sure Re'esh got a fair share of treasure and shrewdly invested it so the wizard would never want for money.

On his last outing a pit trap separated Re'esh from the others. He felt a wave of white-hot magical energy ripple over him, and he blacked out. When he awoke he found he had changed horribly. His flesh had stiffened into an articulated, lobsterlike carapace, his hair had fallen out, and he felt an intense desire to return home to Elsabeth. He escaped the trap, forgot about his companions, and rushed across the continent to the land of his birth.

His return could not have come at a better time. Elsabeth's cousin had come to take the throne by force and had trapped the whole court within the castle. Re'esh, after having cloaked himself so none could see his deformities, struck at night, routed the usurper's troops and drove them away. Re'esh then ran away because he did not want his Elsabeth to see him as the monster he had become. Soon thereafter he discoverd he shed his carapace once a lunar month, and while his new carapace hardened, he looked normal in all respects. Re'esh visited Elsabeth and discovered she was the author of his transformation, though she had no idea what she had done.

Over the next fifty years Re'esh devoted himself to shattering Elsabeth's contract with Two-Scratch Dickens. The first ten years he spent researching the demon and the nature of his contracts. After that Re'esh apprenticed himself to an armorer for seven years and left him with a world of experience and one perfect sword. Over the next 18 years Re'esh sought out and was trained by the finest weapons'-masters in the world. He dedicated his life to learning everything he could about fighting and killing. Because of his broad training, Re'esh is unequaled in his use of a sword. During this period he also learned about his regenerative ability.

It took him three years to imbue his sword with the magicks needed to insure it would send the demon back to his dimension, and during that time Re'esh learned that the spells he'd woven meant the sword would, through draining the victim of all magical energy, destroy its user as well as banish the demon. Because Re'esh wanted to live beyond the demon's parting, he spent the last 12 years (5 elsewhere and 7 in the City) training others as his agents to destroy the demon.

So far Re'esh has met only two people he could have trained quickly to use the sword: Haakon Slashe and Mitch (from the Prodigal's Lantern Mission). Re'esh suspects Slashe's abilities are of a supernatural origin, but he does not know Slashe's history. Re'esh regrets Mitch's conversion to Banistaalism and, if he needed a champion quickly, would snatch Mitch and dupe him into killing the demon.

Physically Re'esh is an enigma to his students and visitors alike. He always wears loose, colorful silk clothes over what appears to be angular armor. His head is swathed in silk and the only part of his flesh left visible is the hard, flesh-colored mask around his green eyes. Re'esh does not speak but imparts his instructions through hand signals or, so it is rumored, telepathic orders to his subordinates.

Elsabeth *Human Ht. 5'7", Wt. 125#, Age: looks in her early thirties, actually 68. Fighting Prowess: none.*

Elsabeth, the flaxen haired, blue eyed, eighth-born daughter of a King, meant well. She was an excitable romantic who feared for her family when a cousin came to claim the throne. Desperate to do something, she prayed and prayed that her champion, Re'esh, would come home and save her. A darkly handsome man appeared to her one night and offered, in return for her soul at the time of her death, to insure her paramour would return and save her. She forced the demon to insure Re'esh could not be hurt, and the demon acquiesced. She did not then, and still does not now, realize just what the demon did to Re'esh.

When Re'esh appeared to her under the full moon after the siege, she greeted him and confessed what she had done. He never told her what Dickens did to him because he knew the truth would tear her apart. Re'esh, promising they would be together forever in the end, left for another ten years, then returned and took her away.

In his studies about the demon, Re'esh decided Elsabeth could probably die in the time it would take him to complete his plan, so he asked and she agreed to be espelled asleep. The stasis spell Re'esh laid upon her is lifted during the full moon, and they spend those nights together. In the thirty years she's been under the spell she has aged just over a year and a half.

Shafe Rill *Human, Ht. 6'3", Wt. 225, Age: 25. Fighting Prowess: Very good with swords, Good with all others. Magic Ability: none. Rank: Green Adept*

Shafe Rill is the pseudonym of a green Adept. His real name is Shafer Creek and he is the son of Aubry Creek (see the Cock and Bull Gaming Club). His normally red hair has been colored brown, but nothing could change the color of his bright green eyes. He is a huge man with a great sense of humor, yet is implacable in combat. A number of sparing partners have been shocked to hear Shafe laugh and help them back up after he's smashed them to the ground. Shafe speaks freely except concerning his background. Re'esh knows his real identity and because of Shafe's unusual situation — his father does not know his son is learning to be a fighter — allows him to commute for training every day.

Shafe is quite worried about his father and the possibility of a battle between the Big Fish Gang and the staff at the Cock and Bull Club. Shafe often prowls the City streets after dark and uses his skills to protect victims of criminals. He's struck no blow against the Big Fish Gang, other than breaking up a few of their alley-bashers' ambushes, but he knows something of their operations. By knocking off a courier or two he could really hurt the gang in the pocketbook. Shafe always makes sure to get back to the farm and wash his hair out before his father and brother return home each evening.

Shafe does not like Anastatius at all. Shafe is confused because he senses something terrible in the diminutive fighter, but he has trouble reconciling his fear of Anastatius with his gross size advantage. Shafe very much likes Ilianya and dearly wishes he could tell her who he is, but he's afraid bringing her home to meet his family would reveal his mission to his

father. Shafe knows his father would confine him to the farm, and he'd never be able to see Ilianya again. To a certain extent he knows he's dreaming because no one as beautiful as her would ever care for him, but he can dream.

Anastatius *Human, Ht. 5'3", Wt. 125#, Age: 25 biologically, utterly unknown spiritually. Fighting Prowess: Excellent with sword, Very Good with all else. Magical ability: Excellent C1-C8 as far as knowledge goes, Nonexistant as far as use is concerned. Rank: Black Adept*

Anastatius is small and lean. Many folks call him spindly before they see him fight. After that they consider this white haired, blue eyed man more like a greyhound — built for speed. Others, especially those he has fought, consider his weapons more human than he is. They find this humorless, morose individual more depressing and terrifying than riding out a typhoon in a rowboat.

Anastatius was once a dark and powerful sorcerer dreaded for his horrid experiments with the peasants' children. An alliance of champions attacked him in his fortress stronghold and succeeded in shattering his power. They beheaded him, but he thwarted them by whisking his soul from his body as the ax fell. Ironically, as he cast about for a body to take over, the only one he could find was that of an infant left out to die on a mountainside — abandoned by the parents who feared the wizard taking the child to work on him. Anastatius abandoned his old name and, with all the knowledge he'd accumulated through his unnaturally long life, he bided his time and grew.

— Anistatius —

Anastatius discovered his new body could not use magic and had to set aside his initial plans for revenge. Despite his size he decided to perfect his weapons skill and joined the Bloodmoon School a year after it opened. His devotion to the training has made him very good. He cannot compromise: he must be the best so he can slay those who trapped him.

Anastatius has all the memories from his previous life and finances his training by recovering caches of treasure he'd secreted in the area. Though he abides in the Bloodmoon School and follows Re'esh's dictates, he will not hesitate to challenge someone to a duel over the smallest slight.

Ilianya *Quarter-Elven, Ht. 5'8", Wt. 130#, Age: 20. Fighting Prowess: Excellent Sword, Very good all others. Rank: Blue Adept*

Ilianya is a red-haired, ice-blue-eyed swordswoman whose elven heritage can be seen in her inhuman beauty, slender form, slightly pointed ears and overlarge eyes. When fighting she moves so fluidly that her limbs seem to have nothing but joints. Although she has never defeated Anastatius in a match, she gives him more trouble than anyone else and Re'esh declared the last three matches draws to prevent either fighter from losing control due to exhaustion.

Ilianya, unknown to Re'esh, is the granddaughter of his old elven friend Aranadir. The old elf managed to track his old friend down after the story of the siege being lifted reached him. He respects his comrade's desire for secrecy and has sent his granddaughter to learn from him for the sake of knowledge, not as a check against him or as a helpmate. Neither Ilianya or her grandfather know of Elsabeth and her spell. In addition neither of them know Anastatius' true identity. This is a shame because Aranadir was one of the knights who pursued and destroyed the wizard in his lair.

Ilianya is popular because of her quick wit and beauty, but she stays apart from most would-be suitors. She's not comfortable with humans because her mother (Aranadir's daughter) was slain in the elf massacres in the south. While Aranadir has forced elves to accept his granddaughter, Ilianya still feels the hostile stares of elven folk when she visits her grandfather. Despite her conscious desire to distance herself from human company, she's very at ease with Shafe Rill and actually loves him. If he did not act so secretive about his background, she'd reveal her feeling for him to him.

The Sword Despite Re'esh's caution about the blade, and his reluctance to use it, the sword does not look special, and its power is not that great. The sword will not register as magical to any spell, in fact it will seem about as *unmagical* as possible because it absorbs magical energy and sends it *AWAY!* Re'esh supposes this ability to bleed magic that comes in contact with it off, and send it out of the world, will be enough to destroy Dickens.

The Sword will drain and banish the innate magic in anyone touching or using it. It will generate heat in a direct relation to how much energy it channels. A simple "detect magic" type spell barely raises it a degree, while destroying Two-Scratch will melt it down. Re'esh handles it with gloves he tanned from the flesh of a broken-hearted virgin who killed herself, but he would not count on them to stand up in combat.

Shafe and Ilianya could use the blade in combat without any

problem. Anistatius, like Re'esh, would be consumed by it because he exists solely by virtue of his magic. If Anistatius was thusly destroyed it would leave a highly trained body with deadly reflexes, and the mind of an infant in control of it.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

Scenario 1: Another group of adventurers arrive in the City and bemoan the horrible fate that has befallen them. In the course of an adventure all of their magic users were changed into warriors, and vice versa. They say they escaped from the foul temple where this took place, and are telling everyone about the place so others won't fall victim to the same cult.

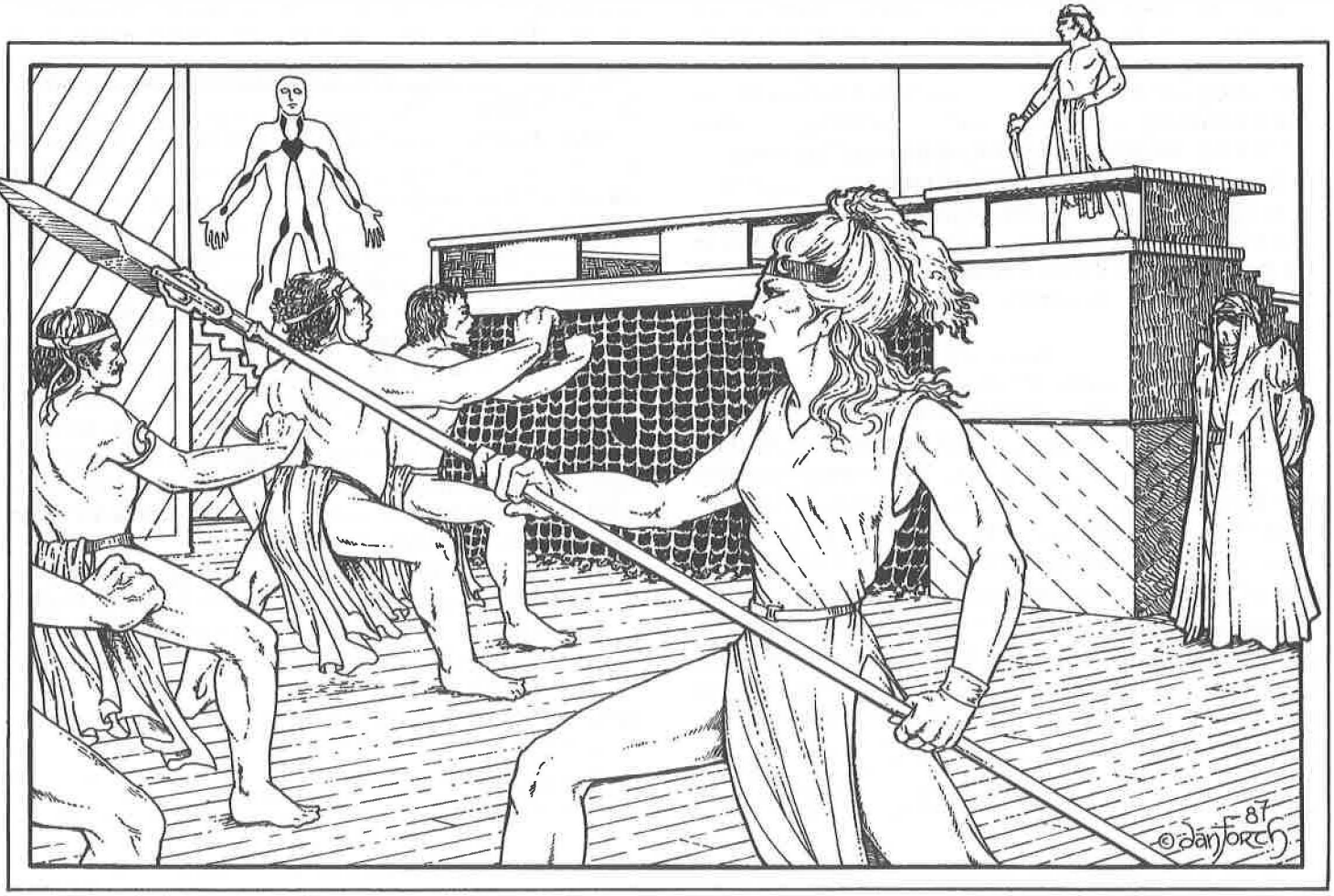
Anistatius sees this as a perfect chance to regain his old powers and deal with those to killed him. He takes off bare months before reaching Master status in the school, and seriously hurts Re'esh's planned salvation for his beloved. Re'esh hires the player characters to accompany him as he tries to drag his student back. If the prospect of possibly being changed from spell-caster to sword-slinger is not enough to daunt the party, wait until they meet an Anistatius who has regained his sorcerous powers, yet has lost none of his sword skill or desire for revenge.

Scenario 2: Though few will admit it, the elf slaughters in the south that claimed Ilianya's mother were not something that happened in a moment of madness; they reflect a deep-seated insecurity humans have toward the elder races and elves in particular. Many folks feel it is not right for elves and dwarves to have a longer life-span than man, and they've taken steps to shorten that of elves they meet.

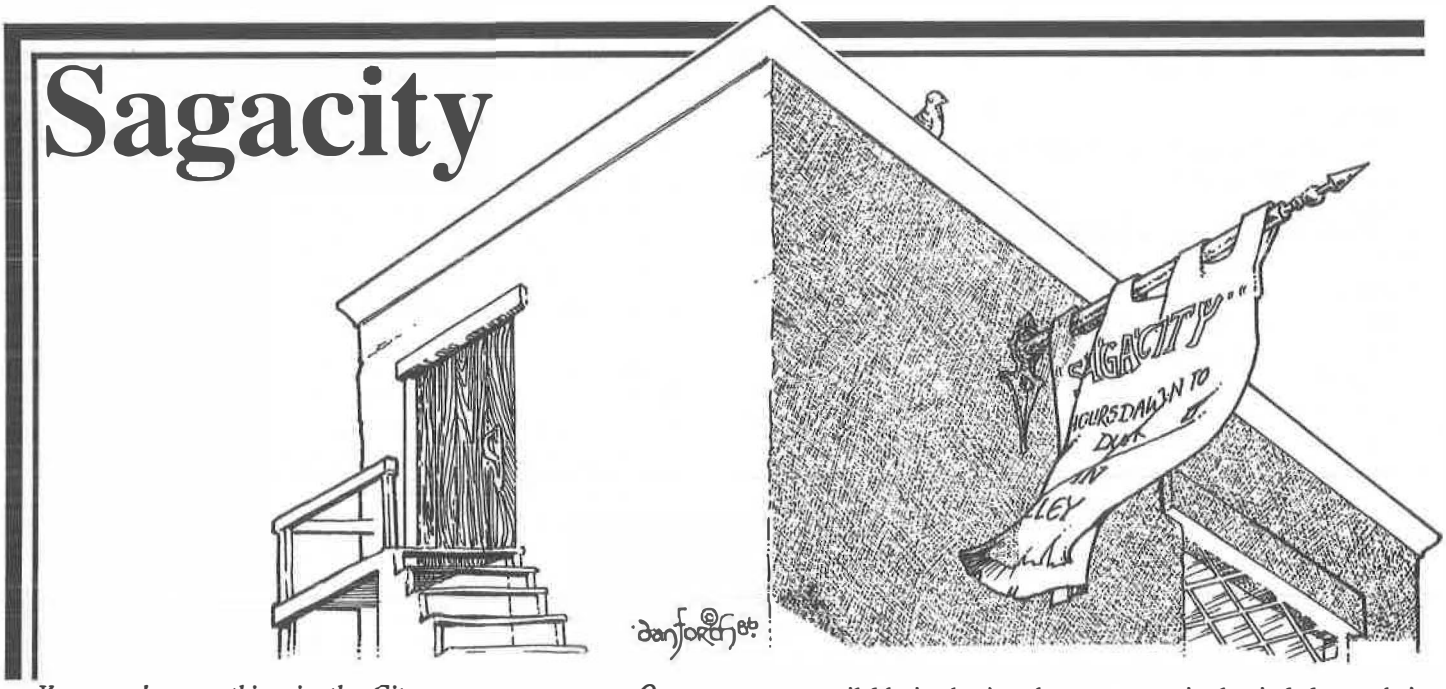
Because the City is such a melting-pot this sentiment is seldom seen, but an incident involving Ilianya triggers a xeno-phobic reaction by many humans. A popular, but minor, noble pesters her to become his consort, and she refuses. He takes affort at this and decides to teach her a lesson. He jumps her and she slays him in a fair fight, but many note that no fight is fair with a Bloodmoon Adept. Suddenly the controversy rips the City wide open, and elves of all type are fair game for the roving bands.

This scenario is a perfect way to force characters to go "underground" in Nightside. To fight this phobia the characters will have to investigate the movement's leaders and prove to the general populace these folks are agents for Dark Elves who want to drive good elves from the area, and take over their domain in the first step toward a war that will pit men against elves and will shatter civilization.

Often a weapon is the only friend a character has in the world. The training Re'esh offers can make that weapon an even better friend. And with a friend like that, who needs fear enemies?



Sagacity



You can buy anything in the City — even answers. *One shop in particular, known as Sagacity, specializes in the twisted tales and robust rumors that flow through these shady streets faster than free beer. For adventurers, his wares are exotic, but affordable. And even better, the proprietor, Snagle Silvertongue, may even be willing to purchase information from the adventurers.*

Sagacity deals in information. Truths, rumors and supposition are all bought and sold here. Snagle, an elderly hobbit, charges steep but reasonable fees. His reputation is fairly good, and his information is rarely bad. In addition, in return for a hefty sum of gold known as a Kill Fee, he'll even forget a tidbit of gossip you do not want to travel any further.

Sagacity is not easy to find. Snagle rents the second story of an aged brick building from the jeweler who runs the shop below him. Snagle's hung out a cloth sign on the wall next to his window, and, if it's not mistaken for a bit of laundry, its logo will convince the adventurers they're on the right track. The sign reads:

SAGACITY
Hours: Dawn to Dusk
Use stairs in the Alley.

Although Snagle promotes himself as a historian, he finds the present and myriad futures of the City far more fascinating than past deeds. Knowledge is power, and Snagle knows quite a lot about what goes on in the City. Through his many sources he gets a whole different view of the City than most people. This bleak picture sometimes frightens him.

And it frightens a lot of other people as well. Numerous attempts have been made on his life and Sagacity has been burgled at least twice. The most recent attempt came up from the sewers through the jewelry shop. As a testament to the value of Snagle's wares, the foiled thieves even ignored the gems available in the jewelry store, so singleminded was their desire to rob Snagle.

Snagle has taken steps to protect himself. He's hired a huge barbarian bodyguard he calls "Genius" because of the man's slow wit. He also prepares and leaves with the City Guard a daily updated list of who has supplied the most recent rumors to him, a short synopsis — packed with names — of each current rumor, and a note suggesting the guards start from this material if he turns up dead. These steps have cut down his troubles considerably.

THE INFORMATION

THE PRICE OF KNOWLEDGE: While the value of rumors you want to impart to further your own campaign should be set according to how much money you want to strip off the characters, below are some guidelines to establish if Snagle will be able to offer information on a particular subject and then how much he will charge for the rumor.

Due to the number of spies and sources Snagle has, there is a better than average chance he'll know something about any subject. On a d100 roll of 01-60 Snagle has enough information to answer the question fully. A roll of 61-70 means Snagle has limited information for you, while a horrible miss (roll of 91-00) indicates that Snagle cannot answer the question, but has decided to lie to the characters. A d100 roll of 71-90 and Snagle admits he cannot help the characters, and has Genius escort them out.

The price of a rumor varies wildly according to a number of factors listed on the table below. Start with a price of 10 gold pieces and multiply it by the different multipliers listed below. If a particular item does not seem to apply, either ignore it or use the closest variable you can find. (In other words, if the rumor applies to a sorcerer, use the Wizard multiplier.)

A couple of things should be pointed out about the chart on the next page. The Future category under rumor age deals with information concerning events scheduled to take place.

Jeff Halsey is a young man who happened to be in the right place at the right time. He needed someone to take a chance on his work, and I needed writers for Citybook III. This is Jeff's first published work, and I think Blade won't be the only company to take a chance on him now.

Rumor Price Construction Table

Age of Rumor		Who the rumor concerns		Appearance of client	
Ancient History	x1	Peasant	x1	Guttersnipe	x1
Recent History	x2	Merchant	x2	Shabby	x2
Fortnight Old	x3	Wizard	x3	Normal	x3
Current	x4	Thief/Felon	x4	Well-Dressed	x4
Future	x5	Assassin	x5	Princely	x5
		Minor Noble	x6		
Rumor Use Result		Major Noble	x7	Nature of Rumor	
Insignificant	x1	Big Fish Gang	x7	Embarrassing	x1
Beneficial	x2	Haansfolk	x4	Inconvenient	x2
Harmful	x3	Sackers	x5	Revelation	x3
Disastrous	x4	Beggars	x4	Devastating	x4
Unpredictable	x5	The Steel Man	x8	Fatal	x5

Example: A normally dressed individual asking about a recent and embarrassing rumor concerning the Steel Man with insignificant results if it is passed on will cost 480 gold pieces. A person in Princely attire would pay 800 gps for the same information.

Forewarning that the Big Fish Gang plans to burn your business down next Thorsday is an example of Future information. Rumor results apply generally to the effect if the rumor comes into general circulation, though Snagle does consider what effect the rumor will have if it is traced to him, and charges according to whichever rate is higher. Finally the nature of the rumor is defined by the person it is about. A story about a peasant getting drunk and falling down stairs would be considered Embarrassing, while the same tale about the Lord Mayor of the City might be considered Devastating if an election is coming up. A Revelation is a rumor that brings to light a side of the individual never seen before (like suggesting the Wizards' Guild leader cavorts with dryads under the full moon), and a Fatal rumor describes the likely result for the subject of the rumor (and possibly the person who starts it) if the rumor gets out. Treason generally falls into this classification.

Like all good merchants Snagle adds a 10% surcharge to the price of any rumor so the client can bargain the price down. (If a character fails to bargain and pays without complaint, Snagle jacks his margin up on future rumors until the client complains.) If Snagle can only provide partial information he will reduce his price accordingly, and will charge servants or agents the same price he would charge their masters if they were present. When he buys information he pays the supplier 25% of what he thinks he could get for the rumor (the price before he adds his surcharge) in one sale. Snagle will gladly sell the same rumor time and time again. If a client does not want it revealed that he has purchased a rumor, a gratuity of 15% or more is gladly accepted.

LAYOUT

A. Entrance. (7' x 5') The exterior stairway is wooden, narrow and shakes so badly that only four people can mount it at any one time. The door at the top of the stairs is heavy oak, has a lock[3], but is usually open during business hours. Beyond it the characters step into a small area with two benches along the north and east walls, and a thin, grey, semi-opaque curtain across the south end of the room.

A huge man, nearly 7 feet of muscle and sinew, stands before the curtain. He'd be naked except for the black leather kilt he wears. A heavy ax rests on his right shoulder and it looks rather odd. The blade is flattened a bit, and some characters might recognize it, without wanting to reveal how they can identify it, as a headsman's ax.

The man examines each adventurer very carefully. Satisfied they mean his master no harm, he invites them to sit if Snagle is busy (a 30% chance of this at any one time). While they wait any attempt to get Genius to talk will be greeted by a cold stare. The character may also notice that, although they can see the shadows of the hobbit and whoever he's currently speaking with, they can hear nothing through the curtain. Magic can be sensed from it; it is a Curtain of Silence and no sound can penetrate it.

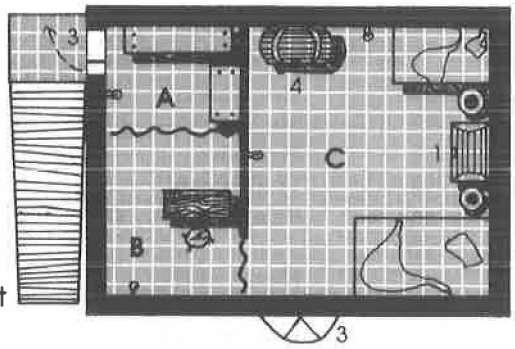
When Snagle is no longer busy, Genius steps to one side and holds the curtain open for the characters. Beyond the curtain lies the Negotiation Booth.

B. Negotiation Booth. (7' x 8') The first thing anyone will notice about this room is that the sparse furnishings are suited to the hobbit who works here, not to any clientele. The wooden counter in the middle of the room is only a foot off the floor. The surface looks cracked and pitted, but it glows with the lacquered sheen most often seen on a bartop in a tavern. The counter itself has no legs; it rests on two small stacks of bricks.

Cheap incense wafts up from the small silver holder on the eastern end of the counter. The Curtain of Silence cuts this room off from waiting area to the north, and similar gray curtains fill a doorway in the southeast corner of the room. One thick pillow lies on the floor behind the counter, where Snagle sits, and the only seating arrangement for the characters is to grab an ample square of cold wooden floor.

C. Living Area. (11' x 14') This is where Snagle and Genius live. Neither are good housekeepers. Clothes lie thrown about and books are casually scattered. A couple of empty bowls, with something that was once edible dried in them, are stacked here and there, and might be recognizable as belonging to the Singing Frog Sanctuary.

Even a blind man could see who sleeps where.



SCALE: one square = 1 foot

The south side of the room has a cot, wood and leather, that is military issue. The blankets are old and full of holes. The pillow is just another blanket rolled up tightly. The bed on the north, however, has a genuine feather mattress. The blankets are new and thick while the pillow is plump and soft. Though full sized, only the top half of the bed appears used.

The window in the south wall is normally open, but can be bolted[3], and has been used as an emergency exit to the awning over the jewelery store's door. Still the window is set high enough on the wall that, to use it, Snagle needs a boost.

Between the beds, at the east end of the room, a pair of aged chamber pots flank a rather beaten old chest. The chest doesn't have a lock. Within is is an elaborate ax sheath, a black velvet hood with eyeholes, a leather kilt, an extra blanket and a bar of soap. A leather pouch containing 19 silver pieces is wrapped up in the blanket.

In the northwest corner of the room stands a large chest. It is made of iron and the metal above the lock is inscribed:

DESTRUCT MECHANISM
Unauthorized tampering with this mechanism
may result in the destruction of contents.

The lock looks odd. It has no keyhole. Instead, on the upper half of the latch, is a set of runes. Anyone who can read Magetongue (the language basic magic is taught in) can read the following riddle:

In again, out again;
In absence, Death,
But hold too tightly
And never return again.

The riddle's answer is Breath. But speaking the word, as might be expected, does not unlock the chest! Doing anything but *breathing* on the lock will get no response.

Striking the chest, forcing the lock, or even dropping the chest sets the destruct mechanism off. A *click* sounds, the chest immediately gets very hot and gives off an odor like burning toast. It then cools, and after twenty minutes, the lid pops open. A chemical smoke drifts out and reveals a chest full of ashes. The acrid scent will linger in the room for days.

A successful attempt at opening the chest, however, reveals Snagle's treasure. Under a pair of fine, hobbit-sized, rabbit cloaks is a leather moneysack. It's only as big as a man's fist but inside are 5-10 gems (1d6 + 4). All are small but relatively flawless. It's not quite a fortune, but it is more than enough for two or three weeks of carefree living in the richer portions of the City. A gnarled wooden walking stick also rests in the chest, but, to most everyone's surprise, there are no reams of notes about rumors past and present.

PERSONALITIES

Snagle Silvertongue. *Hobbit, Ht. 3'2", Wt. 60#, Age: 73. Fighting Prowess: Poor. Magic Ability: Poor, C8.*

Snagle is average height for a Hobbit. His hair is a short tuft of wild gray and his eyes, resting beneath heavy gray brows, are a sharp blue. He wears heavy rimmed glasses and tends to study people as objects instead of living creatures.

Snagle was trained by the Sages Guild. Gifted with a photographic memory and a quick ability to recall even the most obscure fact, he did well in the initial phases of his instruction. But, as he moved into the more rarified atmospheres of Guild elders, he discovered he lacked the ability to draw anything more than an elementary conclusion from the data his head contained. He could remember anything, but linking pieces of information (unless the information itself contained a direct link) was beyond him. That inability to analyze ended his Sage career and the Guild forced him to quit.

Devastated and embittered, Snagle honed his skill at drinking to a fine edge -- and he still practices to keep in form to this day. Sitting in a tavern one day, absolutely unable to think of something to do with his wasted life, he overheard some adventurers discussing the Crystal River, and he knew he had information they might find useful. They paid him money, real gold (that the barkeeper quickly appropriated and applied to a large bill), and a new career unfolded before him.

Snagle got his seed money for Sagacity by blackmailing Doc Mindwort (see the Big Fish Gang). He sought out and bribed a number of disgruntled City clerks to provide him advance information about City Guard activities, then promptly sold that information to Danny O'Grunnion. His spy network grew and he was in business.

Snagle hates only one thing more than the Sages' Guild. He hates being called a *rumormonger* and any client who

— Snagle Silvertongue —

makes the mistake of calling him that will find information he wants to buy very dear. And he'll have to tread care-ully and watch himself because Snagle has spies everywhere.

Genius. *Human, Ht. 6'6", Wt. 280#, Age: 21. Fighting Prowess: Excellent with a headsman's ax, Good otherwise.*

Huge, and muscled like a body-builder, Genius (his real name is Erak) is just plain ugly. His features appear smashed together. A nasty scar highlights the ridge of his left jaw.

Trained as a headsman, he still dresses in the black leather kilt. He carries the heavy ax, with the blade flatted where it's meant to hit the block. He still has the black velvet hood with eyelets, but he does not wear it.

Genius used to be proud of his job as an executioner. The burst of bright red blood, the clump of the head landing in the basket and the stench of urine as the body lost all control never bothered him. It was work, it was easy, and the scum bent before him deserved to die. They were less people to him than they were cord wood to be chopped day after day.

Ugly though he was, a beautiful, raven-haired woman took him as her lover. She told him nothing about herself, and would vanish for days on end, but returned to be with him. She said she felt safe in his arms, and never asked who he was or what he did. Their time together passed, it seemed to Genius, independent of reality. Genius fell in love.

Then she left for a long time. Genius was hurt, but he threw himself into his work and tried to forget her. Then she appeared in his line of victims, and he knew she recognized him even though he wore his mask. She was the last that day, the last ever, and Genius has never been able to forget how she stared up at him from the basket.

Genius crawled inside a bottle and drank to forget. On the few days he drew a sober breath he could see nothing but her dead eyes staring at him, so he worked at drinking even harder. Snagle found him in an alcoholic stupor and Genius agreed to be the hobbit's guardian in grunted, monosyllabic answers to the hobbit's questions.

— Genius —

Genius is not as stupid as Snagle believes, but he continues to play dumb because it pleases Snagle and makes the hobbit careless. Genius knows about the magic lock on the chest, but has never heard any of the words the hobbit says to open it. When the hobbit heads out Genius tries to open the chest, but to date has been unsuccessful.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

Scenario 1: Genius took an amulet from the body of his dead lover before she was carried away. It is a tear-shaped bloodstone wrapped in a web of silver threads. Genius wears it at all times and it hangs at his throat. Though he would have a hard time explaining it, the amulet makes him feel close to the woman, and he would never think of parting with the stone.

The reason the amulet makes him feel that way is because it is enchanted and contains her soul. Confederates claimed her body and had sorcerers heal the damage. They need the amulet to bring her back, but they've had trouble tracking Genius down. They finally arrive in the City and naturally turn to Snaggle to learn if Genius is in town. They recognize him, and he drives them off, but they vow to return.

Snaggle hires the characters to discover who those men were and why they were after *him*, because Snaggle has never seen them before and he's got no idea why they would want to hurt or kill the hobbit.

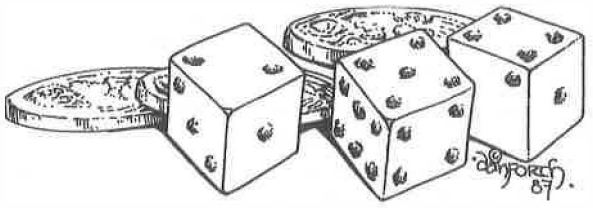
The misdirection can just cause trouble, or can delay the characters enough to leave them racing after Genius when the girl's confederates kidnap him and bring him to a dark and gloomy place where they plan to bring her back to life. The only problem is that Genius has worn the amulet too long, and he must die so she can live again!

Scenario 2: Someone pays Snaggle with twelve small emeralds. Snaggle does not realize it, but the person still has the larger stone these gems were split from, and he's enchanted the lot. Through the minute sound vibrations hitting the smaller gems, the person can "hear" everything said to and by Snaggle. This information starts leaking out from a new source, and Snaggle suddenly finds a number of his clients very angry over his disregard for their anonymity.

The scenario goes several places from here. Snaggle has given several of the gems out as change, and his competitor suddenly has even further expanded sources. Snaggle will hire characters to determine his rival's sources. If Snaggle learns about the larger gem and its abilities, he'll ask characters to steal it for him without telling them what it does or is. Then he'll try to get the emeralds back from others so he can make them into gifts and give them to important clients. In general, this scenario will require discretion and daring as characters try to detect leaks in Snaggle's information network without having their efforts detected in return.

Information is power, and that power is valuable. More than just a place to slip vital rumors into a campaign, Sagacity can be an establishment where facts are bartered, lies are exchanged, and the most important thing a character can learn is when he's angered those who are powerful enough to make their objections count.

The Cock and Bull Gaming Club



The Cock and Bull Gaming Club is the gamblers' Xanadu. It was built to attract game players of every conceivable type. There is no game of chance that cannot be found on its grounds, and there is no chance occurence upon which you cannot be quoted odds. This is the place for any character with cash to burn, and the idea that his luck is just that much better than the next guy's.

The Cock and Bull is an imposing four-story structure on the outskirts of the stockyards; it is, in fact, an extensively renovated stock barn. Despite the building's agrarian antecedenents, on any given night of the week there is some kind of activity going on. Carriages and well dressed men on horseback can be seen coming and going. This, as well as throngs of common working men and ruffians of all sorts fill the Club. At the Cock and Bull anyone's cash is good!

The Cock and Bull is operated by one Wasco "Dicey" McFarland, who, in this establishment, has tried to create a gaming house where the wealth of the elite, and the wealth of the common folk, can be "harvested" at the same time, without the friction this usually engenders. In this case he has met with *notorious* success.

The Club was founded by the Big Fish Gang out of whole cloth. Danny "The Big Fish" O'Grunnion picked the small-time gambler, who was famed for running the City's only permanent twenty-four hour floating crap game, as a "front" for the operation. After a short, *personal* interview, Danny opened the Gang's coffers to Wasco. Virtually overnight Dicey became the toast of the City's gaming elite.

Dicey set to work with a vengeance. He knew he had to create something truly special to draw betting men of all types to his new place. He decided he needed something exciting and spectacular, then made a "pit" the centerpiece of the Club. In its arenalike setting he staged various forms of combats and competitions, and folks came from all over to sample this new offering. With the house quoting odds, acting as the "bank," taking the house percentage, and selling refreshments, the Pit became a big success, and the Club became respected.

McFarland's biggest problems have only just started to emerge. He has been successful beyond his wildest dreams, and how he's seeking ways to separate himself from his "gangland" origins. He is tired of paying 75% of the gross to the Big Fish Gang! Even above this — which he sees as a negotiable debt pursuant to the Club's founding — he is at violent odds with the gangster "Sheets" Eddrad. Eddrad, the Big Fish's notorious whoremaster, has expressed an obvious interest in using the Club as a base for his "ladies-of--the-evening."

Dicey sees Eddrad's girls driving away some of the Club's higher class clientele. Moreover, the girls' presence permits Sheets to bring in enforcers to tighten the Gang's control of what Dicey feels is *his* operation. With an eye toward establishing control over the business, Dicey has hired bigger bartenders and animal handlers — staffing his place with an "army" for a future confrontation. Currently an uneasy truce leaves the Big Fish strong-arm men drinking at the bars and running up unpaid debts at various games.

The different Club levels are described below, but suffice it to say, the higher one climbs in the Cock and Bull, the higher one has climbed socially, and the higher the stakes become.

The live extravaganzas take place on weekends with odds being quoted all during the preceding week. If it is to be an animal headliner, the animals in question will be on display at the Club all week to influence the betting. For those who bet on cock fights, dog fights and ratting, there are nightly bouts in the bar on the first floor.

The Pit is the setting for the various extravaganzas. Three out of four weekends the battles are man versus man, and Dicey encourages the settlement of grudges or feuds in the Pit. He's found these grudge matches generally advertise themselves and spark more local interest than fights featuring battlers from outside the City. The other advantage of grudge fights is that Dicey does not have to put up a purse for the winner; the honor of winning is enough. Similarly, with challenges between townies and a fighter from out of town, the challenger must put up a purse that the champion will match, saving Dicey money and uninteresting fights.

The fights have no referee and the fighters battle until a time limit has passed, first blood (popular with nobles) or until one fighter can no longer compete. Unconsciousness is usually a sign that one fighter has lost, but some of the fights are to the death. Dicey doesn't advertise fights as "to the death" because the City elders don't like that idea, but if a match is expected to end with one person shuffling off this mortal coil, the word gets around and those fights bring in a bigger gate. On any weekend there might be a half dozen man versus man (or men) fights.

The biggest and most popular contests happen once a

James "Bear" Peters produced this selection as a "little" outgrowth of the "Big Fish Gang," which he also wrote. Bear[s been long involved in gaming, and is an accomplished war-gamer as well as superior GM and author of The Dungeon of the Bear.

month and pit man against beast or beasts against beasts. Past contests have pitted a bull against a smallish black bear from the nearby woods, then pitted that bull against a pack of dogs. Another bull went against a pack of wolves, bears have gone against dogs, dogs against wolves, stags against dogs and a puma against dogs. In general the more animals in the arena the better the take. Bets on these contests usually concern number killed on each side and the general length of the battle, or some combination of both. For example, correctly betting that it will take five minutes for 6 wolves to kill 2 stags, and that the stags will kill 3 wolves could make a bettor rich enough to head upstairs.

Quite popular are the man versus beast contests, but they are understandably difficult to arrange. In the past a warrior armed with a dagger has faced a bear and another man with Bagh Nagh fought a stag. All the men in these fights are freemen who enter the pit of their own accord. Dicey found that slaves, local prisoners and even debtors who owed him money did not fight well against animals; they lacked the motivation that could inspire someone to get within dagger-reach of a bear or a rack of antlers. The human contestants generally spend the week before the fight in the Club, cadging drinks from others and bragging about how well they will do. This drives the odds up and inspires foolish bets on the humans, which Dicey is more than happy to cover.

LAYOUT

The Ground Floor is slightly recessed into the earth with ramps leading down into it from the north and south. These ramps lead through large double barn-type doors into room **A.**

A. Stables (40' x 60') This area is the livestock stables. The animals for the extravaganzas are kept here, and this is the one area that underwent little alteration as the Club was built. In addition to holding the Club's stock, patrons' horses and carriages are kept here while the patrons enjoy the Club. Most folks bring their horses in themselves, but the better clientele are met by a valet by the entrance who takes care of their animals for them. Stalls 7-14 are used for guest livestock and the tack is kept on racks in stall 11.

Stalls 1-6 are used to hold the animals for extravaganzas, though if there is no animal in them, the cell is left open and might be used for patrons' stock of there is an overflow crowd. Stalls 2, 3 and 4 has a 12' ceiling — down from the normal 20' for the other stalls — because of the dog pit descending from the bar above.

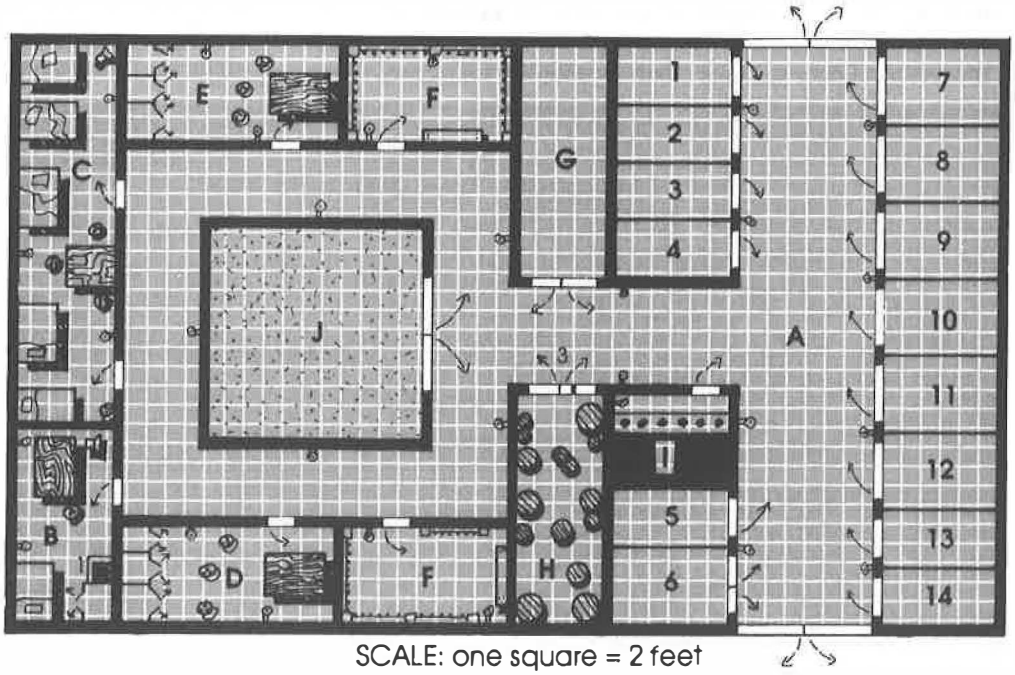
On any given day there will be one groom or animal handler in the stables, and often more when a special animal requires special handling. At night there will be three or four stableboys to handle the patrons' livestock and an animal handler or two for the special animals.

B. Ogun Clovis' Room (10' x 20') The chief livestock handler, Ogun Clovis, lives here. He entertains animal dealers, wolfers, trappers and other sources of wildlife for the pit. This room serves as his office and sleeping quarters. Beneath the crate in the southwest corner is a locked[1] box with a tidy cache of gold Ogun has skimmed from his daily operation. He inflates the prices of animals he's purchased before he passes the bills on to Dicey and he regularly skims "training fees" from the salaries he pays out to his help. Ogun is a tyrant on this lower floor and, if he is crossed, the offending party will have an "accident" while working with something in the stables. Not surprisingly, Ogun does refuse bribes to drug animals or otherwise fix fights — Dicey will tolerate graft, but fixing games is not part of Ogun's job.

C. Stock Handlers' Dorm (10' x 60') Aside from ratty linens and makeshift furnishings, there is nothing of value in this room. The livestock handlers who live here, almost to a man, are remarkable for their strong backs, weak minds, and amazing ability with clubs and long-handled prods. The others, who are more presentable and work the nights caring for patrons' animals, spend only the time they have to here — when their duties are ended they leave.

Even though Ogun does pass most of the handlers' wages on to them, virtually no money can be found in this room. Most of the men immediately recycle their meagre pay right back into the casino in vain attempts to multiply it into an imagined fortune.

D. and E. Fighters' Dressing Rooms (10' x 22') The human pit fighters dress in these rooms before fights, and retreat to them after their battles. While the furnishings are not really comfortable, a drawer in the table contains liniment and bandages so medical attention can be rendered to those who require it, or bandage them up enough to survive transport to



SCALE: one square = 2 feet

some place where better medical care can be provided. These rooms smell predominantly of sweat and not a little of the tension that accompanies fear.

F. Armories (10' x 18') The armories, both north and south, have a fine collection of weapons. Here fighters select their weapons and warm up. The Club supplies all weapons for the fights to counter the big odds shifts caused by magic weapons. Most of the weapons made available, however, have been taken to pay off gambling debts so it could be possible to slip a special weapon into one of the rooms with enough planning.

G. Storage area (25' x 10') This area is used to store grain for the animals and sand to cover the pit floor. There are a fair number of rats, for which the Club has a use, but little else of value. This room might make a good hiding place, but it sees a fair amount of traffic in the early morning and evenings.

H. Beverage Storage (25' x 10') Locked[3] at all times, all the wine, ale and other liquid consumables are stored in here. The Bartenders have keys, and often enlist handlers to help them cart the heavy casks up to the appropriate level as needed. The best wines, and certain patrons' private stock are kept up in the casino for safe keeping.

I. Latrine (12' x 10') The latrine dumps into a cesspit that drains into the sewers. The peculiar "stepped" format of the latrines on the different floors mean they all share the same cesspit without causing discomfort to patrons seated below.

J. The Pit (00' x 00') Ten inch thick wooden posts form the walls for the Pit or Arena (both terms are used interchangably). The area is 24' on a side and the planking covering each wall makes the pit appear, from above, like a solid box. The 20' deep enclosure is covered with tightly packed sand that gets changed after particularly nasty fights. A set of double doors in the east wall open to let combatants in and out.

MAIN FLOOR

The Cock and Bull is fronted by an earthen ramp, paved with flagstones, leading up to two large, brass-bound, wooden doors. On the right hand door is carved a six foot tall bas relief of a fighting cock, talons reaching toward the left hand door. The left hand door features a bull — shoulders hunched, head lowered — facing the giant cock. Both carvings are brightly painted in colors so brilliant, and so well maintained, that in the noon sun they actually hurt the eyes.

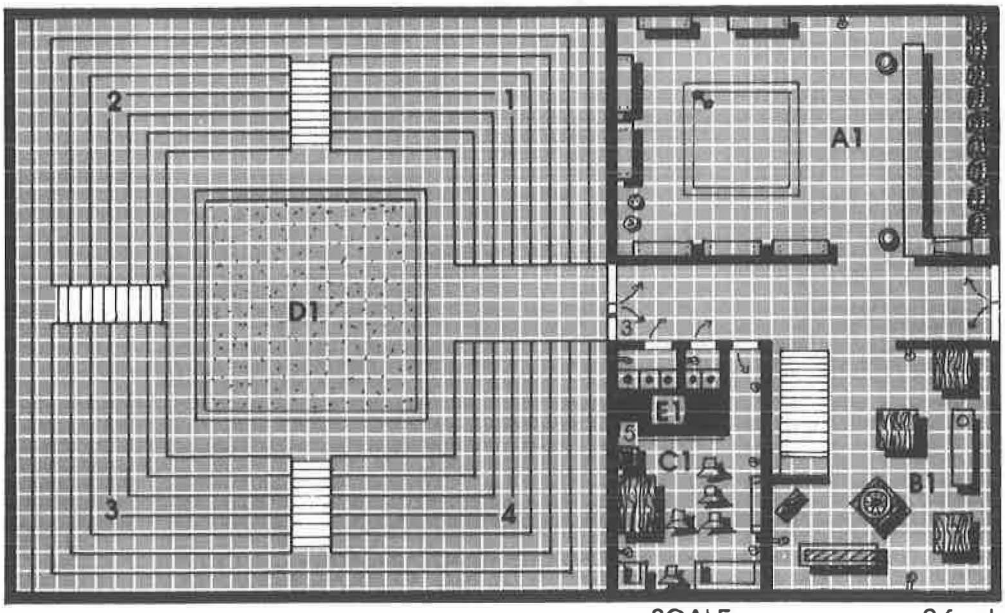
A valet in the buff pants and vest with scarlet tunic uniform-of-the-house waits to greet patrons. He takes the horses below and turns them over to grooms who stable the beasts.

The doorman serves several functions. The first is obvious: he opens the doors for everyone who enters the Club. He also scrutinizes the clientele and signals the floor manager when he believes a patron is too "undercapitalized" to fully enjoy the Club. These people are allowed to stay and, in some cases, run up a debt, but the management watchs them to make sure they cause no trouble. Lastly, the doorman tries to turn Sheets Eddrad's women away or, failing that, notifies the floor manager about the potential for trouble.

The doors open into a long hallway direct to the Pit. On extravaganza nights two more greeters attend these doors, but if there is nothing scheduled, the pit doors are closed and locked[3]. The stairway up to the second floor is located midway along the south wall of the corridor.

Activities on this floor are overseen by Reedly "Taps" Newhorn, Dicey McFarland's right hand man. This floor is the roughest, and the staff on it are the largest and generally least nimble-minded. As a result, the floor manager has to do most of the thinking for the floor, and he has to back up his decisions with an iron hand. Because the main floor is the Club's first line of defense in case of trouble, the floor manager must be able to rally the staff, and needs their loyalty, from bouncers to dealers. In this respect Taps excells. He has a sense of belonging with the ruffians in his charge that rises from his origins as a bouncer in the days before the Cock and Bull. He knows how to appeal to the men and deflect their inate, hostile reactions to insulting patrons.

A1. Dog Room (40' x 25') This room, the main floor bar, is known to staff and patrons alike as the Dog room. Its central feature is is a ratting pit, and the walls are filled with drawings and paintings of dogs who distinguished themselves within it. The converstations, like the decorations, are exclusively devoted to ratting and most of the regulars can recall any of a number of fights as if they happened earlier in the week.



SCALE: one square = 2 feet

The ratting pit is ten feet on a side and eight feet deep. A four foot tall rail surrounds the pit to keep over enthusiastic fans from falling into it. A rope ladder can be lowered over the side to let a dog owner recover his champion after the fight has ended. Over in the northwest corner a pulley arrangement allows a cage of rats to be lowered into the pit and opened to spill the rats onto the pit's sandy floor.

The bets in here run much along the line of those in the larger arena. The dog's owner states how many

rats in how much time his dog can kill, then the house calculates and announces the odds of success, or varying degrees of success. Bets are shouted and agreed to while the dog — most often a bull terrier or a similar breed — is lowered into the pit and the rats are released. Side bets — informal bets about the number of nips the rats will inflict on the dog, or which rat will be the last taken — are made throughout the fight, and bets are paid when the fight is over. The dog's owner is paid a percentage of the Club's take, so the purse varies with the odds and take.

Oddly, ratting appeals to both the poor and rich alike. The poor seem very able, driven by practical need in most cases, to breed excellent ratters. The rich, on the other hand, have the time and money to purchase offspring of champions and try to perfect the breed. Consequently all levels of society rub shoulders in this room, and while a noble might not even notice a serf on the streets, here there is a strange comraderie born of their common interest.

Though the purists hate it, the pit is sometimes used for cockfights. This drives the richer clients out, and replaces them with a crude, rowdy lot. The management made an attempt to add pictures of victorious cocks to the walls, but they were soon defaced so that effort has been abandoned.

The bar stocks mostly beer, ale and other potables that tend to come in bulk quantities, by cask or keg. There are large barrels of nuts and pretzels at the ends of the bar. They are offered free, but are heavily salted so most patrons partaking more than cover the cost by purchasing drinks to slake their thirst. The casks of ale and wine are of a generally ordinary quality. All potables are dispensed directly from the cask in mugs or tankards, and served by aproned thugs who look like they would more at home wielding bung starters on the heads of the drunks than the casks they oversee.

B1. Casino (25' x 25') Known as the "Copper" room to the staff, this is the least expensive casino in the Club. It has facilities for cards (use dominoes in cultures were paper is a luxury item), dice, table shuffleboard, darts and roulette. The dealers and croupiers are mostly brawny thugs, and all male. Beer flows like water and the tinkling sound of silver coins mingled with the laughter of women from the next level spur players on to make a fortune so they can move up. Of course, fortunes are not made in this room — most of the games are played with copper coins, and just enough silver to make the players stay alert. It is a genial room and a nice place to spend an evening without losing one's life savings.

C1. Library (15' x 15') This room is known as the library because, if you're illiterate, the room can be very boring. A longish hallway leads into a small room filled with a murmur of voices and the occasional squeak of chalk on slate. The big chalkboard contains the odds on any of a number of strange events, and here wagers are taken concerning these events.

The odds fixed here can be short term — like those on tomorrow's horseraces — or longer term. Anything, from the outcome of the next pit fight to crop yields, weekly rainfall, the identity of the next mayor, the day of the current mayor's expiration (due to the nasty disease he's contracted — someone has sent the Steel Man after him), and whether or not the sun will come up. Seldom are the bettors in possession of secret information or a verifiable "hot" tip about important items though, one time, a man burned several farms so his wager on annual crop yields would be safe.

The chief odds maker is Gilden Wannamaker. He sets the odds on most of the day to day bets. If a bet comes up that is unusually bizarre, or excessively large, Dicey becomes the final arbiter and a runner is sent for him. The Club seldom sets a bet it cannot realize a profit from and, though no solid evidence exists to back up the speculation, Dicey is not above fixing an event so the Club does not lose money.

The safe[5] against the west wall is where all the cash from this level is kept. The safe is four feet square and of the finest dwarven craftsmanship. Taps, Dicey and Gilden have the only keys, and Gilden turns his over to Taps before he leaves at night. It is likely to contain 1D10 x 10,000 silver pieces worth of silver and copper depending on the nature of the weekend's extravaganza or proximity to harvest time.

The cash and receipts from the rest of the main floor operations also end up in this safe. Each table in the casino has its own locked[3] box and money is slipped into it through a slot in the top. The cash taken in the Dog room goes into a larger model of one of these and requires two burly men to lift it when even half full. Taps and Dicey have keys to all these boxes and on busy nights the boxes may be emptied up to three times into the safe.

Generally the Club's staff is enough to keep prospective thieves wary of stealing the cash, but Dicey has further assured the safe's invulnerability by noting no bets will be paid off until the swag is recovered because all receipts are stored with the cash. This means all the bettors with money owed them will become eyes and ears for the Club, putting more agents onto the streets than the City guard could ever afford.

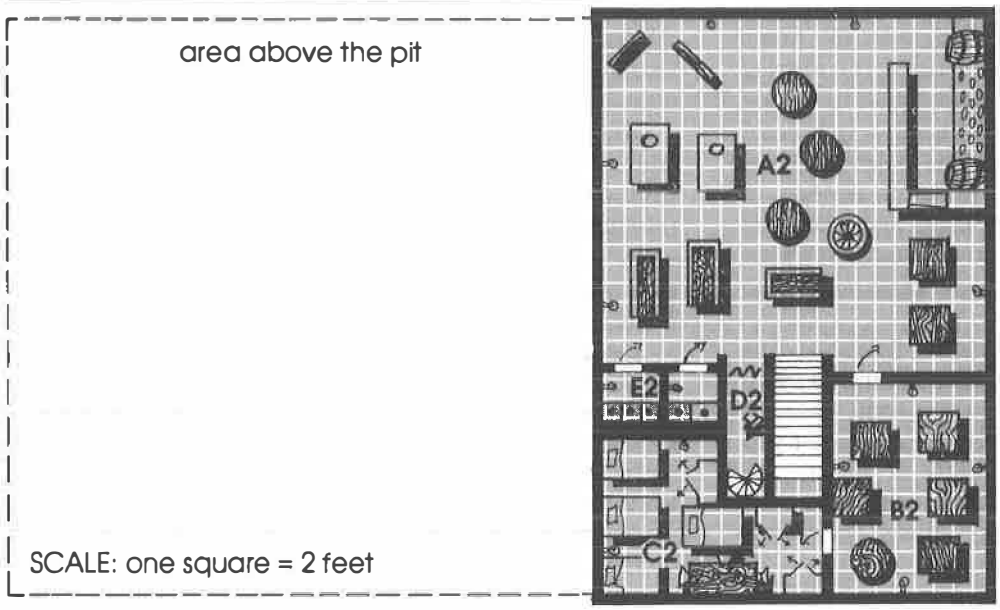
D1. Pit seating (60' x 60') This room seats 336 comfortably, or can pack in 400 on the really heavy nights on the steeply set benches. The seating is segregated by social status. Area 1, immediately to the right of the doorway, is reserved for the socially well to do. Area 2 caters to the upper middle class, area 3 to the middle class and area 4 provides seating for democrats and other lower class individuals. These restrictions are the general rule, but there is frequent intermixing at the edges due to crowd size and an uneven division of spectators. The Pit is railed whenever the creature featured in the fight has a reputation for leaping, and can even be covered with a stout rope net to keep the larger cats in. Most of the time, however, the railing is not present, so it does not obscure spectators' view and can cause an unexpected fall into the pit if the crowd is too rowdy.

While there is no bar in this room, skins of various potables are available between bouts in the main bar. In the case of richer patrons, or those with a cultivated palate, a runner can be sent to bring something from the upstairs bars.

E1. Latrine (10' x 12') The latrine is split 4/2 for male and female patrons and has minimal facilities for the job.

SECOND FLOOR

This is the floor where the first gold coins make their appearance. It is on this floor that the talented gamblers can begin to make their fame and perhaps their fortunes. On this



floor are to be found the City's prosperous, the gentry, and the lucky adventurer.

The floor manager is also the chief dealer, Visalia "Vi" Tollhouse. Vi is the penultimate crooked gambler; she knows every technique for rigging or fixing the various games of "chance" that has ever been devised. She will generally restrict the use of these skills to catching those who would circumvent the house, as she enjoys games of chance. She also possesses a certain degree of inate magical skill. In times of extreme stress she can read minds. This power comes and goes without her conscious control, and will generally not work in the games she plays or deals, as these are so commonplace to her that they don't evoke a response, even if the stakes are high.

There are magical wards cast weekly on this and the upper floor by a high level member of the Wizards' Guild. He's doing a study on standard deviational probability, which requires him to play a large number of games of chance per week as research. The spells make anyone using magic glow with a purple light visible to everyone but the victim, and the cheater is quickly ejected from the Club. In return for this magical protection, the wizard has a virtually bottomless account with the house to bankroll his research.

A2. Casino (40' x 38') Known as the "Silver" room to the staff, this is the highest level anyone who normally frequents the Club can rise to. The bar is capable of serving almost any palate. The bottles feature a wide variety of drink. The floor is dotted with more elaborate versions of the same games found in the Copper room, the surroundings are a bit more elegant than below and the stakes are higher. The dealers and croupiers here are women, and the bartending crew looks a tad less brutal, but no less lethal.

The chief of staff up here is Abrey "Dinky" Creek, a former adventurer turned bartender. In addition to being the head bartender for the entire club, and in charge of obtaining and keeping up the potable stock, he's a shrewd judge of character and quickly spots troublemakers among clientel and staff alike.

Cash storage procedures are similar as below, with the storage taking place in the bar. At the end of the night the proceeds are taken up to the third floor safe. Only Dinky and Vi have keys to the strongboxes used on this level, and Dinky returns his key to Vi when he leaves at night.

B2. Card Room (15' x 20') This is the place Vi is most often found. A liveried staff member admits only those players who have purchased at least 3,000 silver pieces worth of chips at the bar. Vi frequently deals the high stakes games (and takes a house cut of 10% of each pot), and special all-night (or all-Knight) games can be arranged with a day's notice. If Vi is hosting an all-night game with players she does not know or does not trust she will keep one bartender on duty for each two people she is wary about. Chips can be cashed in at the bar where they were purchased.

C2. Female Dealer's Dorm (23' x 15') Entrance is granted only through the Card room, which means most of the riff-raff interested in the dealers cannot get past the guard to harass the women. Dicey encourages, but does not require, the female staff to live on the premises, and because of the rising friction between Dicey and the gang, most of the women do bunk in the triple-tiered beds. Because space is a bit cramped there is little in here to personalize the room, but the women get along with each other quite well, and anyone who does not fit in quickly moves on.

All the women are employed for their distraction abilities. The more dexterous or clever among them are turored in the finer points of their chosen profession. None of the girls is kept on the staff if addicted to anything stronger than liquor, and dealers are not allowed to drink (or abuse any other substance) before or during their shifts.

D2. Stairs (4' x 15') These stairs lead up to the third floor and are hidden behind a thick curtain. A large individual, Dinky Creek's son Holbrook, wards this passage up to the most expensive and exclusive level of the Club. He will not allow anyone to go up to the third floor without written permission from Vi, Taps or Dicey. He is polite, firm, and large enough to keep even the most determined individual at bay.

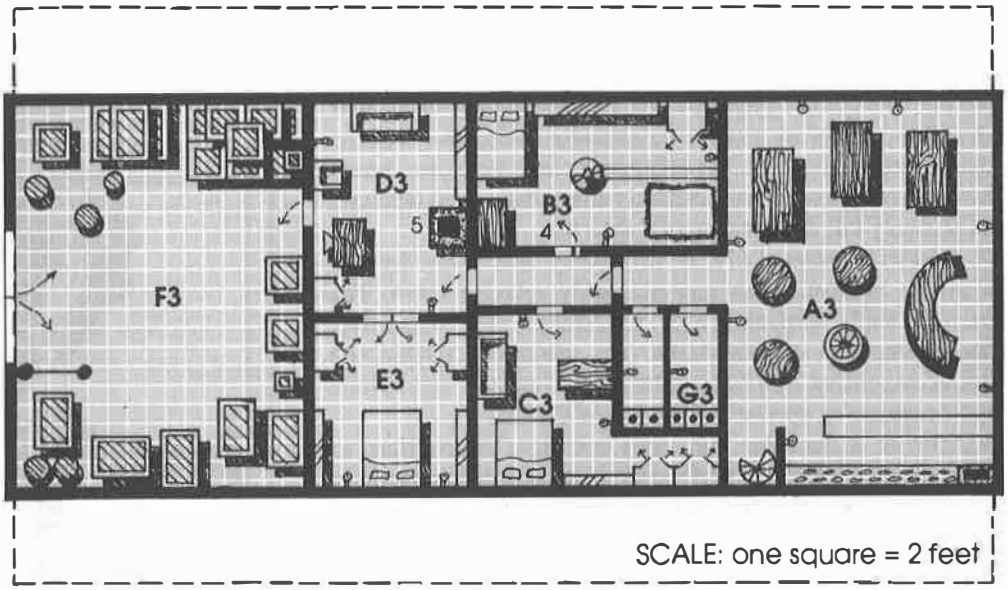
E2. Latrine (7' x 12') The facilities are a bit nicer here, yet still divided 4/2 male and female.

THIRD FLOOR

A3. Casino (27' x 40') Known as the "Gold" room to the staff, it is the true casino at the Cock and Bull. The stakes on this floor are astronomical: gold is king and silver barely acceptable as tips for the staff, or change back from a drink. The games here are the same as on lower floors, all though there are some more exotic variations, and the house will attempt to supply the essentials for those that can't be found at hand, upon request. Here players can name a game at any stakes, and if there are insufficient opponents, the house will supply competition, usually in the form of Vi or Dicey.

The bar on this level stocks any potable to be found for a thousand miles around, and the best of the vinatage whenever that is available. In the cases where the vintage is entirely in the hands of one owner, the Cock and Bull Club is very effective in reaching some accommodation with the owner.

Often this floor will be closed due to the derth of players with sufficient capital to make opening its bar and accoutrements worth the effort. Then, all of a sudden, a fleet of carriages will arrive, the sconces will be lit and the velvet barrier will be removed from the circular stairway. The rumors will start to circulate...the Count?...the Duke?...was that the silk merchant? The pace of play on the other floors will quicken with the feeling there are fortunes to be won and lost this night. Once the action starts on the third floor, the players on the lower floors try just that much harder to gain the necessary stake to elevate them.



The money is kept in a safe[5] behind the bar and Dicey has the only key to it. All cash is converted to gold gilt chips, and appropriate tabs are run for honorable or rich individuals. The management has legendary "respect" for the wealthier guest's good name and repute. Often only a signature is security against credit but there is no compassion for welshers.

B3. Vi's Quarters (25' x 15') In keeping with the Club's rules, Vi lives on site and helps to balance the Club's books in the mornings before the doors open. She receives a percentage of the profits, or what little is left of them after the Big Fish Gang has taken its cut. She would be just as happy if the gang's share was pared down or eliminated, but the money she has coming in does make sure her life is not that bad off.

Visalia is a very cultured woman, her job not withstanding, and has converted much of her earnings into *objets d'art*, including several fine examples of gem quality petrified wood. Many fine works of metal and stone grace the cabinets and shelves, but the centerpiece of her collection makes all of these seem less lustrous because of its outstanding beauty. It is a jade statuette of the ancient god of luck, gems, mineral wealth and the underworld where gems and minerals are found (but not necessarily *the underworld*). The god is believed to be a human representation of an older Dwarvish deity, Kumbama, but he goes by a whole host of names in human circles.

To the untrained senses this statuette is worth thousands of gold pieces, but to the few who enter here with magical senses, its greater value is revealed. This statuette bestows upon its owner unnatural speed of hand and eye. The use of these blessings to a gambler are obvious, but the presence of various stilettoes, throwing knives and needle-sharp darts suggest Vi has found another avenue to employ her supernatural reflexes. Her natural training, and the magical augmentation of her abilities, makes her formidable indeed.

The door is locked[4] whenever she is not in the room.

C3. Taps Newhorn's room (25' x 17') Taps spends little enough time in his room and, as a consequence, it is an utter mess. Beneath the mounds of paper and clothes it is possible to locate furnishings, like a bed, table, some chairs, and a clothes cabinet, but it's not an easy task. A laborious search of the room would uncover many things lost beneath the clutter, but nothing of value beyond a gold piece or two would be included in this booty. Taps knows he can't handle his money so anything beyond what he requires to live is given over to Dicey for safekeeping. From time to time Taps cleans the room up, sending his clothes out to be cleaned, and a cleaning is usually taken as a sign that Taps has fallen for some woman, from patron to dealer.

D3. Dicey McFarland's Office (17' x 22') The door from the hallway opens into Dicey's office. The room is filled with a desk, some chairs and a divan. The tapestries on the walls appear to have some value, but are fairly run of the mill in the scenes of gaming they depict. The room looks less "wealthy" than it might for two reasons. First, Dicey does not mind projecting, for Danny O'Grunnion's benefit, the image of a narrower take. Second, and far more cogent, Dicey has dug into his own pocket to finance the beefing up of his staff.

The safe centered against the east wall is where Dicey keeps his own money, Taps' funds and the take from the Club. Identical to the one in the Library (C1), this safe is locked[5] and has a special "defense" mechanism. Dicey and Danny have the only keys to this safe, but only Dicey knows its secret and can open it with impunity.

A fair time ago a prospector ran up a healthy tab at the Club's tables, and Danny invited him up to the office so they could discuss repayment. The old man revealed to Dicey the existence of a creature the prospector called a "Lightning Salamander." The creature, the old man explained, was placid, slow, blind, toothless and corpse white, yet was a predator. Living in damp, dark pools in caves, it generated an electrical field that fried prey when something bumped into it. The creature, the prospector insisted, could guard the Club's gold without anyone knowing what it was or that it was there at all.

The salamander burrows into the coins (gold, silver and

copper all being conductive) and unleashes a charge when disturbed. Dicey has discovered the salamander can only kick out one charge per minute, so he generally drops a tidbit of food onto the gold, it gets fried, and then the salamander crawls out and eats it. Dicey sets the salamander aside, takes out the gold he needs, then lets the salamander burrow down again. The charge it generates will certainly stun a man-sized creature, and probably kill anything smaller than that.

E3. Dicey's bedroom (17' x 18') Dicey gets away from it all in this opulent, plush and ultimately relaxing room. The fixtures, wall hangings and furnishings are expensive, cumbersome and warmly bulky. The wardrobe contains the various expensive outfits required to put up the appropriate front necessary to operate the third floor Casino.

Dicey is a bachelor and does not have much time to entertain. When he does find the time, though, his companion is usually a high-priced courtesean — often from the House of Infinite Dreams — who has no connection with the operations overseen by Sheets Eddrad.

F3. Storage Loft (30' x 40') The loft is used for general storage, from used equipment and old tables to non-perishable food items and various odds-and-ends. Until recently much of the space was taken up by hot merchandise from the Big Fish Gang, but Dicey asked for it to be moved and, because of the growing tension, Danny acceded as opposed to have it held hostage against a settlement with Dicey.

The only interior door into the loft is from Dicey's office, and a large set of doors in the west wall is used for moving things into and out of the loft. A block and tackle on a swinging boom is put in place and used to lower supplies to the various levels, or to bring things up from the ground. Dicey always either locks an employee in the loft, or supervises the operation so his office is never left vulnerable while access is so easily granted.

G3. Latrine (10' x 12') The latrine, split 3/2 male/female is plushly furnished and handsomely painted. The staff members who live on this floor use these facilities, and the rooms are checked for thieves who might have secreted themselves here before the club is closed.

PERSONALITIES

Wasco "Dicey" McFarland *Human, Ht. 5'7", Wt. 150, Age: 36 Fighting Prowess: Knife Good, Sword, Fair. Magic skill: C7, Good in detection and production of illusions.*

Wasco McFarland started life as a handsome, dark haired, blue eyed, small time game hustler: he was good at what he did, but was not genuinely outstanding. He was not a brilliant gambler, but he was a good study and could consistently win. Wasco soon realized, though, that the folks running the games made the profits, and he decided to open up his own games.

Wasco excelled as an organizer, and that's been the secret of his success. He quickly set up a floating crap game that always stayed solvent, well stocked with players, and one step ahead of the law. When Danny O'Grunnion decided to take over the City's gambling, Wasco managed to keep his game out of Danny's reach. When they finally met, both men realized the other had something he wanted, and an alliance was forged between Dicey's dreams and Danny's finances.

— Wasco "Dicey" McFarland —

Dicey realizes he made a deal with the devil to get his club. He pays the gang 75% of the gross profits which, at the time, seemed reasonable. In addition he set up a crooked gambling shop in the Gang headquarter's basement and instructed people how to create crooked dice and rigged roulette wheels. Dicey was careful to disguise himself so only he and Danny know the ties between Dicey and the Gang. This makes Sheets Eddrad's intrusion into the club all that more difficult because to pressure Danny to get Sheets out could reveal to Sheets the connection between the gang and Danny. (Sheets believes Wasco is paying Danny protection, not because he's a part owner of the club.) Danny agreed that as long as the club showed a profit, Dicey was on his own.

Dicey, when he can find the time, likes to think of himself as a ladies' man. He entertains, from time to time, some of the more stylish courtesans in the City, and enjoys hiring beautiful women to work for him as dealers. While other men might take advantage of their position, McFarland is a gentleman in manner (though not blood) and treats his women with respect. He encourages this proper treatment in the club, and the staff (save the troglodytes working in the stables) has embraced his philosophy. This prevailing attitude makes the club special in the City, and has become the centerpoint of the conflict between Dicey and Sheets Eddrad.

Dicey would welcome any solution that could get Sheets out of his life and if it also included a way Dicey could loosen the gang's grip on his club. Ultimately Dicey feels the club really is his, and his genial connections with the City's richer folks have made him friends Danny does not want to upset by knocking off the club's host. Wasco McFarland enjoys his rise in status, and puts on a good show. But show is all it is because, in his heart of hearts, he is still a back-room gambler

looking to make that one big bet, winner take all.

Reedly "Taps" Newhorn *Human, Ht. 5'11", Wt. 190#, Age: 28 Fighting Prowess: Good hand to hand, Very Good with clubs, Fair otherwise.*

Taps has been refered to as "ruggedly handsome" which means his nose was broken once and set in a way that flatters his angular features. He earned his nickname for his skill with a club — his victims don't die from shattered skulls, they wake up in the morning and can play again that night. Dicey hired him because of this ability and Taps took care of security with Dicey's crap game. If there was trouble, well, there are few men Taps can't handle.

When the gang made Dicey his offer he naturally took Taps along with him, but really felt at a loss for a place to put his friend. While Dicey could see Taps heartily greeting nobles and peasants with an equally pleasant manner, and he knew Taps would sort out the potential problems, he was afraid his friend would quickly become bored and leave the Club. Suddenly, however, Taps appeared to be a diamond in the rough. Dicey knew Taps couldn't keep track of his own money, but Taps kept perfect track of each and every copper flowing in and out of the Club's main floor. Because the Club's money is not his own, he watches over it with an eagle-eye, and runs the Club's main floor with an even hand that keeps workers in line and patrons happy even when they lose.

In his private life Taps is a spendthrift and painfully easy touch. He lends money and forgets both quantity lent and the identity of the debtor. (Because of his size and reputation many of the loans are repaid, and Taps is surprised, from time to time, when someone walks up and hands him money.) Taps can't explain why he does this, but he thinks it's because he's responsible for the Club's money, and he doesn't want to let his friends down.

Taps owns 25% of Dicey's share of the Club, and would be a rich man if he was not so reckless with his wealth. He entrusts most of it to Dicey and draws only enough to keep him going. When he's not at the Cock and Bull which is seldom, he can be found at various houses of physical pleasure or wandering around the City's bars. He will never, under any condition, have anything to do with any of Sheets' women, and he is a remarkably tight-lipped drunk!

Visalia Tollhouse *Human, Ht. 5'4", Wt. 120#, Age: 35, though she looks younger. Fighting Ability: Excellent with knives (as long as she owns the statuette), Very Good if the statuette is gone. Magical Ability: Excellent in C3, but only in times of stress.*

Dicey realized from the start that the Club needed a touch of class, but his area of expertise was gambling, not fashion or style. He muddled along as best he could, and thought he was getting the hang of making the Club chic until a diminutive powerhouse strolled in and quickly disabused him of that notion! Visalia Tollhouse, a fiery brunette with trim figure and pert nose, pointed out several places where the garish wallpaper clashed with the furnishings, and nearly laughed herself to death when she saw the first of Dicey's goons attired in wig and hose! She told Dicey that the Club would attract people — once — then they'd never come back.

Other men in Dicey's society and position would have invited Vi to the loft, then chucked her out, but Dicey was an entrepreneur. He took Vi up to his office (which was furnished with sawhorses and planks at the time) and twenty minutes later she emerged with a 20% share of the casino, virtually dictatorial powers over the second floor, and arrangements concerning the third. At her direction women were hired to deal on the second and third floors. Vi also acts as a "Den Mother" for the girls, insuring they are not taken advantage of by customer or staff.

Not much is known about her background, and Vi offers little or no information herself. She does not realize her power to read minds, which often comes into play when Danny and Dicey are having arguments, messes up Danny's Elven ring, hence the crime boss never feels Dicey is a threat to him. Because Vi brought Aubry Creek, her right hand man on the second floor, into the organization some have speculated that her parents might have known the old adventurer, but neither person has said anything about their relationship. Still, Vi's manner, speech and actions all suggest she once enjoyed the same social status as those she serves on the third floor.

When she's not working Vi tends to keep to herself. She spends most of her time in her room with Nails (her large and very loyal Wolfhound) and, while many of the male staffers feel she's aloof and cold, the female dealers do not and have given her a standing invitation to visit the "dorm" any time she wants to talk. She's extremely fair with her charges, and has built up lots of loyalty because of it.

Aubry "Dinky" Creek *Human, Ht. 6'3", Wt. 265#, Age: 55. Fighting Prowess: Excellent hand to hand, Very Good with a bung starter, Good with an ax. Magical Prowess: Good C2 and C6 as pertains to the refining and brewing of beverages, and reversal of spoilage of same.*

Unlike most old adventurers, Aubry Creek's body is not criss-crossed with scars. His bright green eyes don't bear any hint of the horrors he might have seen, and whatever he endured in his career has not seeded his red hair with any white. He moves easily for a big man and, though taciturn, has a booming laugh that shouts out his love of life. His immense family, including twelve children all built along his lines, lives on a farm just outside the City, and Aubry commutes each morning and evening with his son Holbrook. Aubry's living away from the Club is a cause for some concern on Dicey's part, but Aubry's defensive abilities have been well documented as he's thrown rowdy gang members out on a number of occasions.

Aubry's real service to the Club comes through innate and magical ability. Aubry's got the most educated palate in the area. Not only has he tasted most of the drinks available in the world, he remembers each one and can identify vintages, both region and year, from a single sip. In addition to that, his magical ability allows him to cleanse any cask or bottle of the elements that make the wine bitter. He claims he learned the magic from an old elven brewer, and no one can prove otherwise, though some have hinted his magic would make him invaluable as a food and wine taster for a noble afraid of being poisoned.

When Aubry retired from adventurering he tried to become a farmer, but his attempt met with meagre success. In fact, if

not for the generous help of hobbits, his family might have starved on the food he raised. But, in return for "curing" their brewing efforts, the hobbits virtually adopted the family and taught them how to be farmers. ("No, Aubry," one wizened hobbit admonished him early on, "farming is not plundering the earth the way you might plunder a dragon's lair. You must work to coax wealth from the earth, not rip it free.") When Vi offered him a job at the Club he moved his family, and a number of hobbits moved with them to make the new farm he purchased a going concern.

Aubry feels he owes Vi a great deal and watches over her closely. He only works on the floor she's working on and, although he won't admit it to himself, he gets anxious when she's out of sight and he doesn't know where she is. Aubry's told all his children (5 sons and 7 daughters) that Vi's a lady and deserves their respect and protection. Though he's forbidden all but his son Holbrook to leave the farm, the family's elected Shaefer to attend the Bloodmoon School so Aubry will have some skilled aid when and if open warfare erupts between Sheets and Dicey:

Despite his new position, Aubry is always happy to see old adventuring friends and generally manages to slip them a drink on the house for old time's sake. Aubry and Taps get along very well and respect each other's skills. Taps knows Aubry's first thought in any emergency will be to protect Vi, and Aubry acknowledges Taps as his superior within the Club's chain of command. Although he does not like the animal extravaganzas, he's learned to tolerate them as a condition of his employment. This tolerance does not extend to the stable crew and Aubry's more than willing to crack a few heads.

Gilden Wannamaker *Human, Ht. 5'3", Wt. 135#, Age: 30. Fighting Prowess: Fair with a sword, Poor with all else.*

The Club's brown haired, brown eyed oddsmaker is lanky and almost cadaverously thin. He's quiet and most modest, but an absolute wonder with numbers, probability and information. He lives alone in a small room over a bakery and, aside from the few occasions when co-workers walk him home, he lives a solitary existence. He has developed a few friends, but it's difficult for him to open himself up because he's afraid folks are just laughing at him, or want him to use his skills to their benefit.

In addition to setting the odds on most bets taken within the Club, Gilden keeps the books. He is careful to balance everything and keep the operation running in the black. Vi helps him from time to time, but her aid mostly consists of organizing receipts so Gilden doesn't have to look too far for them. Though Gilden does not know the Big Fish Gang uses his books to determine their cut, Gilden keeps records in a fashion that pumps money back into the Club at a rate that trims 10% of the profit off before it is recorded as such.

SCENARIO SUGGESTION

Scenario 1: The Cock and Bull's latest extravaganza involves pitting a huge, ravening wolf against a man. Though the particular character the GM chooses does not remember it, he (or she) agreed to the match after a late night of heavy drinking. There's already been so much publicity that it would be impossible to back out, and McFarland confides in the character that the purse for this fight will be rather high. (Dicey is no idiot, if you lose he won't have to pay, and this wolf is big.)

After the week-long promotion (which should be fun to play out) the fight takes place and the character kills the wolf more easily than imagined. Worse yet, the dead wolf's form evaporates and leaves the body of a man in its place. Ogun Clovis vanishes, but some documents in his room suggest the character arranged to have this man enchanted and killed in this manner to settle an old score and literally get away with murder. The City Guards, taking a dim view of murder, and having no other suspect, give the character and his friends three days to discover who really is behind the plot to murder the man who was a wolf.

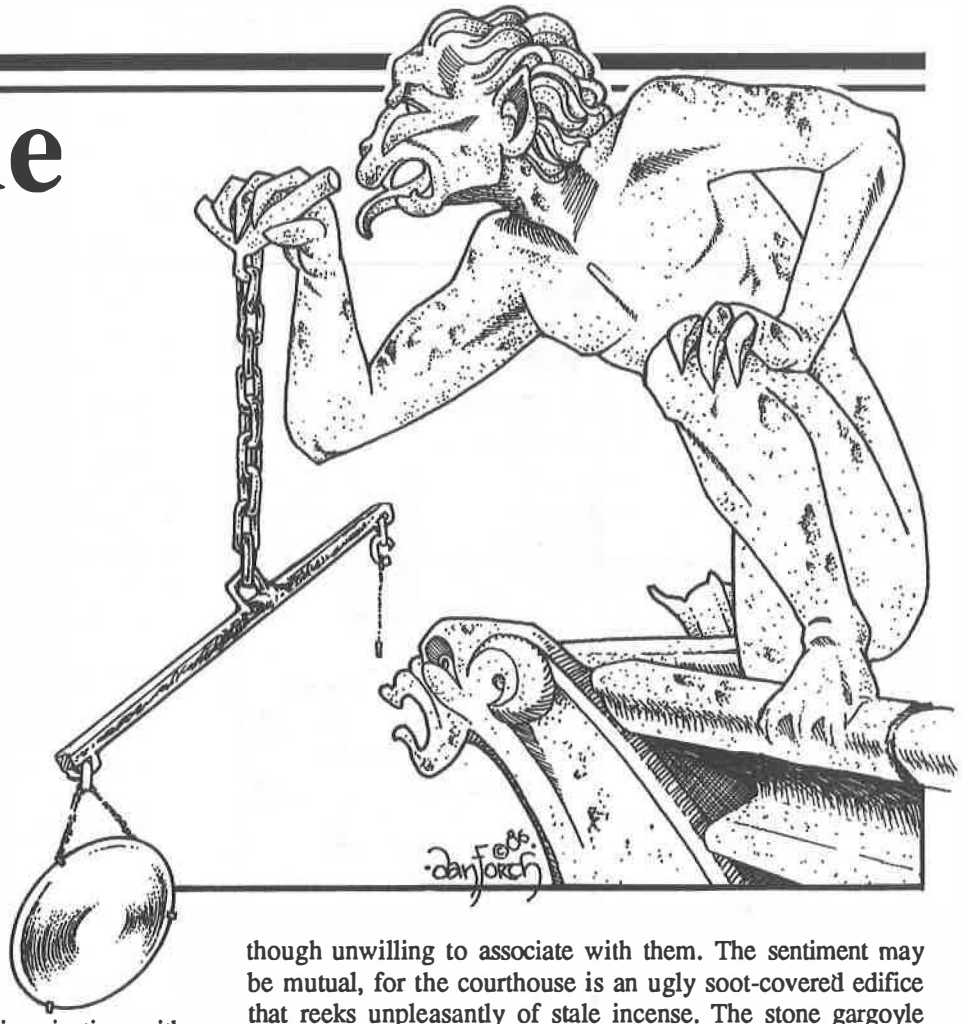
This adventure will be especially interesting if set up as a tight frame. Obviously the individual who set the murder up is a person who can summon great magical power, so figuring out who it is can be both a puzzle and a grave danger if the characters are successful.

Scenario 2: A darkly handsome man arrives in the City and earnestly romances Vi. Aubry Creek seems to think Vi knew the man before, and Dicey is not at all pleased by the man's offer to finance the Club's buy-out from the Big Fish Gang. The two of them collaborate (or operate separately) to hire adventurers to learn who this man is and what's really going on with him, but to do it without letting Vi knowing they're checking up on him.

This can be an interesting scenario for a split party play where both sides are searching for the same information and keep running afoul of each other. The dark man's background can be anything, really, but a sinister plot could involve the goddess Tel (see The Shadow Riders) and her control of this man. A nicer, but just as difficult to unravel, plot makes him a conman who's playing Dicey off against Danny O'Grunnion in hopes of cheating both sides and heading out with lots of their money.

The Cock and Bull Gaming Club is one of those establishments that can serve as a meeting place and a possible source of income for lucky characters. Its various rooms and levels offer a chance for characters to rub shoulders with the City's rich, and to see the City's scum in action. Whatever they do there, from gambling to getting stuck in the middle of a gang war, five will get you ten no one will think of the Cock and Bull as dull and boring.

Nightside Inferior Court



In a district of theft and immorality, Nightside Inferior enforces the law — so long as it's good for business.

The City has several courts of law. The humble Nightside Inferior Court is the institution of first and last resort for minor crimes: petty theft, assault, disturbing the peace, and other crimes often committed by player characters.

A large City is likely to have four to six of these "inferior" courts. One or two judges preside in each court, dispensing justice with unquestioned authority. Some courts are fair, impartial, and honest. And then there's Nightside Inferior.

THE SYSTEM

This court is corrupt from the front desk to His honor's bench. For a reasonable price (say 20 gold pieces) you can have an enemy raided, booked, tried and imprisoned. But the court is fickle: your enemy might bribe his way to freedom for a mere 30 gold and have *you* arrested for another 40!

Nightside law has always been this way, and everyone has learned to live with it. Particular clerks may be fired — now and then a judge is disbarred (or lynched) — but the corruption continues unabaited. The fines mostly go to the City, and increase every year; the officials who care are almost all in on the take (led by Sgt. Jevro Tharn of Skilfin Barracks, in *CityBook I.*) Citizens have adapted to the routine corruption, and all major crimes and suits are tried in higher courts.

This kind of evil doesn't go away when you throw a ring into the Crack of Doom. It's built into the society and your adventurers will have to deal with that reality.

LAYOUT

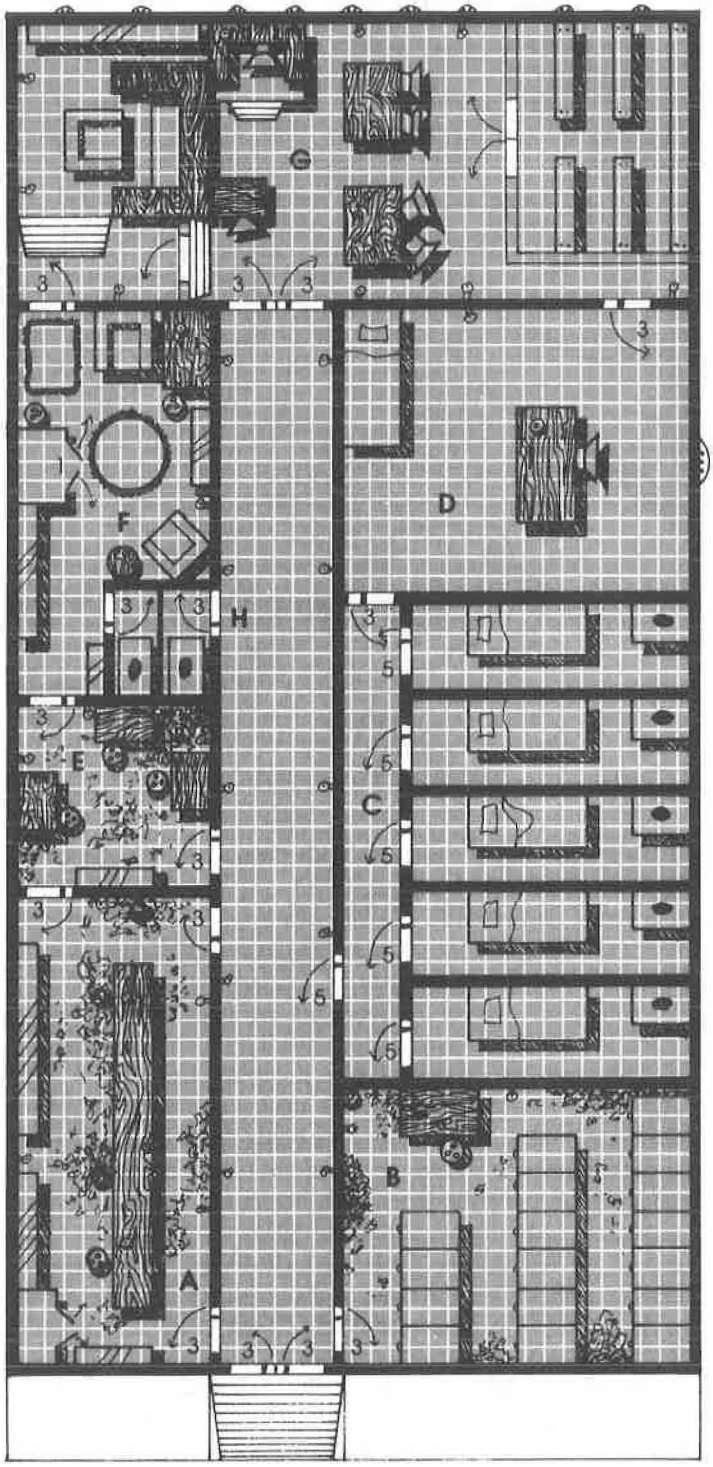
A modest stone building in the seediest part of the City, the courthouse stands apart from the wooden shanties nearby, as though unwilling to associate with them. The sentiment may be mutual, for the courthouse is an ugly soot-covered edifice that reeks unpleasantly of stale incense. The stone gargoyle perched above the entryway holds the scales of justice in its clawed hands. Long ago one of the pans broke, leaving the remaining pan out of balance, but no one has bothered to repair it (thinking its appearance suits the activities within).

The court is open from 9am to noon, and from 2 to 5 in the afternoon. Passing through the thick oak door (which is always closed and after business hours locked[3]), a client of Nightside Inferior finds a close and grimy corridor, torchlit and smelling of sweetish incense. More oaken doors line both walls, and huge double doors with glass windows loom at the end of the hall. All the doors are locked[3] after business hours here as well. (What the court lacks in justice it makes up for with security. No one, except those paid to do so, can mess with the files.)

A. Reception (10' x 25') The only open door is to the right of the entrance. Here Bandell the clerk (see Personalities) keeps a squinty eye on the door so he can nail intruders with a shrill "Can I help you?" Bandell's desk, like the whole office — like the whole building — is cluttered with legal documents, and all three of the wastebaskets overflows abundantly with crumpled evidence of errors. (A GM may wish to make the clutter in each room a running joke by stressing its universality within the court.)

B. File Room (18' x 15') This is the source of the incense smell. The clerk here is undead, and the burning censer in one corner conceals the unpleasant odor of decay. The undead attendant is Bandell's deceased brother Hugo (see Personalities).

Allen Varney is the second of our Texas based contributors, and a rare find in the gaming world. Not only can he write clearly, well and humorously, but he's intelligent and a really good sport. That counts for a great deal in this odd business.



SCALE: one square = 1 foot

Hugo shambles amid tall shelves absolutely crammed with scrolls, papers and refuse. There appears to be no order to the mess. Only Hugo knows where to retrieve a particular brief or transcript, which is an important reason behind his resurrection and continued service to the community. It's almost too dark to see in here — Hugo doesn't like light — but no one complains after they "look in on" Hugo for the first time.

C. Cells (15' x 5') Here prisoners are detained temporarily before and after trial. Each cell contains a cheap cot, sanitary facilities, and nothing else aside from dust and dirt. The walls are stone and there is no light source in a cell save for the dim illumination that comes through a small window centered in each door. The doors are thick metal banded oak and locked[5].

Prisoners are escorted to and from the cells at dawn and dusk by a detachment of of well-armed City guardsmen. When the docket is full (often), prisoners have sometimes been held for days in the "temporary" cells, awaiting the call to testify or receive sentence. Prisoners are fed three times a day by a shrewish hag who contracts with the City to feed them.

Just beneath the stone floor of the north cell a conduit runs from the privy (H) to the sewers. The conduit is big enough to hold a crawling man who has a strong stomach.

D. Bailiff's Office (18' x 15') This dingy room appears orderly only by contrast with the rest of the building. Holt Bricker is its tenant (see Personalities), and the burly bailiff wants to keep legal clutter to a minimum... especially when it involves a prisoner's rights. A table, chair, cot, and lamp fill the room. The window is barred and the doors are locked[3]. Everything in here, except the bars and the locks, is of the cheapest quality.

E. Clerk's Office (10' x 10') With its three high desks and numerous shelves almost lost in clutter, this room is the very depth of Nightside Inferior's trashiness. Ordinarily three young legal apprentices scribble away by candlelight, stooped over making fair copies of wills and contracts. The bailiff's brutality has driven two of these away and left one overworked starveling to handle all the work. This is Dilton.

F. Judge's Chambers (10' x 20') This is a luxurious room, well-appointed with fine furniture and wall hangings. But again, the room is cluttered: not with legal documents, but with so many antiques, knick-knacks, footstools, standing mirrors, inkwell stand, and upholstered chairs that it looks like an attic. Shelves line the walls, filled with scrolls and genuine law books (a rare luxury).

His Honor is a compulsive buyer... and drinker. A huge liquor cabinet to the west sags with exotic spirits. All the bottles are at least half-empty. The cabinet is locked[1]. There is nothing important or incriminating in the chambers; such material is locked[6] in a safe in His Honor's home.

G. Courtroom (35' x 15') None too spacious, none too clean, the courtroom is dominated by His Honor's great wooden bench. The magistrate enters from this chambers (F) while the bailiff calls "All Rise!" As he sits, His Honor is practically dwarfed by the tall bench, but it also conceals his occasional pull on the gin bottle hidden beneath his chair.

South of the bence is the bailiff's desk, and north is the clerk's table, where Dilton laboriously copies all proceedings in shorthand. A waist-high railing divides the court proper from the three rows of spectator seats. The seats are hardwood, uncomfortable, and decoracted with carved graffiti (most of it concerning His Honor, none of it printable).

The windows are high on the wall and barred.

PERSONALITIES

Bandell Willem *Human, Ht. 5'5", Wt. 120 #, Age: 44. Fighting Prowess: Poor.*

Bandell, the scrawny chief clerk, is also the chief taker of

— Bandell Willem —

bribes at Nightside Inferior. He distributes shares to His Honor and the bailiff, though not with good grace: his contempt for His Honor is barely concealed while his fearful respect for the bailiff is clearly evident. Everyone else is beneath notice.

The only sympathetic emotion in Bandell's character is affection for his undead brother Hugo: "Cooden bear to 'ave 'im gone," he'll say in a nasal accent. "Look at 'im now, 'e's 'appy as ever 'e was."

But more powerful than filial affection is sheer greed. Bandell will do anything for the right price, and he doesn't come cheap. If you don't pay him off, your case doesn't get heard; pay him enough and you can dictate His Honor's ruling. If his avarice weren't cruel it would be pathetic, for Bandell soon won't need money. His posture is hunched, his voice hoarse, his eyes and mouth watery. He's slowly dying of some wasting disease, and he hopes enough money can buy a cure.

Hugo Willem *Human (deceased), Ht. 5'8", Wt. 60 #, Age: n/a. Fighting Prowess: Good in unarmed combat, otherwise poor. (GM: if your system has no undead, or an undead would not reasonably fit in your City, make Hugo a wizened, untalkative human who would be dead of the Willem disease if he didn't have heaps of magic keeping him alive.)*

Bandell's brother Hugo is basically a skeleton, wrapped in skin stretched as tight as a bedsheet. His eyes, nose, and ears are gone. What's left of his flesh is magically protected against decay, yet a smell of corruption lingers about him. Bandell constantly burns incense in the file room to conceal that odor. No one but Bandell enters that room very often.

Hugo died of the Willem family wasting disease several years ago, after two decades of service in the file room. Bandell was motivated to rescue his brother partly by love and partly by pragmatism in hiring a powerful sorcerer to resurrect Hugo: Bandell wanted his brother back and the Court desperately needed a clerk who knew the filing system.

Now Hugo doesn't talk, sleep, eat or do anything but stand in the file room. He files and retrieves documents, transcripts, memoranda, and everything written down in the Court. He cares for nothing but the files, and makes no hostile move against anyone unless the files are searched or threatened. Insofar as an undead creature feels emotion, Hugo is content.

Dilton *Human, Ht. 5'7", Wt. 130 #, Age: 16. Fighting Prowess: Average.*

In Nightside Inferior, only Dilton is still both honest and vaguely normal. He's skinny, spotty, woebegone, but earnest in his desire to do a good job. He is selectively blind to any sign of corruption, and trusts His Honor and the other staff members implicitly. Dilton wants to become a lawyer and help people, just like them.

Yes, he's stupid, but he'll grow out of the stupidity with time. Unfortunately, he is irredeemably honest, so his career at Nightside Inferior is probably as limited as his outlook. But Dilton is sincere and talkative, and makes a good source of information for your players — so long as they don't imply any misconduct by his coworkers.

Holt Bricker *Human, Ht. 6'3", Wt. 220 #, Age: 38. Fighting Prowess: Very good unarmed, otherwise Good.*

Called, not surprisingly, "The Brick," Holt Bricker has seen better days in the City Guard. While he has gone slightly to fat, he remains a formidable — one might say *weighty* — opponent. Unlike most bullies, he is virtually fearless... although Hugo gives him a shiver now and then.

Big as a bathtub and bald as a snake, Bricker dresses far more poorly than he can afford. He conceals his wealth carefully, pending early retirement. His superiors think him incorruptible and polite. To those beneath him (i. e., everyone who can't fire him), he is a loud, obnoxious terror.

More than brute force, the Brick's viciousness makes him feared in the district. His hobbies are threatening powerless prisoners, intimidating those not yet imprisoned, and brutalizing Dilton. Not smart, but canny and courageous, Bricker does a fine job of keeping "Order in the Court!"

His Honor, Judge Horatio Horris *Human, Ht. 5'10", Wt. 210 #, Age: 54. Fighting Prowess: Poor.*

His Honor is seldom seen outside his chambers, except when the docket is full or the liquor cabinet is empty. The His Honor hardly presents an honorable appearance: paunchy in the stomach, pouchy in the eyes and cheeks, thin in the hair and wrinkled in the robes. He has the sad eyes of a man who started with a seemingly golden career ahead of him, and watched it tarnish.

Why would a man of ability and intelligence — and he has both in generous quantities — passively read off a purchased verdict provided by Bandell? His Honor seems too tired to care about ethics. Too tired to show his sharp, sardonic wit, except on rare occasions. Too tired to do anything but drink.

His Honor drinks to forget. He started drinking to forget his wife, but fate has unkindly provided him another reason to imbibe. His closet secret is one of lost love: a beautiful courtesan, the most desirable in the City, stole his heart — then vanished with it, mysteriously. His Honor is still

married, if the word alone means anything, but he still dreams of his gorgeous blond-haired lover and has another drink.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

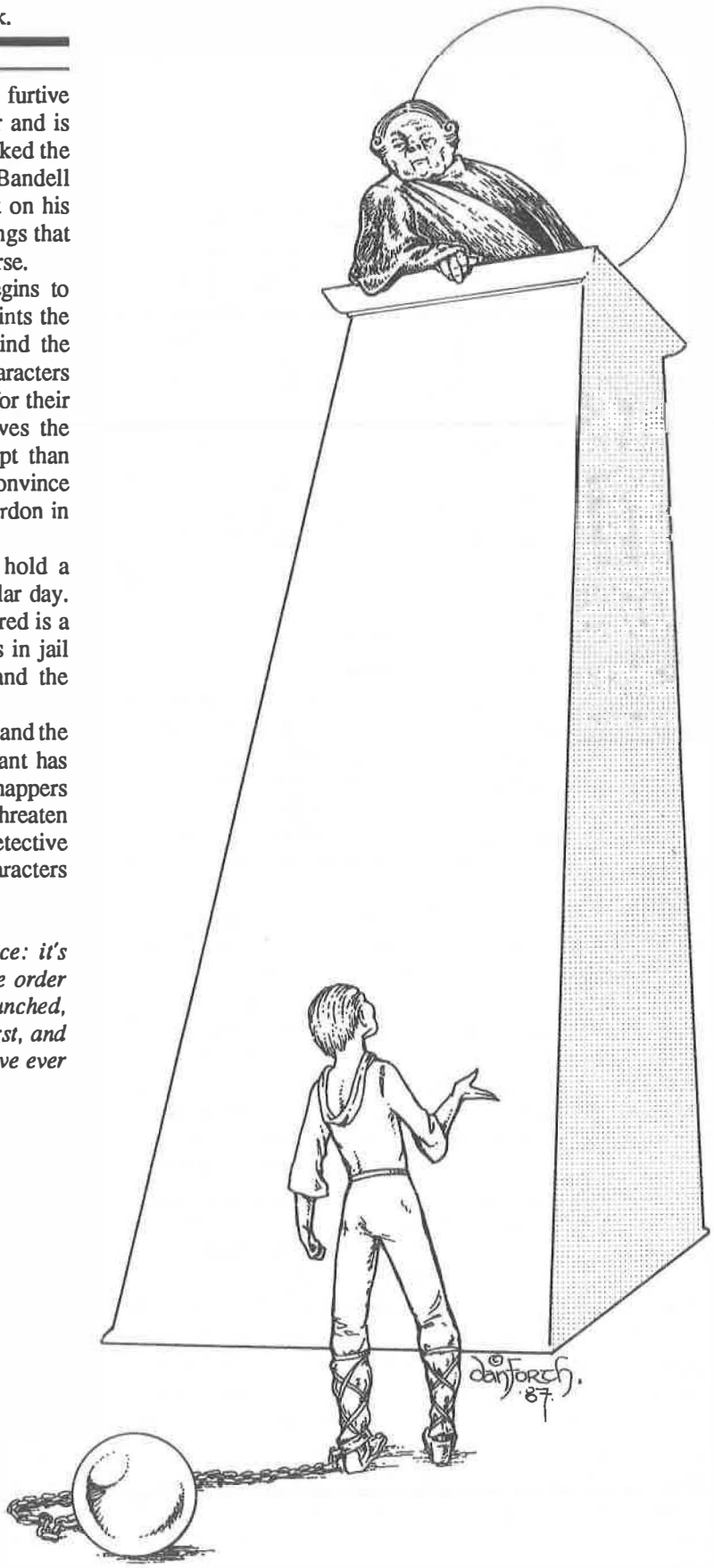
Scenario 1: A passing conman learns of Bandell's furtive search for a cure for the disease that killed his brother and is killing him from another con artist who has already bilked the court clerk out of a small fortune. The conman tells Bandell that the disease is not a disease at all, but a curse put on his family. He offers to work some spells and do some things that will put everything to rights, for a consideration, of course.

The characters become involved when Bandell begins to doubt the conman's story. The conman, in a panic, points the characters out as members of the secret society behind the curse. He hastily suggests to Bandell that if the characters could be jailed they might reverse the curse in return for their freedom. The characters will suddenly find themselves the object of a nasty manhunt and trial even more corrupt than ususal. If, after enduring Bricker's abuse, they can convince Bandell he's been had, Bandell will barter a judicial pardon in return for the conman's delivery to justice.

Scenario 2: A mysterious figure bribes Bandell to hold a well-known noble for a couple of hours on one particular day. Normally Bandell would not do this, but the bribe offered is a considerable amount of money, and a couple of hours in jail is no hardship. The whole ordeal is over quickly, and the merchant is released into the custody of his friends.

Suddenly the merchants real friends show up and demand the merchant's release. Bandell stalls, realizing the merchant has been kidnapped, and hires the characters to track the kidnappers down. The kidnappers retaliate and kidnap Dilton and threaten to kill him if the adventurers don't back off. The detective work required to track the kidnappers down will force characters to think before they act.

Nightside Inferior Court is a place of tough justice: it's tough to get justice here. Still, the court provides some order in Nightside, and a form of corruption that can't be punched, stabbed, battered or burned. It is civilization at its worst, and that can be more of a problem than most adventurers have ever



The Sewers

The world above-ground is the only world most people know. But for some — the thief on the run, the assassin in need of a hiding place, the tax collector absconding with the contents of the City treasury — the sewers provide an escape route and a place of refuge. For some souls (poor and otherwise) the sewers even provide a home.

The sewers, a network of tunnels and passageways leading from any place in the City to anyplace else, run just beneath the surface. Most ordinary folks wouldn't be caught dead there: sewers are dark and wet and dirty; there are nasty, creepy, crawly things that chitter and bite; sewers also smell bad, and anyone caught in them for even a moment stands a very good chance of ending up wet, dirty and smelling bad, too.

When they think about the sewers at all, most people just thank the gods they live in a City which has sewers — in many other places sewage simply runs in the streets.

Though most people care little about the sewers, a surprising number of the City's inhabitants don't seem to mind the dark, the damp, the dirt, the vermin or the stench. Needless to say, the dregs of the earth are most likely to be found below the ground. Curiously, though, the highest echelons of society are only slightly less likely to be found there....

LAYOUT

The sewers are vast, spreading like a stone spider's web beneath the entire city. Few underground explorers will ever come to know more than a few of the twisting, turning passageways. What is described here, then, is just a portion of the tunnel network. (If players want to explore beyond the "boundaries" on the map below, simply extend the tunnels any way you want, assuming this basic layout repeats until the tunnels open into a nearby river or the sea.)

The darkness is nearly total, the air stale, the smell nauseating. Every surface is covered by a slick, slimy coat of algae or hideous, furry mold. Watch your step! One slip and, well, no telling what's in that water! Some say alligators lurk beneath the water's surface; others think that's silly; but none deny the presence of rats, roaches and snakes — thousands upon thousands of them.

Worst of all are the sounds — the chittering, the slithering, the moans of the gods only know what — all made worse by echoes that make communication almost impossible. Light a torch then, take a deep breath, keep your eyes peeled for danger. Your're about to face the horrors of the underground.

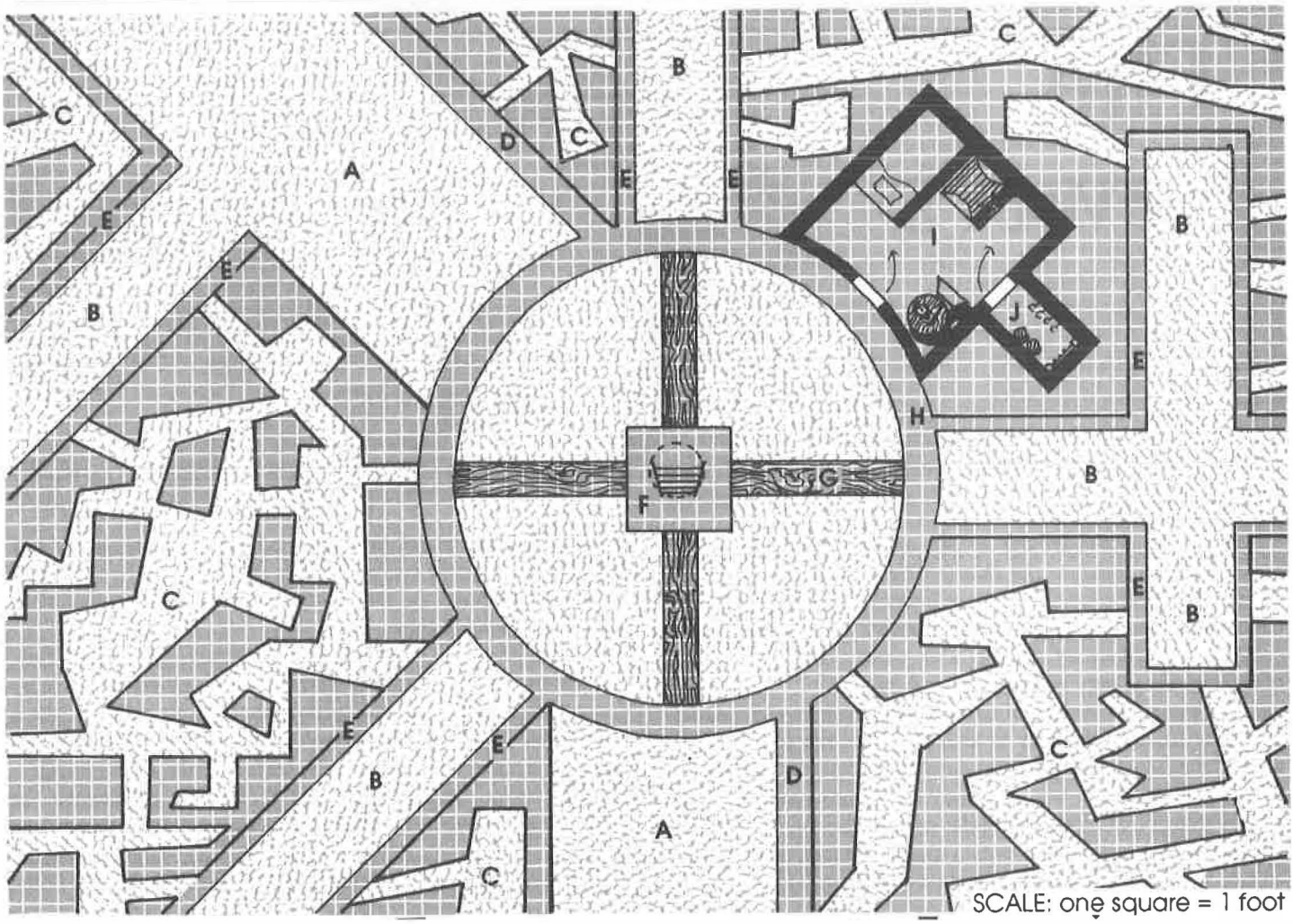
The sewer system consists of three types of tunnels: Far below street level are the large primary canals (**A**) which lead directly to the nearby river or the sea; slightly smaller secondary tunnels (**B**) below the street direct the detritus of the City to the primary canals; small tertiary tunnels (**C**) run mazelike just below the survace of every street in the City, carrying sewage to the secondary tunnels.

The tubular tertiary tunnels can be as little as a foot or as much as four feet in diameter. Children can barely squeeze through the smallest of them, while they could walk stoop-shouldered through the largest. Adults have little choice but to crawl through all tertiary tunnels. In dry weather, adventurers will find between half a foot and a foot of water flowing through these tunnels.

The secondary tunnels, seven feet in diameter, are also tubular and generally have about two feet of water flowing through them. There are slick, foot-wide walkways (**E**) halfway up on each side, leaving a five-foot-wide, one-foot deep stream flowing down the middle of the tunnel. Observant explorers may notice old metal hoops (like horseshoes), on the ceiling above the stream. It might be possible to swing from one hoop to the next, avoiding the walkway and the water. (These hoops were placed by a Fagin for the use of his child-hoods.) The juvenile felons are quite adept at swinging like baboons from one handhold to another without sloshing through the muck. A running man would be hard-pressed to keep pace with a practiced sewers swinger.

The primary canals are approximately fifteen feet in diameter with a steady flow of sewage about three feet deep in dry weather (as much as six feet during really rainy weather).

Warren Spector is another talented designer who's done his time in the game world of Texas. When offered a berth in this Citybook his immediate response was, "The sewers, it has to be the sewers." Whatever made him choose the sewers, it kept him going and helped him produce an interesting establishment out of something often taken for granted.



There is a two foot wide walkway (**D**) halfway up the east wall of each primary canal. The pervasive sewer slime makes travel difficult, however. Careful sewer explorers might be able to cling to chinks in the aging rock walls, but rapid movement and combat are pretty much out of the question here. These tunnels stretch for hundreds of yards without turning. Eventually they run into the river or the sea.

All of the tunnels have a downward slope of about 5 degrees — enough to carry sewage away, enough to make footing just a little difficult, but not enough to cause serious balance problems. This slope may be the only sensible thing about the City's sewer system.

The system was built on patronage, not common sense. Often function took a back seat to other considerations (like who paid off whom to have a tunnel running beneath whose home or place of business). Thus the primary and secondary tunnels often twist and turn and double-back on one another to guarantee the "right" people got adequate sewage facilities. It isn't uncommon for sewer explorers to spend hours trudging through muck and mire, only to find themselves back where they started.

The map above shows a representative section of the sewer system.

There are three ways to enter the sewer system. First, manholes are located in various back alleys of the City. These three-foot diameter, circular openings are covered by heavy iron manhole covers. The manhole covers are "decorated" with the identifying mark of the sewage engineer in charge of the sewer section below.

Opening the manhole over a maintenance opening, adventurers look down into a circular chamber thirty feet in diameter. A sturdy wooden ladder descends from the street level to the stone platform below (**F**). Wooden planks (**G**) radiate out like the spokes of a wheel, and provide a narrow bridge to the two-foot-wide walkway (**H**) around the outer wall.

Beneath the walkway is a pool of fetid, brackish water, which flows into the chamber from several secondary tunnels, and out through the primary canal to the south. This layout practically assures that the hubs will flood in the heavy rain — yet another example of the lack of thought which went into the construction of this particular sewer system.

A door on the northeast wall of the hub leads to a 10' x 10' apartment (**I**). The apartment is sparsely furnished — just a bed, a table, a chest for personal belongings, a couple of chairs, and a water bucket. Sewer engineers don't usually live underground, but during particularly rainy periods they're expected to stay down there as long as necessary. An apartment comes in handy. A door in the south wall of the apartment leads to a 3' x 6' storage closet (**J**), in which holds the engineer's equipment (pickaxe, shovel, lamps, buckets, etc.).

Several such "sewer hubs" exist under the City. Most are the domain of a sewage engineer like Baldo Brick (see Personalities), but players who spend any time exploring the sewers may come upon a hub that has been "closed for repairs" for the longest time.

The second way to enter the sewers is the most dangerous and, certainly, the most offensive. It is possible for a small child or individual to enter the sewers through the privy in most of the buildings. The openings can be small, but where the tertiary tunnels were brought in to connect with an old muck-pit they might be larger. The main problem with these pipes is that they can be a claustrophobia-sufferer's nightmare — a tiny hole leading to a pipe, tucked away in a dark corner and leading into further tight darkness. The opening itself might have a secure grate, or might just be open, but, in any case, it will be unsanitary in the extreme.

The third way to enter the sewers is through one of the slit openings cut into most of the City's streets. The streets are slightly graded so slop, rainwater and whatever else people want to get rid of runs off to the outer edges and into the slits. Slits are located on both sides of the street every hundred yards or so, are often found at corners, and run into both secondary and tertiary tunnels.

These openings have no protective grating, and the engineers are often called upon to clear debris, dead animals and other large objects from them. There are no gratings because the City fathers mistakenly hoped the small size of the openings (three feet long by nine inches deep) would prevent people from jumping in for a quick swim. Someday an enterprising politician will install grates to prevent sewer clogging and unauthorized use of the tunnels. Gratings won't last long in Nightside.

For now, at least, those so inclined can crawl, with some difficulty, into a slit opening. For a child, entrance to the sewers by this route is, well, child's play. (Of course, such an entrance practically assures a belly flop into the filthy sewer water, but that's the risk you run!)

Although the sewers do run beneath the City the same way the Beggars' Underrealm does, the two systems do not intermix. In general the sewer lines run above the Underrealm and the beggars used their influence with certain people to alter the sewer's course in the few areas it did conflict with their excavations. All the new construction the beggars have done has taken them deeper, so conflicts with the sewers do not arise. An enterprising character, if he could locate a point where the warrens and the sewers are near each other, could possibly use the sewer water to flood portions of the warrens, but the beggars have guarded against this avenue of attack so it would only partially succeed in flooding them out, yet would be entirely successful in earning the beggars' ire.

PERSONALITIES

"Oozer" Perebedzhik *Human, Ht. 6'8", Wt. 200#, Age: 27. Fighting Prowess: Excellent barehanded.*

Oozer is the King of the Rats, and with his hairy body, razor-sharp teeth, clawlike hands, and long, jagged fingernails, he looks the part. He wears no clothes, but twenty years in the sewers have left him with a coat of dirt and an odor that is quite overpowering and hides all vestiges of his humanity.

As a child Oozer was quite ugly and, to all appearances, quite stupid. When he was six his parents turned him out of their home. For a year he begged and stole what he needed, but one day, suffering from a cold that should have killed him, he rolled into the sewers and found a new home.

In his fever-induced delirium he thought he heard voices — high-pitched, chittering, hissing voices. The alligators (if you decide they exist), rats, snakes, and insects of the underworld reached out to him and made him one of their own. He found companionship among the lower forms of life.

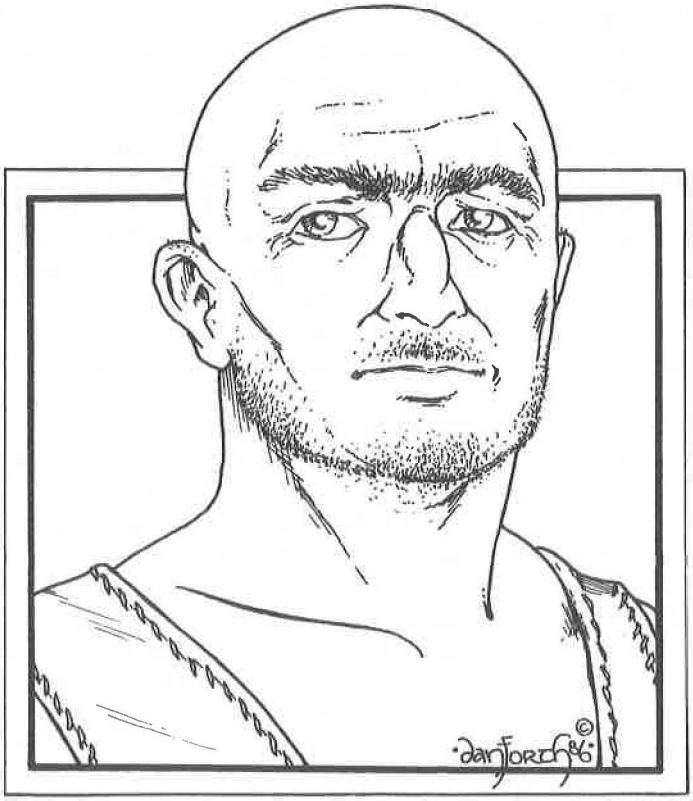
They told Oozer of his destiny — to lead an army of furred, scaled and chitinous creatures against the men who ruled the surface world. But the day of conquest hadn't yet arrived, they said; wait patiently and one day we will rule. Oozer waits.

If Oozer wants to find you in the sewers, you'll be found. If he doesn't want you to see him, you won't. He's so elusive many in the City don't believe he exists. They think he's a fairy tale, and mothers scare their children with tales of the strange shambler who lives in the darkness below. The superstitious blame any unsolved murder in Nightside (and there are plenty) on him. Sometimes they're even right.

Baldo Brick *Human Ht. 5'10", Wt. 165#, Age: 43. Fighting Prowess: Fair barehanded, Good with pickax.*

Baldo is the perfect sewage engineer. He doesn't ask for much: just a sewer to clean and a little respect. Give him those and he'll happily stay out of your way, or get in it, whichever you prefer.

He loves the ladies, can't understand why they don't want anything to do with him, and will (not <u>may</u>, but <u>will</u>) fall under the influence of any woman who shows up in the sewers



— Baldo Brick —

and shows the least interest in him ("Hey, you, yeah you, what are you doing down here, buster?" is the siren song of love to him). Needless to say, Baldo doesn't have much of a social life. The sewers are his life, and they're a good chance he'll be puttering around down there at any time the players show up (or down as the case might be).

Unlike most other sewer engineers, Baldo *does* live in his underground apartment. His room and storage closet are tidy and clean — a place for everything, and everything in its place. His hub is spotless and Baldo won't take kindly to interlopers who dirty it up. He's quite particular about that.

Baldo's hub is his castle, but he is almost as attached to the section of the sewers immediately adjacent to the hub: it always runs free and clear, with nary a stopped-up opening or gummed-up tunnel. If it does get clogged, he'll find out who clogged it up and take them to task for it, though a fruitless search will leave him blaming the first people he sees (probably the characters).

Baldo isn't a bad guy; he's just not very bright, and he's awfully tired of people making fun of him about his job (and his odor). If the players compliment him on the condition of the sewers he might let them stick around, and might even help them out if they need assistance or a tour guide. If they ignore or, worse, insult him, they'll find out he's quite handy with that pickax....

Budo Pumbular *Human, Ht. 5'6", Wt. 190#, Age: 49. Fighting Prowess: Poor.*

Budo is a wealthy merchant who deals in anything and everything. To all appearances he's a fat, pompous, cowardly fool. He married young and loves his wife dearly, but she can be so frightfully dull, and she has such expensive tastes. A lowly merchant couldn't hope to afford the extravagances that make life bearable for Mrs. Pumbular.

To sate his wife's desires, Budo became a crook. He loved the thrill of it and despite his apparent innocence, he found he had a knack for dealing with the lowlifes of Nightside. They were so easy to bribe and intimidate. He started by hiring a deadly killer — Falvo DePortago — to fight for him on those rare occasions when his silver tongue let him down. Budo's persuasive abilities and Falvo's strong right arm made a formidable combination and Budo rapidly became one of the shadow figures who rules Nightside.

His wife and friends never suspected a thing, and Budo made plans to keep it that way. He realized early on that his much beloved wife would leave him in an instant if his secret life was exposed. And his friends, why, they'd have him up before a judge...a judge he couldn't buy. This makes Budo a perfect target for blackmail, and he lives in fear of just that.

No, a man of Budo's station could not be seen on his nocturnal visits to collect from his agents in Nightside. To avoid discovery, Budo took to the sewers, travelling from his uppercrust neighborhood to the slums in total secrecy.

Budo can be quite a valuable person to know. Need to find a fence? Budo can find one. Need to bribe a guardsman? Budo can tell you how much, who it will buy and where to deliver it. Need a hiding place until the City cools off? Budo's your man for the best in covert accomodations. Pay him and keep out of his way. Budo's a swell guy if you're a friend, but cross him and he's a vengeful enemy.

Falvo DePortago *Human, Ht. 6'0", Wt. 200#, Age: 33. Fighting Prowess: Good barehanded, Excellent with a knife or shortsword.*

Flavo is Budo's right-hand man. His primary responsibility is to keep Budo safe from harm, but he's also in charge of Budo's ragtag (but highly effective) gang of bandits and lowlifes. If necessary, Flavo can, at a moment's notice, call up a dozen of the dirtiest fightergs in Nightside, all loyal to Budo and his gold.

Flavo is one of the finest knife and sword fighters in the City and he's almost as deadly with his bare hands. He stands six feet tall and weighs 200 pounds — all of it muscle. If he had any brains he'd be as big a shot as Budo. As it is, he does whatever Budo tells him to do, without hesitation. If Budo isn't around to give orders, Falvo generally takes the most violent course of action.

Falvo has a weakness for just about everything it's possible to have a weakness for — wine, women, a dare — everything cxccpt money. He's utterly immune to bribes. They insult him. And when he feels he's been insulted, he gets angry. When he gets angry, someone dies.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

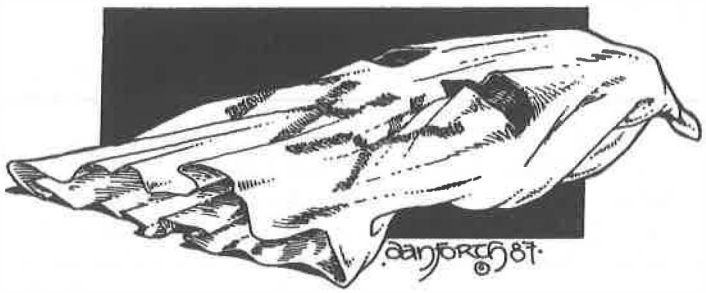
Scenario 1: Oozer's spent lots of time alone in the sewers and his friends have told him he needs a *bride* before the time will come for him to rule the earth. Oozer broods over this for a while, then decides to secure himself a wife. Oozer immediately starts looking for a bona-fide bride, and happens to choose the Lord Mayor's daughter as she's being married that very day, and he sees the vast parade in her honor. Oozer crashes the reception and carries her off to his domain.

The characters, as guests at the wedding, or folks known for their bravery and willingness to enter dark holes in the ground, are called upon to rescue the girl. If the characters are guests, and attired appropriately the need for a quick response can send them into the sewers without all the tools of their trade, which makes them rely on themselves instead of all the magic trash they've acquired over the years.

Scenario 2: Certain individuals (read Big Fish Gang) are not pleased with Budo's inroads into their operations. They hire the characters to scour the sewers looking for the mysterious crime boss who uses them. They want him and his identity, and the search is on. The only difficulty is that the night of the search is graced with a nasty storm that floods the sewers and washes everyone into an area Oozer has claimed as his own! This can be a very spooky and terrifying scenario run for laughs or for chills.

The sewers are often taken for granted, but really can provide lots of play. Not only are they a way to pass unnoticed around the City, but they are where items accidently lost in a john end up. Who knows what will fall into them, or be washed through by a flash flood in the mountains? One thing is certain, though, even the bravest adventurer will have second thoughts about a journey in that dark, dank realm.

The Well of Justice



When injustice rears its ugly head, the Sackers cover theirs... *An old City proverb*

On a well-traveled street of the City there is an old, dried-up well surrounded by a 4' wall of sturdy stone. A heavy wooden structure supports a rope drum and hand-crank. The rope is in excellent condition and the bucket is still attached. The word "Justice" is scrawled on either side of the drum housing. Beside it sits a large table with assorted items on it. A sign on the table reads, "Put contributions in the well."

This, though modest it may be, is the Well of Justice, and the only place one may contact the Sackers.

COMMON HISTORY

The first Sacker tale any visitor would hear is the commonly-held origin story. Most say the owner of a small stone-working shop, Niss Lapidate, formed the Sackers after a series of robberies and the murder of his only son. He contacted five people he trusted and all agreed to join his cause. They agreed to become vigilantes to punish those the City guard could not, or *would not*, deal with. And each man was to wear a common flour sack over his head to hide his identity.

At this point in the story, if any other citizens are within earshot, an argument will probably erupt over the reasons behind the sacks. Many folks point to the sack as the easist thing for a man of any means to obtain, and it provides a common symbol for the common man. Others hint at more sinister reasons, or that one of the original members was a miller who stood to make a profit from sack sales, but everyone agrees the sacks do hide the Sacker's identity, and keep the membership a secret. In fact most people believe not even another Sacker knows the identity of his comrades, which makes it impossible for him to reveal them even under torture!

Of course, the storyteller would add, the leader knew who everyone was, but not for long.

The group had only been in operation for a few months when a criminal faction (some blame the Big Fish Gang, but others say the incident took place before Danny's rise to power) somehow found out that Lapidate was the Sacker leader. Late one evening when the Sackers were on a job distant from Lapidate's shop and home, several figures, wearing jet black hoods in a parody of the Sackers' headgear, hauled him out of his home. They brought him into the street near what is presently known as the Well of Justice and started to work on him. His abductors tried to torture a public confession from him and to extricate the names of other Sackers.

Lapidate died before he admitted leading the Sackers or surrendered a single name. The storyteller will be quick to point out that Lapidate died with a curse on his lips. For the failure of the locals to help "someone who helped them," Lapidate swore only justice would flow from the well from that day forward.

The well dried out the very next day.

Dissenters will say Lapidate did admit to being the leader, although not directly. They swear he also said, "The Five will never die!" This tale backs the belief the current leadership of the Sackers are called The Five, but that's a claim that's only sprung up since Lapidate's death. Because of the curse, many locals believe the Five are immortal, but sensible folks say that's just a way to frighten children away from a life of crime.

Regardless of the stories, it is well known that the Sackers are active today, and that they use the Well as some sort of base of operations. Anybody in the area will tell you the same thing: If you have a problem, or you've been wronged, go to the Well. While the Sackers have and will go out on their own to mete out justice when they hear of a need, the most common way to get them involved is to explain the problem at the Well. Most folks suggest writing the problem down and tossing the note into the Well but, if the injured party cannot write, speaking the problem into the Well seems to work.

The problem needs to be described in detail, citing both circumstance and names of those involved. Some locals whisper that a "contribution" thrown into the Well, or set in the bucket, will improve the chances of the Sackers acting, though others warn the Sackers might see this as an attempt to buy justice. There is one drawback with bringing a problem to the Well: if the "victim" has lied or misrepresented the problem, the Sackers will come down on the victim — usually harder than they have on the "criminal." Most folks don't speak of this Sacker aspect, probably because they don't know about it, but stories about the Sackers punishing a liar or conman are not unheard of in the City.

Punishment is not always death. The sentence depends upon the judgement of the Sackers, and they do a great deal of investigation before they move. Often the Sackers merely return in kind, if in greater quantity, what the victim got from his tormentor. At other times all the criminal's possessions are

Mark O'Green's Well of Justice is characteristic of his unusual solutions to what might be stock situastions. As his contributions to the Traps books have pointed out, Mark is very creative, and when he runs an adventure, players know only one thing: nothing is as it seems.

confiscated and, in general, most folks find the punishment fits the "criminal," if not the specific crime that brought him to the Sackers' attention.

Booty taken from a criminal shows up on the "Honor Table" beside the Well, less items returned to their original owners or given to the victim as restitution. The items are laid out in plain sight and anyone who wants an item may take it. The person is then expected to make a fair payment, though generally well below market value, for the item by throwing the money down the Well. Since few people would want the Sackers to think of them as thieves, rare is the item taken without a fair payment. Merchants frequently purchase items for resale, but they are very careful to pay more than anyone else for the things they take.

No one is very clear on how many Sackers there are. They have been reported in groups from 1 to 100, though seldom are more than a dozen seen at any one place at the same time. Estimates of Sacker membership vary from a conservative fifteen all the way up to several hundred. Generally it's considered an honor to be a Sacker — even if you can't admit to it. Occasionally — usually late at night in a tavern — sommon may brag about "brown-bagging it," a thinly disguised reference to being a Sacker, but most folks figure if you brag about being a Sacker, you aren't one.

Sinister rumors of a Sacker who has no eye-holes in his sack abound. Some say it's a scare tactic by the Sackers — a magic trick — or a wizard, but others shiver and suggest it's Lapidate come back from the dead to get his killers.

The group does have many detractors — obviously those involved in crime — but others object to the idea of an unaffiliated group setting itself up as judge and jury. They call the gang nothing but a clever gang of thieves, and point to the booty on the Honor Table as brazen proof of the gang's activities. The Sackers' opponents call them by a number of different derogatory names including the following: "Mealies," "Bag-heads," "Cornies," "Wheaties," and "Spud Uglies."

THE TRUE SACKER SECRET ORGANIZATION

Lapidate's death was a "set-up", but only he and the Five, who acted as his "murderers," know this. Lapidate had just finished construction of a safe headquarters with the help of the witch Eva Seption. Since his death, Lapidate has only gone by the name of "Justice," rarely travels in public, and always wears a sack when he does. He makes all the final decisions in all matters, but leaves it to the Five to reveal his judgements to the public.

In a sense the public stories about the Five and their immortality are correct. They are like the hydra of legend: when one dies, another two come to the fore. This is due to the cell structure of the organization. A cell is comprised of a leader and two followers, so when a leader is killed, his two followers move up a rank in the organization.

The five original members that Lapidate had recruited each went out and recruited two members who reported to them alone. Each new member was told to do the same, but was warned to take enough time to make sure his selection was a good and safe one. As their leader had done with them, the new members contacted their recruits while wearing sacks to keep their identities safe from their underlings. The initial contacts are always made in private and, if disturbed, the Sacker will immediately pretend to be questioning his recruit for information or evidence about a crime.

Curiously there is no onus attached to rejecting an invitation to join. Candidates are selected for their honesty, so their character is not called into question by their refusal to join. Most often it is supposed that the recruit might already be a Sacker. If a recruit accepts he chooses a codename (like Rapier, Hawk or Mealworm) and learns his leader's codename.

If a cell's leader is slain, the members, after a scheduled meeting and the back-up meeting are missed, report to the Well of Justice for reassignment. The members whisper the code name of their leader and they are given a time and place for a meeting. Justice will then reach another Sacker and assign the members to him. It is possible, but not very common, to split a cell so the two followers are assigned to different leaders. This usually only happens after a particularly bloody mission where several cells have been damaged, or if the followers lead a fairly large section of Sackers themselves.

If the followers reported to one of the Five, they are reassigned to report to Justice himself. This is the reason the "Five" currently consists of seven members. Two of the original Five have died, and Justice decided it would be confusing to someone trying to infiltrate the group if there were actually more than five in the fabled Five. In addition, the four men who were elevated by this move are good organizers and have created strong arms of the group. Even so, Justice has not seen fit to reveal his true identity to them.

In addition to codenames, each cell works out a series of passwords, secret signals, handshakes and other security rituals that are changed with some frequency. One of the problems with being "everyman's justice" by wearing common items like a flour bag is that it's easy for an outsider to masquerade as a Sacker. The signs and counter-signs prevent this, and anyone caught pretending to be a Sacker — or worse, stealing while on a mission — faces a mandatory death sentence.

If a Sacker spends most of his time around people, his leader will arrange a signal, like a brown cloth tied to a post across the street, that alerts the Sacker that he's needed. In addition, most Sackers know of secret hiding places scattered around the City where they can hide or retrieve notes and other information. On the very rare occasion where a Sacker has been identified, and a felon is looking for retribution, the organization can hide the Sacker and keep him out of trouble. Generally the organization's reputation is enough to keep members inviolate, but every so often a problem arises .

Sackers are very proud of who they are and are not afraid to be seen by day with their hoods on. While not a frequent occurrence (the Sackers prefer to do their work at night), it can be very effective for one or more of them to go to someone during the day. Many deliveries of retribution payments are made this way to show the public the Sackers are still around. All Sackers are instructed to wear non-descript clothing and remove any remarkable items that could identify them. In other words, if a Sacker wears an ornate ring in his everyday life, he will not wear it while "under the hood."

When Justice decides to send Sackers on a job, he will

contact the member or members of the Five needed to run the operation and give them their instructions. He always sends more individuals than needed for the mission because Sackers are not fighters. The Sackers' strength is superior numbers.

Justice is very concerned with public perceptions of the Sackers. He knows public support is half the battle. To maintain respect to make criminals fear the Sackers, he will frequently hire excellent or clever fighters to undertake jobs. Only those he feels will keep their hiring secret are contacted by a note, one of the Five, or by Justice himself. The pay is good and comes out of the money from the honor table.

Since a good number of the Sackers are only shopkeepers and the like, and have no particular combat skills, Justice's use of superior warriors helps the "mystique" of the group. A criminal is never shure of the abilities of an approaching Sacker. Justice uses the hired Sackers as publicly as possible to instill the idea that all Sackers are excellent fighters.

LAYOUT

A. Honor Table (8' x 4') This is where the items taken from a criminal are sold to raise money for the Sackers. There is a sign on the table that says "Put contributions in well."

B. Well (10' diameter x 30' deep) This is the empty well where victims of crimes are to tell their problems to the Sackers. This housing for the rope drum and crank is made of heavy wood and is in good condition as is the rope and bucket attached. The stone wall surrounding the top of the well is 4' high. There are knots in the rope to help the Sackers climb down to the Listening Post.

Above the Listening Post is a small stone grating. This is where the smoke from cooking and torches in Justice's living area exits. Since there are torches and lamps on in the living quarters almost all the time, there is almost always a thin whisp of smoke curling up the inner wall of well and dissipating at the top. It lends a certain eerie quality to the well, expecially in light of Lapidate's curse.

C. Listening Post (6' x 4') This is where a Sacker will sit and wait for word of a crime from a victim. It is also the place they contact and receive instructions from Justice. The acoustics of the well are very good and someone talking into the well can be heard easily.

The room is located 5' above the bottom of the well. A small ledge only 6 inches wide provides a foothold for climbing over the bottom protective wall in the Listening Post. A thick wooden barrier attached to the ceiling can be swung down to lock into place just above the lower stone wall. The barrier provides protection for the Sacker on duty.

There is a comfortable chair and a small table with writing equipment and a lamp.

The back wall has a slot in it to allow conversations and note-passing between the Sackers and Justice. The wall itself is nearly a foot thick. For passing larger items, like food or booty from a mission, a larger section, one foot square, can be removed from Justice's side in the Message Alcove. (The stone block is tapered to be smaller on the Listening Post side.)

There is a definite, detectable aura of magic here. It comes from the fact that Justice used his magic ability to shape the stones here and also because Eva Seption put an aura here to make magic-sensistive types believe there is a magic trap.

D. Message Alcove (6' x 6') This is where Justice or — rarely — Eva will sit to listen to reports or pass messages to the Sackers. Anything larger can be passed through the removable block which can be unlocked and slid out from this side. The small cot is used for sleeping or sitting and the small table has a lamp and writing material for filling out reports. The wall opposite the communications wall has a door leading into the tunnel.

E. Tunnel (50' x 6') Simply a very smooth tunnel for extra defense in case someone tries to break in from the well. The door leading to the Message Alcove can be easily braced with a sliding wooden bar. (It is possible to be trapped in the Message Alcove. Both Justice and Eva Seption have the means to escape given time.)

There is a lever at the far end (near the living quarters) that, if pulled, will collapse the tunnel. Because the trigger mechanism has been put in the stonework by the highly skilled Lapidate, it is nearly impossible to find.

With the doors slightly ajar at either end of the tunnel it is fairly easy to hear voices calling from the Listening Alcove.

The quarters for Justice and, sometimes, Eva Spetion are generally cool. The stonework is all amazingly smooth. The ceilings, with one exception, are domed to help support the weight and have stone columns at frequent invervals. All smoke from torches, braziers, or the stove is ducted through an area running over the tunnel to the well area. The air draws mainly from Eva Spetion's house. Small, beautifully-worked stone scuptures are scattered throughout the quarters.

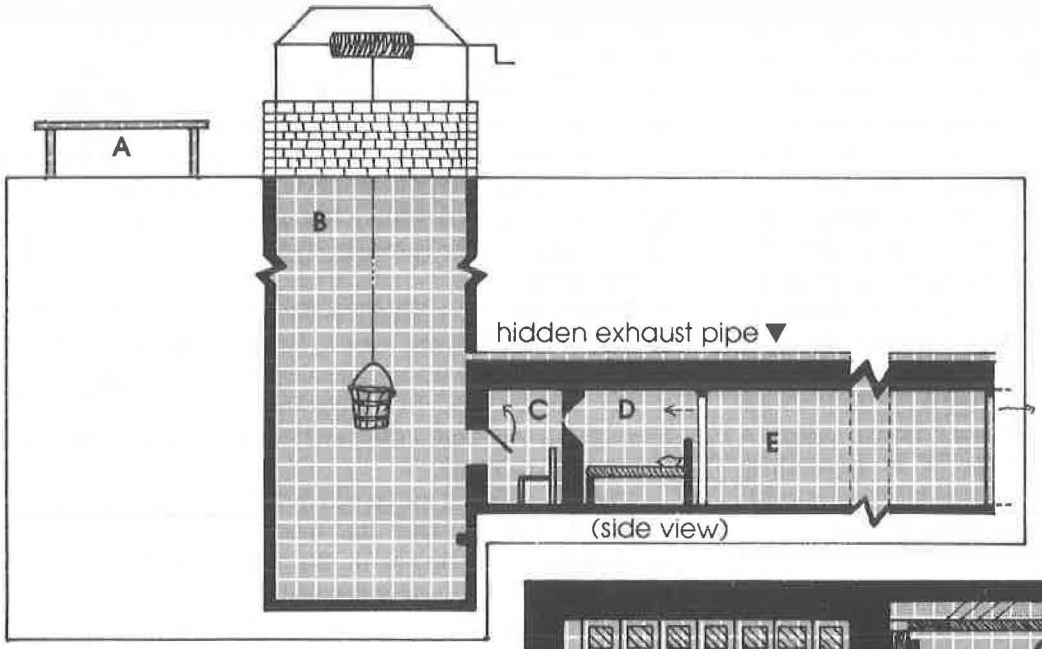
F. Hallway (40' x 4') This hallway runs the length of the living quarters connecting all rooms. Like all ceilings in this area, this one is higher in the middle and curves down to the support of the walls. Across from Eva's room is an excavation site where Justice is expanding the area where Eva does her magic experiments.

At the end near Eva's room, there is a stone door leading to the sewers. It is cleverly balanced and can only be opened from this side. It will close itself unless braced open. (It can be forced from the other side but only by someone or something with unbelievable strength.)

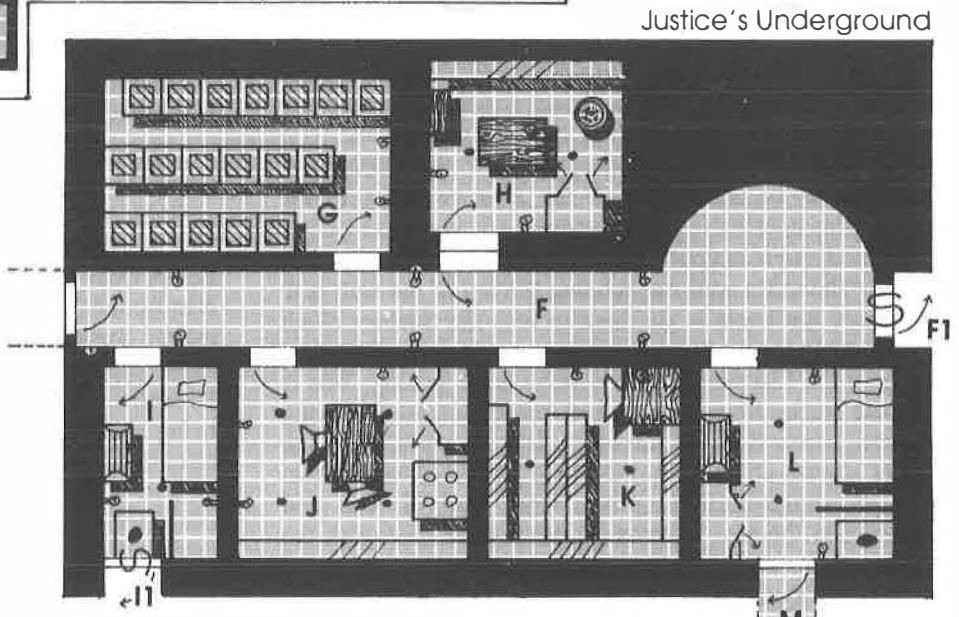
F1. Sewer Tunnels This tunnel can be any length and lead to any section of the sewers you wish. The door to the sewer was made with the magical stone shaping skills of Lapidate. Both the door and the latch are nearly impossible to find since they are blended into the stone so well.

G. Sacker Records Area (15' x 9') This is where Justice works. He records as much information as possible using a fairly simple code that both he and Eva understand. There are not only lists of the members of the Sackers, drawings of the organizational structure and records of cases, but also bits of information picked up about people that may help in making a judgement in a later case. The information is filed in wooden crates stacked around the room. There is a large table and a chair for Justice to work at.

There are stone supports throughout the room. The ceiling is unlike any of the others in the living quarter area. Instead of being curved or domed, it is flat. This is because it can be



SCALE: one square = 1 foot



collapsed like the tunnel to the Message Alcove. The trigger is on the wall under a torch holder next to the hallway and Eva's experiment room.

H. Magic Work Chamber (10' x 9') This is the area used by Eva for her dabbling in different forms of magic. At two feet thick, the walls are twice normal width. Various magical equipment can be found here depending mainly on what Eva is researching at any particular time.

I. Justice's (Niss Lapidate) Room (6' x 10') This small room contains only a cot, a chest for clothing, and a privy. In the privy there is a secret door opening to the tunnel back to Lapidate's old stonework shop. The tunnel has not been used for some time.

I1. Tunnel This tunnel leads to the old shop which Lapidate no longer owns. Choose any small shop from other Citybook establishment or make up your own new owner. The secret door in the shop will be blocked by a stone statue called "The Weeping Man" made by Lapidate. Because of the exquisite workmanship and weight, the statue has not been moved.

J. Kitchen (12' x 10') This is simply a kitchen with a small pantry and place to eat. The stove provides most of the heat and the smoke goes out through a pipe into the well.

K. Library (10' x 10') This is a veritable treasure trove of books dealing with all types of magic. Not only is all information picked up by the Sackers taken here, but Eva has accumulated a great deal of scrolls, parchments, and books. There is a small table to spread things on and a reading chair.

L. Eva Seption's Room (10' x 10') A reasonably comfortable room, one only used when Eva is too tired from

research to go back to her place. The door in the tunnel can be locked on this side. If it is, Eva knows there is a problem and will use other means to investigate. Included here is a privy.

M. Tunnel This tunnel leads to a secret opening under the stone of Eva Seption's kitchen.

Eva Seption's Home: Eva's home is a small and nextled in with other buildings. A rear entrance opens onto an alley. The curtains are always drawn and the shutters usually closed. There is a small, light blue circle drawn over the door.

N. Kitchen (10' x 8') The only major feature of the small kitchen is the stove that covers the tunnel. Cleverly made by Lapidate, it is easy to slide to the side then the latch, hidden beneath the firebox, is pulled. The stove and stone slab will block the back door when open.

O. Eva's Room (10' x 8') This is a simply appointed room with its own privy. Eva keeps all items of note down in her room underground.

P. Parlor (8' x 8') Customers use this entry area and sitting room to wait while Eva prepares for fortune telling. The furnishings are not new, but not so seriously ragged to put customers off. In general customers feel at home here.

Q. Seeing Room (8' x 8') This is where Eva reads futures. Her favorite method is to use a large crystal basin with clean water in it, but she will use other paraphenalia if the customer so wishes. Tarot cards and the like can be found in the room.

PERSONALITIES

Justice (Niss Lapidate) *Human, Ht. 5'8", Wt. 185#, Age: 51. Fighting Prowess: Average in general, Fair with a dagger. Magic Ability: Average, C6.*

Justice, formerly known as Niss Lapidate, is the founder and leader of the Sackers. Dark haired and dark eyed, Justice has spent many years out of the sun and is pale to the point of looking dead — which most people think he is anyway. The time spent as head of the Sackers has taken its toll, especially having to abandon his two daughters after his 'death' to insure their safety. He looks physically soft and far older than he is.

Mentally he lurks somewhere in the region between extreme caution and outright paranoia. The image of the Sackers is a constant concern to him and he fears making mistakes. He also fears crime getting completely out of control but at the same time doesn't want to get any of his Sackers killed. The Sackers have taken the place of the son he lost in a crime long ago.

His only magic ability used to be the basis for his work — he can shape stone with his hands. It takes time and effort, but he can make everything from intricate sculptures to large, smooth tunnels. He used this ability to build the entire underground area and block off the water to the well. Occasionally, he will still make sculptures, some of them extraordinarily beautiful, others wracked and twisted.

Justice's greatest strength is his vast experience with the Sackers. He's learned from early mistakes, and his policy of sending professionals and/or an abundance of Sackers to get a job done has made defeat something seldom visited upon the Sackers. Still he cautions the Five to remind everyone that Sackers are not invincible. Justice is capable and cunning; his tactical plans seldom have flaws and often have redundancy

— Justice —

built into them that insures success.

Eva Seption *Human, Ht. 5', Wt. 115#, Age: 46. Fighting Prowess: Poor. Magic Ability: Good, C1-8.*

Eva is very inconspicuous, partly from being short and partly by choice. She dresses drably and talks to few.

A witch and dabbler in all magical arts, she makes her living through fortune telling. During one session with a client she saw Niss Lapidate as the Sacker leader, and she offered her services to her neighbor to help in his crusade. He gratefully accepted her aid and built her the underground area where she could experiment freely in the arts.

Anything remotely associated with magic or information about magic will be held out of the Sacker booty and given to her to examine. She is sort of a Jack-of-all-trades witch, able to do at least something in every area of magic, though her specialty is clairvoyance. The ability to see future possibilities has meant a lot to the Sackers.

Occasionally, she will go out with the Sackers to lend a magical hand. While preparing to go out for the first time she put the bag on incorrectly and discovered an unusual ability: thus 'blinded' she can sense the surrounding area much better than by sight. She can tell who is in the general area around her and even some things about that person. Now she goes out with a sack with no holes and will directly speak only to the mind of the member of the Five in charge of the mission.

Working with Justice has colored Eva's attitude toward her customers. When she 'sees' the person's future and it involves a criminal activity, she reacts appropriately. If the person appears to be a victim she will warn them about their danger, and often alert the Sackers about the crime that might happen. For individuals, basically good individuals, who are flirting

with crime, Eva will predict dire consequences for any illegal activities, and generally scares honest folks back onto the straight and narrow. If a customer reveals a sinister side, or repeatedly is involved in crimes, Eva will predict death, or ask for more details so she can be more specific. She might well promise great success but, at the same time, warn the Sackers and destroy whatever evil plot her customer has in mind.

— Eva Seption —

Ali Lapidate *Human, Ht. 5'6", Wt. 110#, Age: 21. Fighting Prowess: Very Good with dagger, crossbow or poison, Good with all else.*

Ali Lapidate inherited her father's dark hair and eyes, and her mother's handsome features. Her father's murder shattered her and, unlike her older sister, she fled from the friends and relatives who tried to take her in. Still fairly young, several of the Steel Man's agents spotted her and brought her in with promises of helping her find the men who murdered her father. With that goal uppermost in her mind, she applied herself diligently to her studies and, as Salome once murmured, "She's good enough to have Valora's blood in her."

Ali is one of the assassins Salome considers loyal to her, and she is correct in one respect. Because Ali wants nothing more than to slay those who killed her father, she works with the assassins so they can continue to work at piercing the veil around the identities of Niss' murders. The lack of information about her father's death does disturb her, though she has never even considered the truth for a moment. She assumes, in a mirrored reflection of her father's paranoia, that the killers formed a hideous and secret cabal to do their deed, and one day she will solve the mystery. If someone pointed out to her that the Sackers never nailed anyone for the crime, she might begin to unravel the mystery and learn the truth.

Ali plans to leave the assassins once she avenges her father. She really wants out of the assassin life, because the wholesale murder she must engage in repulses her. But, to her, her murders are not really murders because they are something she must do before she can avenge her father, hence the ends justify the means. In addition she has consoled herself with the idea that those she has already killed might well have been in on her father's murder, or may have known about it, etc.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

Scenario 1: Justice decides to engineer the biggest operation of Sacker history. Acknowledging his appearance has changed so no one will recognize him, he sets himself up as the leader of the men who murdered Niss Lapidate. He quickly spreads the word that the Sackers are afraid of him, and he'll offer more for stolen items that any of the Big Fish fences. In short he sets up a vast sting operation designed to get evidence against the small hoods, and provoke a response by the Big Fish Gang that will weaken them.

Justice hires a number of the characters to act as his bodyguards, but he never lets them know Justice and the man they are guarding are one in the same. Other characters might become involved in the crime end of the operation, and will quickly find a number of Sackers ready to convince them of the error of their ways. All crooks caught through this operation will be turned against the Big Fish to put more pressure upon him. Things will heat up in Nightside.

The biggest hitch in this whole plan is one Lapidate cannot foresee, and Eva might not know how to interpret. Niss Lapidate's daughter Ali decides she's found the person who slew her father, and she moves to exact her revenge! Between open gang warfare and a well trained assassin, there should be more than enough excitement for any group to handle.

Scenario 2: A series of robberies and assaults are carried off by a person in a Sacker hood. Justice is puzzled and worried. By all reports this Sacker knew all the correct passwords and countersigns, but the person supposedly under that hood has an airtight alibi. And each time one of these crimes is carried off, the imposter assumes the role of a different Sacker!

Rather than have the Sacker reputation destroyed, Justice himself recruits the adventurers as a secret cell, answerable only to Justice himself. He fills them in on all details he knows, then leaves them to discover who or what is behind these crimes. Whether you use a mad Sacker who is believed dead, or a secret organization that has infiltrated the Sackers, the secret Sackers will have a tough mystery to crack, and have lots of fun working under the hood in a town that is coming to distrust the Sackers.

Justice is not hard to find, it's in the bag. — another old City proverb.

The Haansfolk

The tall dark clansmen of the Haansfolk are not very common in the City. Quietly religious, mildly humorous, the Haansfolk are available for odd jobs, magic potions, and foretellings. Yet, like so many denizens of the City streets, they are not entirely what they seem.

The clan known as the Haansfolk, or the People of Haan, is an extended family of some 30-40 individuals residing in the City. A private central clanhouse serves as meeting hall, dormitory, and temple, but most of the clan members have separate dwellings scattered among the back streets.

Physically, the Haansfolk are universally remarkable. Although clearly human, nearly all the adults are over 6' in height, thin and rangy. Their height and their very dark copper-red skin marks them as related to the Sequr tribes that skirt the edges of the great southern desert.

The clansmen work odd jobs around the City, although rarely take menial work. The common people in the City seek out Haansfolk for amulets, unguents, some "special" cosmetics and potions, charms, and talismans. Some Haansfolk cast foretellings, with a few regular clients from the upper classes. Not everyone wholly believes in the abilities of the Haansfolk, but many people would sooner give them the benefit of the doubt than cross the Haansfolk.

The Haansfolk are congenial, with a sense of humor that always seems to conceal some private joke. They are an insular and private people, little given to personal discussions. The Haansfolk worship a strange southern god and they practice unusual magicks, if whispered tales are true.

This view of the Haansfolk is largely the fabrication of the clan itself, a colossal joke played on the *kosije* (their derogatory word for 'outsider' — anyone who is not of Haan). They know, with utter conviction, that only tall dark-skinned southerners are true people. The Haansfolk can be tolerant and even companionable — in part because the hostility of the general populace would be inconvenient, and in part because the *kosije* are considered interesting... the way an intelligent but unpredictable housepet is interesting.

Liz Danforth is one of those disgustingly talented individuals who can do it all. The illustrations in this book, as well as its cover, were all done by her. In addition to her ability with art, she can write, and write very well. The Haansfolk is a facinating variation on the idea of a Thieves' Guild, and is one of the more memorable establishments in this Citybook.

HISTORY AND RELIGION OF THE CLAN

The People of Haan are mostly descendents of three brothers and their wives who came to the City several generations ago. The eldest brother, Haanoto Bengo, had been a religious novice in the desert temple complex of Haan of the Long Boughs when that city was razed. Bengo escaped, located his brothers and their families, and set out for a new life. Half-educated but sincere, Bengo codified the religious base of the Haansmen. The results were not entirely in accord with conventional Sequr religious thought. (Imagine a 1st grader, armed with George Washington's cherry tree tale, teaching American history.) Over the years, connections with other Sequr tribes have been reestablished, but the Haansfolk retain their autonomous ways.

Haansmen worship a creator god, Haan of the Long Boughs. They believe the rest of the world was an empty desert when the Sequr homelands were a sub-tropical park thick with vegetation. At the heart of the garden was Haan's holy Tree of Life. In some celestial conflict, the Tree of Life was transformed into a vast crystalline stone replica of itself, then shattered across the plains of Fendali. (In confirmation of this belief, agatelike stone boughs and limbs still lie around the desert, exact to the smallest detail. Sequr tribes refer to these as pieces of the great Stonetree — the rest of the world calls it petrified wood.)

The lifeforce escaping from the broken Stonetree manifested itself in the countless forms of life — human, elvish, dwarvish, and all foreign plants and animals — which populate the world. The Haansmen know these maverick lifeforms were not created according to Haan's will, as the god would have preserved the Tree of Life intact. As the epitome of unholy life, humanoid *kosije* are thus interesting for their similarities to true people, but are unpredictable and unreliable. (This unpredictability even extends to the very rare outsider who "should" have been born a tribesman... a *kosije* who exhibits the soul-traits of a true human, earning the respect and favor of

the Haansfolk or their kin.)

Sequr tribesmen consider it their holy duty to gather together every fragment of the Stonetree and return it to the place legend says the Tree of Life originally stood. (There is a terribly vague rumor of a palace of Stonewood deep in the sandy wastes.) When all the parts are restored, Holy Haan is expected to reach down and restore the Tree of Life. This would also restore the old order, taking the lifeforce of the tree from the *kosije* and other lesser vessels, and green the vast desert of the Scoured Sands.

The Haansfolk clan who took refuge in the City discovered that unbelievers had a regular market of Stonetree fragments being taken away from the desert. These fragments were made into jewelry, carved boxes, and magical amulets. Haanoto Bengo and his brothers determined to put an end to this sacrilegious business and, in time, succeeded in disrupting — but not ending — the traffic.

It was one of Bengo's sons, Wesiuhaan Dasco, who (being both religious and practical) decided it was not merely acceptable, but divinely ordered, to steal anything made from or with fragments of the great Stonetree. This meant rifling through valuables of all sorts, and he occasionally carried away other goods — usually small and valuable — as the means to support the clan as they carried out their holy work. It also obscured the thieves' preference for petrified wood.

Because the family members are so recognizable, Dasco's robberies were necessarily most circumspect. In fact, Dasco planned and carried out some of the most secret and well-staged thefts in the City's long history. This passion to never be seen or caught has been the last word for all Haansfolk since. Rumors sometimes surface, but are rarely substantiated. Linohaan Hyr is the only Haansman ever to have "gone bad" and openly engage in illegal acts.

The clansfolk are not wealthy, although most of them are accomplished sneak thieves. For one, wealth is a *kosije* thing to be involved in, and thus inherently undesirable. Two, the passion for secrecy dictates that no Haansman shall attract notice by conspicuous consumption. "All needs will be met when the Fendali is green," say the clansmen when one member's wealth becomes too evident. Odd jobs and gypsy-like magical fakery provide the illusion of honest labor.

Adventurers are likely tragets for the Haansfolk thieves and tricksters. Haansfolk are quick to spot newcomers and those whose new-found treasure comes from out-of-the-way places. The fresh wealth might, after all, include newly-discovered pieces of the precious Stonetree in the possession of sacrilegious unbelievers.

LAYOUT

The clanhouse of the Haansfolk is an unremarkable brick and stucco building in a rather run-down district. The ground-floor level has a meeting/eating hall, some dormitory-style living quarters, and the temple to Haan. Above is a partial upper floor, more a dusty attic storage area with a very low roof than useful storage space. The attic covers all the rooms except A and Q.

A. Main Hall (38' x 100') This is a large, general purpose room. The attic does not extend over the meeting hall (except for a narrow walkway above the south entrance), giving the room with a warehouse-like height. Light and air come in narrow windows high on the north and south walls. Candleholders line the walls to provide nighttime light as required. The walls have some cracks, and need fresh paint. The floor is worn brick, but reasonably clean and swept. There is an overhanging odor of old smoky cooking oil.

In the south wall is the private entrance commonly used by the Haansfolk. It is generally locked[3] and those living on the premises have a key. Five feet inside the door is a tall latticework screen securely built into the floor and overhead walkway. It prevents casual passersby from looking in the door to the end of the hall and would also briefly impede someone storming inside with hostile intent.

The north end of the hall has two long tables with wooden benches. Among themselves, the Haansfolk are sociable, and about half the local population eats here communally each day. The assortment of individuals varies, but every Haansman joins the group at least once a week.

Some evenings, the hall becomes a dancefloor, or a podium for storytelling or music fests. Celebratory evenings can become drunken revels.

B. Kitchen (25' x 20') The kitchen has a small hearth and baking oven in the northwest corner. Counters and cabinets provide the workspace and utensils to prepare the meals for the 10-20 people who gather each evening. Clan members contribute regularly, in money, goods or victuals. The traditional foods of the Sequr are often highly spiced and fried in hot oil — the kitchen is the source of the lingering smells that permeate the clanhouse. The outside door is closed and locked[3] except in hot weather; the nearest city well is down the dogleg alley to the north.

C. Kitchen Storage (25' x 10') Dry goods and kegs of wine are kept here.

D. General Storage (25' x 10') What it says... a catchall common-use area for the entire clan. The room has relatively little in it since the Haansfolk eschew excess goods. There are some chests, a fancy chair with a broken arm, and other non-essentials. Unusual clothing and the means to make disguises are here. The door has a simple lock[1], mostly to keep curious children out.

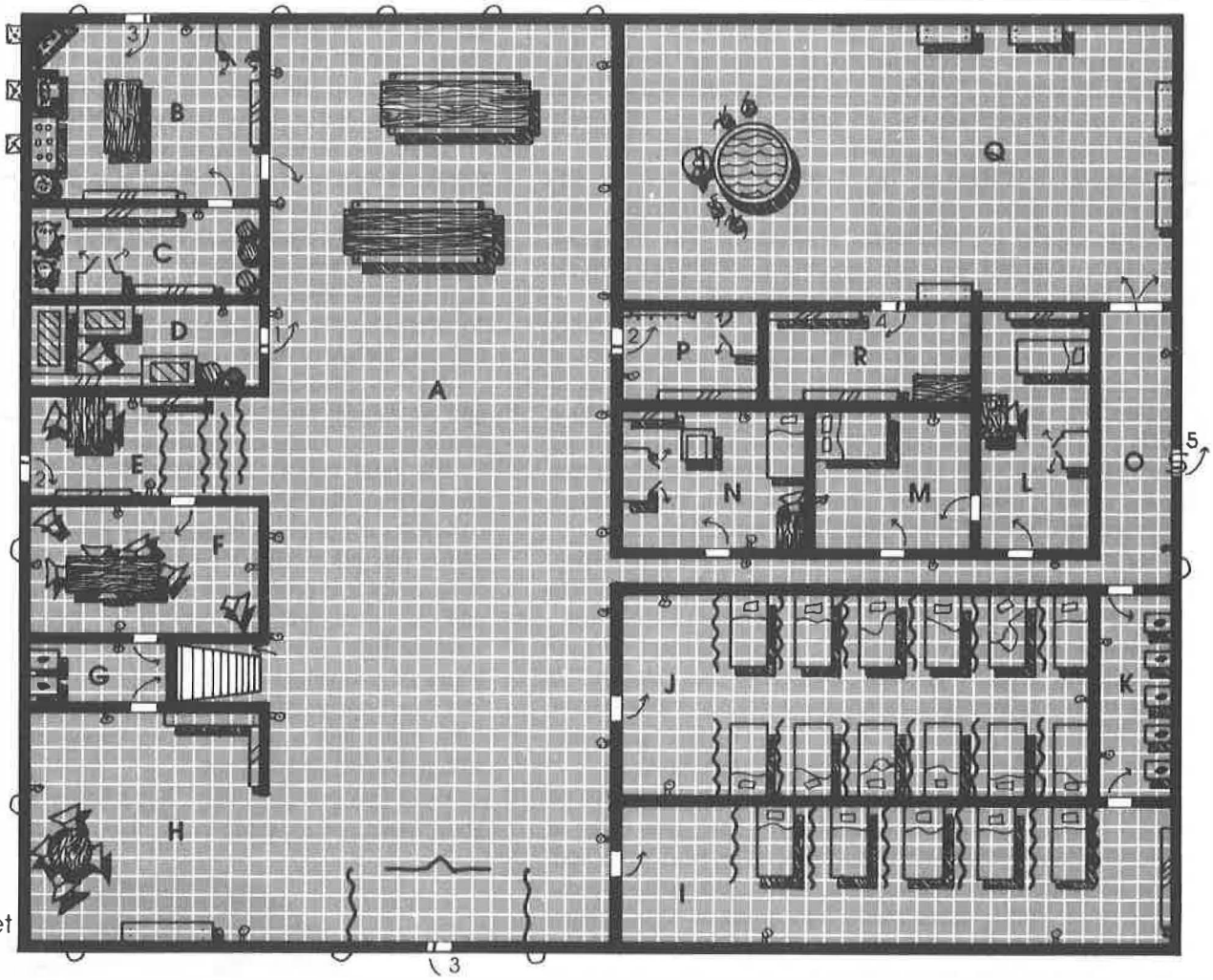
E. Visitors' Entry (25' x 12') This is the only area most *kosije* ever see inside the clanhouse. It is a facade presented as a foreteller's shop.

A clan member (young or old) will crystal-gaze or perform some other fortune-telling ritual for moderate fee if anyone knocks and finds someone "home" (meaning "on duty"). There is usually someone attending from late morning until late afternoon, with late-evening hours available on request.

The room is dirty, dusty and rather stenchful — Haansfolk don't want visitors lingering here. (Other clan "shops" are more welcoming.) The outer door[2] can be barred, and is, except when a visitor is within. Ragged curtains thoroughly obscure any chance view into the main hall.

F. Vistors' Private Room (25' x 15') This room has a meeting table, used when Haansmen must make some arrangements with outsiders.

G. Privy (15' x 7') Minial facilities tucked under the



stairway; the stairs lead to the attic. The exit from the Visitors' Room into the privy is not for the visitor's ease (the host would recommend the alley). Its purpose is inconvenience and disorientation if an unpredictable *kosije* broke out of the meeting room... and a small joke as well.

H. Social Area (25' x 26') This is actually a porch-like extension of the main hall. Here friends work and talk together during the day, and card games are often played in the evening.

I. Women's Sleeping Hall (60' x 15') Five cots are kept here for use by Haansfolk clanswomen when needed. Cheap tapestries can be pulled between the beds for privacy, but in the women's hall it is rarely done. Shelves hold some belongings, but most people just keep a satchel under their bed. In practice, only a few beds a night are in use. Some socializing takes place here during the day, but in general the room is empty.

Most often it is young unmarried women who stay here, since men and women alike are considered adult and on their own at 18, but few marry before 23. These dormitory-like sleeping halls provide a halfway house for young adults. Widows and others temporarily on their own sometimes stay here as well.

J. Men's Sleeping Hall (52' x 22') This sleeping hall provides a similar service for the men of the Haansfolk. Men are by far the heavier drinkers among the Haansfolk, and the extra beds are occasionally used by revelers too befuddled to make it home. Again, however, it is a rare night when more than half the beds are occupied. The males of the clan do their socializing elsewhere, and the room is never occupied during the day unless someone is sleeping off a night's heist!

K. Privy (8' x 22') Polite custom dictates that one's eyes are downcast in here, since no other privacy is practical.

L. Tuhaan Del's Room (12' x 25') The main caretaker of the clanhouse lives by herself, except when her husband Linohaan Hyr shows up. She writes at her small desk, and keeps her journals and other books on the shelves near her bed.

M. Spare Room (17' x 15') A large bed is kept in here for couples or a clan member who is ill. The connecting doorway to Del's room remains open when she's treating someone sick.

N. Takat-haan Saavo's Room (20' x 15') The patriarch-priest permanently resides in this room. He sleeps a good deal, so the room is rarely straightened up and always smells acrid.

O. Secret Door This door is an escape route should the Haansfolk (one or all) need to leave abruptly. The door is hidden from both sides, but would be exceptionally difficult to locate from the outside; all the Haansmen know what to look for on the inside. The lock[5] is easily released from inside.

P. Armory (15' x 10') To call this an armory overstates it. There is a mixed bag of weapons and some light armor stored here: leather jerkins, a mail shirt, and a few sets of cestus-type fighting gauntlets on the upper shelves. Most Haansfolk have their own daggers, but a few extras are here with some curved

swords favored by the Sequr style of fighting. Some simple pole weapons are stored on the rack on the north wall. Annoyance weapons — things like caltrops and bolas — are kept in the cabinet with vials of poison and some genuinely magical aids used in heists. The door[2] is kept locked.

Q. Temple to Haan of the Long Boughs (60' x 30') This room evidences cleanliness, care and artistry not seen anywhere else in the clanhouse. Without the attic overhead, this room also has a sense of height. Skylights provide indirect light.

The only seats are benches along the wall for the very young, very old, or very tired. Worshippers stand, kneel or dance according to the particular ritual enacted. The focus of worship is a deep tiled pool of water at the edge of which stands a carved statue of Haan. On holy days, Haansfolk bring potted plants and bowls of flowers. Some effort is made to care for the spindly trees planted around the pool, but the small windows provide insufficient sunlight for verdant growth.

The statue of Haan is fine hardwood carved in a primitive, evocative style. The west wall has a stylized floor-to-ceiling religious fresco — the work of Haanoto Bengo in his old age.

R. Temple Storage (22' x 10') This room is kept locked[4] and the patriarch Saavo blesses it frequently. This "blessing" is in fact an enchantment that strikes the unbelievers entering the room for unholy purposes. Dread and aversion are initial effects; continued effort culminates in panic or even death.

Inside are shelves and cabinets with a wide variety of objects both mundane and valuable. All have one thing in common: some component in each object is petrified wood. Some items are made entirely of it. Along one wall are some whole stone limbs, never made into artifacts. One cabinet (itself faced with an inlaid design of petrified wood chips) contains bags of tiny stone flakes and even dust taken from artisans' workshops.

PERSONALITIES

All Haansfolk names have two parts. The initial name is some referent to the god Haan, with translations such as "Haan is gracious" or "whom Haan created." The second name is the common name, and the only name known to an outsider.

Most adult Haansfolk carry at least one dagger in everyday situations. Heavier weapons and armor are only added under special circumstances.

Takat-haan Saavo the Patriarch *Human male, Ht. 6'6", Wt. 165#, Age: 71, though he claims to be over 110. Fighting Prowess: Poor. Magic ability: Fair, C3, C7, C8.*

The septaugenarian who provides the religious leadership of this motley gang is a white-haired relic loved and tolerated by most of the clan. Saavo has three almost distinct personalities to deal with the world around him. The "patriarch" persona is for the *kosije* — he gives orders pre-emptorily, wields a piercing black stare like a weapon, and talks casually of events that occurred in the previous century. His monumental dignity forestalls questions that might uncover inconsistencies. Clan members play along, and all enjoy pulling outsiders' legs.

Saavo is also the repository of the religious teachings of Haan. Although worship is participatory, elders and the learned have a high status akin to that of a priest. Saavo chants prayers and thunders lessons with an ability that his skinny chest would belie. Some suspect this persona is as insubstantial as the patriarch, but all Haansfolk have a deep-seated faith, and are awed by Saavo in his priestly aspect.

Sadly, the pulpit-thumper and the patriarch are frequently displaced by a weary, unwell old man drifting toward senility. At such times, the clan gives him a respectful but over-wide berth, and only Haanatakan Esset provides the old man with the love and care he needs.

Haanatakan Esset *Human male, Ht. 5'10", Wt. 155#, Age: 19. Fighting Prowess: average. Magic ability: Fair C2, C7, C8, plus sleight of hand.*

A great-grand-nephew of Saavo, Esset is devoted to Saavo and an earnest believer. In spite of his youth, he is clearly destined to be a religious leader in the future.

His great fear is that Haan disapproves of him, having created him "flawed." He is short by Sequr standards, and self-conscious about his comparatively pale skin. He vociferously denies that his mother took a local man for a lover, although he believes it is probably true. He hopes his devotion to Haan and the clan will be enough to overcome his (literal) shortcomings. Some of the curative magic he studies is in hopes of permanently "improving" his appearance. In actual fact, his coppery-golden skin, black hair and eyes, and compact form make him a good looking young man generally liked within the clan and without.

Esset is a practiced thief, but a better foreteller where his good looks are an asset to his believability. He lives in the

— Haanataken Esset —

men's quarters of the clanhouse and has no strong emotional attachment to any particular clanswoman. He is an accomplished musician on the *wohmo*, a native guitar.

Tuhaan Del *Human female, Ht. 6'3", Wt. 178#, Age: 46. Fighting Prowess: Average. Magic ability: Average, C1-3, C7, C8.*

Del is the clanhouse concierge and a capable organizer. She keeps the keys, including the duplicate doorkeys that are handed over to those who live in. She oversees the communal meals and conscripts clansfolk to maintain the clanhouse from dirt and utter ruin. She is also capable of such magics as are used in Haan ceremonies, and can perform the magic that protects the temple storage room.

Del is one of the few literate Haansfolk, and writes a journal (written in a mix of Sequr and local cant) in the evenings. When younger, her thefts included a few books, and working clansmen sometimes bring her new reading material.

Del's husband is the ill-favored Linohaan Hyr. Del has birthed three children, but only the last, a boy, lives. The infant's left hip was damaged when he was dropped during an altercation between his parents, and he disappeared when he was about 12 years old.

Linohaan Hyr *Human male, Ht. 6'9", Wt. 250#, Age: 46. Fighting Prowess: Very good with fists and bashing weapons, Good otherwise.*

Hyr is a mean-hearted bully inept at sneak-thievery but superb at alley-bashing, extortion and intimidation. He approves of the clan's dedication to relieving the wealthy of the burden of their goods, but not the circumspect way they go about it — nor, for that matter, with the clan's general interest in fragments of the Stonetree.

Hyr is widely disliked and only appears at the clanhouse when he wants an alibi, a hand-out, or a visit with his long-suffering wife. He is accorded the courtesty due by his birthright, and no one would speak against him to a *kosije*. Hyr would not be quick to divulge clan secrets either, although for company he prefers "his gang," a circle of poorly-organized scofflaws among whom his size and strength earn him nominal leadership.

Doluhaante Ember *Human female, Ht. 6'4", Wt. 165#, Age: 35. Fighting Prowess: Good, favoring sword and dagger. Magic ability: Fair C4, C7, Very good with sleight of hand.*

Ember is in her prime. She is a careful and circumspect thief and, as a clan member, her opinion sways others although she is sometimes considered a bit wild. Her looks are not remarkable (except, of course, for her height), but she has an animation and sly humor that goes far past appearance.

Ember also does a little adventuring on the side, which raises some eyebrows in the clan. Her stated intent is to learn the ways and rumors of the adventurers' subculture, and to be able to steal away Stonetree treasures. Her primary weakness is a tendancy to underestimate the *kosije* when she must make a snap judgement. However, her above-average intellect, cleverness and wit see her through difficulties. She's literate like Del, and also multilingual. Her relative sophistication makes her one of the Haansfolk most likely to overcome her prejudices and recognize a true soul in the heart of a *kosije* — but only if he or she truly was worthy.

Ember is not zealous about Holy Haan, and doubts the utopian pleasures of the restored Garden of the Sands would offer much intellectual stimulation if it were to come to pass. Ember is married to a Sequr southerner (but not a clan member), Yatouni-nefr Moc, who is remarkable only in his ability to play *netsu*, the southern version of chess. Ember and Moc live away from the clanhouse.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

Scenario 1: Unbeknownst to the Haansfolk because of their cultural distance from the southern desert, another splinter group of Haan worshipers has become a malignant and vengeful cult preaching death for all who are not true men like the Haan. A series of strange murders take place in the City and the assailants are described in terms that leave no question but that they are Haansfolk. Everyone at the house plays it close to the chest, assuming Hyr is behind these horrible things until Hyr is present in the house when Esset, the half-breed, is attacked on the streets for his "sin" of mixed blood.

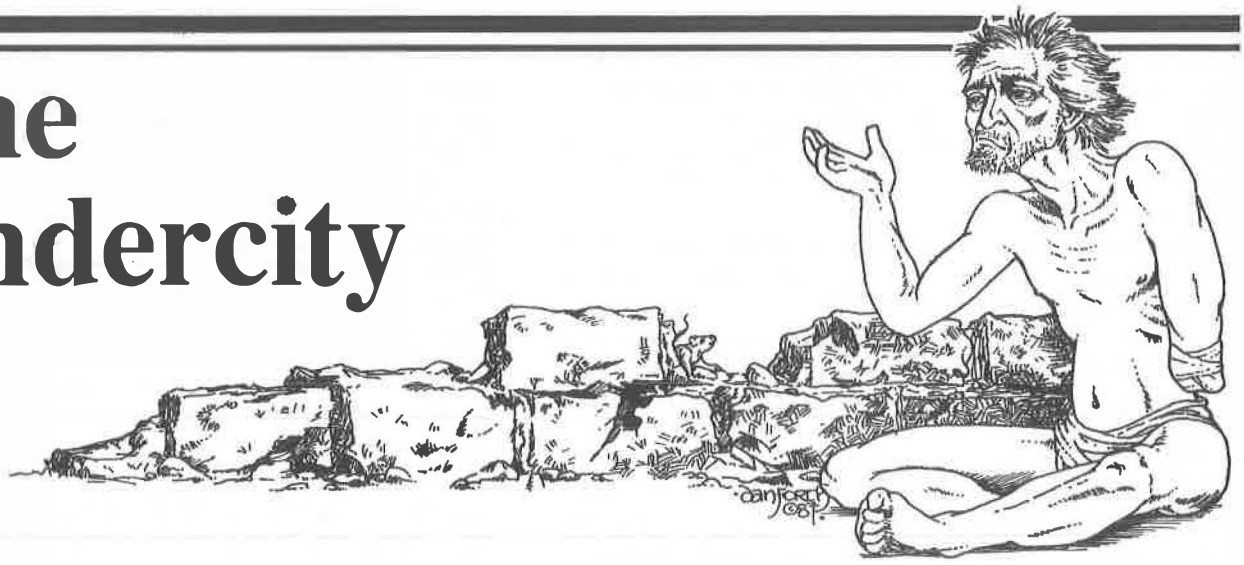
Many of the Haansfolk assume this is some divine retribution for faithlessness, but Ember and Del think something else is up. Ember, recognizing the player characters as individuals she's run with before, takes them into her confidence and sets them out to trap whoever has attacked the Haan. The only difficulty in this is in locating the few cultists in the vast City, and keeping knowledge of their hunt away from Hyr, who has begun his own, brutal, investigation.

Scenario 2: The adventurers are hired by a wealthy merchant to trace his runaway daughter and bring her back home. They are given a petrified wood amulet she normally wears and bring it to the Haan in hopes one of their foretellers can use it to determine where the girl is. One of them does get some feelings from it, and tells the adventures how to use it to find the girl. She also says the girl has been kidnapped and is in grave danger.

At the same time another Haan decides to steal the amulet and gets away with it by palming the stone when she places it in a silk sack to preserve the magic. The characters discover their loss later, but the Haan claim they have no knowledge of the amulet. The characters have to break into the Haanshouse to get it back, and hope their efforts do not take too long to save the merchant's daughter.

The Haansfolk provide an interesting sub-culture for games that seldom have any culture at all. Whether used as merely fortunetellers, or employed fully to bedevil those who dare profane Stonetree fragments with their kosije *touch, the Haansfolk have a depth that will make them a remembered part of any fantasy gaming world.*

The Undercity



Not everyone is blessed at birth with healthy, clean limbs. All too often accidents shatter arms, twist legs and warp spines or ribs. The vengeance of a scorned lover, or the keen jealousy of a rival can easily shred the well being of a beautiful person and forever scar him, both physically and mentally. In one careless second a lifetime of work and health can be utterly crushed and extinguished.

In a society where power is measured in weight carried or skill is defined by the dexterity needed by a swordsman, a cripple is worthless. No one wants them around because they remind everyone of his own mortality, and of what might happen to him were he not so favored by his gods. Beggars are driven out, thrown away, and left to beg or die.

The maimed and crippled belong to no one; therefore they belong to the Undercity.

The City's beggars form a tightly structured group uniting the dregs of society. Beggars are everywhere and have no "off" hours. The difficulty with beggars is not in finding them, but really in avoiding or escaping them. They are as common as gutter filth, rats and shadows in Nightside; and perhaps only as common as shadow elsewhere in the City.

The beggars, true to their name, beg for a living. Each has a bowl or cup or ratty pouch and dirty hand ready to snatch up any coin that might slip from philanthropic fingers. While they will accept gifts of food and clothing, they prefer hard currency, and will only take the same when offering information. Precious metal is highly valued because of its liquidity: a shirt is always a shirt, but a gold coin can be traded for food, clothing or firewood as needed. Beggars may work alone, but more commonly a pair or trio will haunt the shadows outside a public house or another location where prospective patrons are likely to leave in a good mood, drunk, drugged or otherwise charitably inclined.

In general the beggars are not tightly bunched, but spread out so one area is not overworked. Certain beggars do develop a territory, especially if they become "adopted" by people of that locale, and they are not above doing an odd job or two if a reward is promised. Wealthy adventurers might find a beggar "assigned" to them, either to help openly or follow covertly. Beggars never ambush or mug people and, if possible, will warn a generous patron about an ambush. In fact, the beggars have earned the Big Fish Gang's emnity by disrupting some of the gang's alley bashers in the middle of jobs.

Michael Stackpole shamelessly exploited his close, personal relationship with the editor to get a submission in this book. Somehow he managed to produce the Undercity while editing this CityBook and finishing a novel. The Undercity is definitely a different Beggars' Guild.

PUBLIC PERCEPTION

The beggars are seen as a nuisance, and are often likened to packs of dogs running through the streets. Even so, many people remember a beggar they've known personally, whether a maimed warrior spinning stories in a tavern, or a lame child who used to help out in the stables from time to time. These relationships are largely pleasant — "Jamie wasn't like most of these no-count beggars, he was a right regular fellow, just down on his luck..." — and foster tolerance for the beggars.

Some people won't talk about the beggars at all. A few will mention how the beggars witch pregnant women so their children will be deformed, then steal the misshapen babies. But that and so many other elusive rumors are generally lumped into the category of "beggars' breath." Shortened from "Worth its weight in beggar's breath," it's a phrase used to dismiss anything as valueless. Moreover, it hints that many of the City's rumors get passed by the beggars, but very few people see the sinister import in that piece of common knowledge.

Everyone knows the beggars live in "the Warrens." Only a very few people outside the beggars know of entrances to the Undercity, and rare is the person who knows of more than one. Folks know the beggars have a king, and it's commonly believed story that the king has vowed never to leave his realm unless the City's rulers invite him to dine with them on tulip nectar and hummingbird wings. (Another saying in the City, used when someone is talking nonsense or bragging about something he could never have done, is "And then you dined with the Beggar King....") A few others whisper quietly about the Lace Lady, the beggar Queen, who comes on bats'-wings at night to takes the children born to be beggars.

BEGGAR CULTURE: THE REAL STORY

If the citizens of the City really knew how the beggars were organized, and what they really did, a campaign would be mounted to root them out and destroy them. They are not set up along the lines of a Guild; they really form their own sub-culture within the City. While they all speak the common tongue, and a few have mastered some of the higher languages, like Elven and Dwarvish, they have their own language that few normal folk would recognized as born of common, and even less could decipher. The beggar dialect is rarely heard outside the warrens and only Tranq (see Domdaniel's Gate) has ever been instructed in the language. (Myre thought that a fair trade for knowledge of Tranq's eye and hand.)

The beggars are organized into six tribes. The Fakers are the lowest in status, the Ysraiget are the highest, with all the others treated as roughly equal. This stratification is very loose because all the beggars work together toward the goal of total salvation, and in that struggle everyone is a full partner.

FAKERS: The Fakers are the normal children of beggar parents. They feign injuries so they may beg for a living. The Fakers are instructed to vary their "injuries" so they cause no pernament damage to themselves (i.e. the right leg might be tied up to appear "missing" one week, then the left leg the next, and so on). They are free to leave the Undercity whenever they wish, but are sworn to secrecy if they ever choose to do so. The only thing the beggars can hold over them, if it comes to that, is refusal to let them see their families. This is a powerful threat because, despite their problems, the beggars are quite capable of raising children in a loving setting.

WARDREGS: The Wardregs are the warriors or adventurers who have suffered maiming injuries. These often split time among three tasks: begging, working with The Captain (see Personalities) and helping train others to defend themselves. Special care is given to those Wardregs who suffer mental problems because of battle, and their tasks are often those that will not cause stress or remind a warrior of something he feared. It is possible, therefore, to have a beggar with no physical injury who belongs to a tribe other than the Fakers.

GUTTERKIN: The Gutterkin are the utterly desperate and destitute. Most of them are old, drunk or mad. If they have family in the City that should care for them, the beggars will make sure that a portion of their upkeep comes from that family. Gutterkin usually beg or are assigned to work for The Captain. This is especially true of those who have a substance abuse problem — the Captain's tasks will keep them clean.

ILLKIN: The Illkin are people who have been maimed or disabled by disease and illness. Anyone with a contagious disease is quarantined. In dealing with the Illkin, the beggars have gathered a good knowledge of disease, and have developed several non-magical cures for common maladies like dysentery, gangrene, plague and, oddly, polio. While they share their knowledge with no one outside the Undercity, they have covertly supplied the cure to a number of individuals in their favor. The most highly valued Illkin are former miners who have been invaluable in helping The Captain expand the warrens because of their experience and direction.

SPOILED: The Spoiled are those who have been maimed by an accident, or on purpose, and can no longer function in society because of their injury. On a rare occassion the beggar King has been known to declare someone "spoiled" in order to provide them refuge from the world above. (A common "beggars' breath" story has it that several centuries back the City's ruler spent a week in the Undercity while his personal bodyguard company tried to depose him.)

YSRAIGET: The Ysraiget are the congenitally deformed beggars. They are considered especially blessed by the beggar god Ysrai (pronounced Yes-rye). Many of them — but not all by any stretch of the imagination — come to the beggars through their "Changeling" program. The beggars consider it very fortunate when their King is chosen from the Ysraiget.

Any deformed or damaged individual is allowed haven in the Undercity, with the exception of magic users. The beggars have an almost pathological hatred of magickers that probably stems from their feeling that magic could be used to make them all whole again. Oddly, because Kother Landsend has not used his powers to repair his hand, the beggars do accept him and have secretly proclaimed him a Wardreg. No one really knows what the beggars would do to a magician they caught sneaking into their warrens and, because the magickers in town avoid them and treat their own injuries, the depth of the beggars' hatred has not been plumbed.

Most important is a concept touched upon above: what you once were matters not to the beggars. Each individual's worth is measured by value to the beggar society, not by Upworld fame or importance. While this would seem to lead to a society similar to that which discarded them, the beggars believe those who can do nothing are really worshiping Ysrai and, in that manner, are doing more for the beggars than those who are physically capable.

YSRAI WORSHIP

Several centuries ago, in a level deep beneath the City, some beggars made an incredible discovery. In digging out a few new dens they uncovered a temple to a god they'd never heard of before. They dug out a huge statue — four times life size — and found it to be broken and scarred like themselves. One beggar, a half-blind madman, studied worn runes and figured out the god's name was Ysrai.

A full thousand years before history was recorded with any veracity, Ysrai's temples were swept from the earth in a holy war led by gods who descended (or ascended) to the mortal plane. It is believed Ysrai was cast down either because he was a tyrant in the heavens, who encouranged barbaric acts in his worhip; or in revenge for deposing an earlier divine ruler (the Haansfolk believe Haan struck because Ysrai shattered the Tree of Life). Whatever the cause, Ysrai is so thoroughly removed from the minds of men that his name is only known to a few practitioners of arcane and blasphemous rituals.

The beggars made this god their own. As they had been abandoned by the world above, so had this god been deserted and maimed by those he once loved. Cetainly this half-blind, legless, scarred and broken statue had to be an omen. Readily the beggars took to Ysrai the Withered God, fabricated their own theology, and tied the selection of their King to their patron deity.

The theology of Ysrai worship is simple: Ysrai was once perfect and the other gods jumped him out of jealousy. Proper worship, while highly private and individualistic, consists of dedicating whatever the beggar has lost (health, beauty, a foot or eye) to the god. When enough of these voluntary sacrifices have been made, the devout believe fervently, Ysrai will be made whole and will come to heal his faithful. Then he'll carry them away to a world where the merest beggar's wish is made reality. While almost childish in its simplicity, Ysrai worship offers hope to the hopeless, and provides them a reason they have been so afflicted.

BEGGAR ACTIVITIES

Aside from begging to raise money, the beggars do certain things that either go unnoticed within the City, or are considered "beggars' breath." The beggars work hard to keep these activities secret, and have had centuries of practice at doing so. If these actions became publically known and believed, many diverse factions would try to rid the City of the beggars at any cost.

It is rumored, in bright sunny courtyards and the better City homes, that normal beggar babies are exchanged for deformed (Ysraiget) children at birth. If a couple tells the midwife they must have a "normal" child, especially after a difficult pregnancy, the beggars learn of this and provide that normal child. In exchange they take the malformed baby, and exact from the parents donations for the child's upkeep. Midwives vehemently deny this rumor, but cursing someone as a "changeling" is almost as bad as calling him a bastard. Every so often, when a politician resists a move to drive the beggars out, the unkind suggest he is really one of them.

The beggars also regularly burgle homes and workshops. They steal nothing but information, and often work to help those who have helped them. The classic tale of a kindly cobbler who cannot possibly finish an order of shoes for a noble, and opens his shop the next day to find the work done for him is widely known and believed. That sort of thing happens with certain regularity and is generally ascribed to magic spirits. In reality beggars steal into the shops and homes to use their skills to repay kindness. This sort of thing usually prompts the benefitted party to greater acts of charity, and creates a cycle that pleases both the beggars and their patrons.

The beggars never maim enemies because that would make their enemy one of them. Because many of their number are constantly in pain, the beggars have developed an advanced knowledge of pain, nerves and drugs to relieve pain. From this knowledge the beggars have created a nasty form of nerve manipulation torture that leaves the victim in agony without bruises or visible injuries. The beggars can repair the damage they've caused, and much of it is temporary anyway, but relief often costs. This knowledge of pain forms the base of beggar self-defense, and mugging a beggar can be as painful as hugging a porcupine.

Lastly the beggars form an incredible information network. Through a bizàare set-up, beggars all memorize and analyze (if mentally capable) all the news, rumors and actions in the City. Stories pass through the Undercity and are relayed to the individuals who handle that information. New beggars are trained and learn everything one of the older beggars knows so redundancy is built right into the system. In fact, some of the most hideously deformed Ysraiget are so mentally gifted they can remember and recall centuries-old gossip as if they'd heard it the day before, and they'll link it with any cogent data gathered before or since. Without benefit of books or scrolls, the beggars have the most complete history of the City and world in existence today!

THE WARRENS

The Warrens is the name commonly given to the Undercity. The City's current level is built upon a dozen previous cities — some old enough to be legendary, and a couple more lurk beneath those. The beggars, over the generations, have dug down, excavated and set up living quarters in buildings that once stood in sunlight but now dwell in everdark. Most of them live in a level about four cities below the surface, and the sewers cut through levels 1 and 2, though never did hit any of the warrens. The Temple to Ysrai is located in the fifth level along with a couple other excavations, but the warrens go no deeper than that.

Until the Captain appeared, the excavations were carried on in a random pattern and only on an "as needed" basis. In the past a married couple would live with the family of either partner until their hole became too crowded, then they would leave and dig out a new home for themselves. Often this new habitation would go unreported, so no one even had a guess as to the size of the Undercity, or the number of beggars living there.

The Captain changed all that. He set out to make the warrens into the WARrens. With the King's blessing he organized work parties and set people to tasks. At first the beggars balked and threated to revolt, but The Captain's initial job streamlined and centralized food storage and distribution. That won him instant support. Since then he's divided his campaigns between building defenses and digging out huge new quarters for the tribes. Much of the level 4 city has been recovered and the various tribes have their own neighborhoods.

The largest excavation and reconstruction attempted to date is that of the level 5 Palace and Temple to Ysrai. Both structures have been cleared of debris, cleaned and restoration of the wall murals is currently underway. The only thing not scheduled for repair is the statue of Ysrai himself.

The warren defenses largely consist of blind tunnels, submerged entrances in deep wells, oil/gas traps and trapdoors that convert entry tunnels into dead ends, or circular runs. By carefully digging tunnels on a slope, creating conical chambers and setting up sections of tunnel to collapse, The Captain has insured any attempt to take the warrens will be most difficult and costly to the attacker. The beggars have unlimited water from their deep wells and enough food to feed them for several months in a serious siege situation. The beggars also have access, through the sewers or their own tunnels, to many of the City storehouses so supplies are likely to run out for the surface dwellers before they do for the beggars.

PERSONALITIES

Myre *Human, Tribe: Ysraiget, Ht. 3' 4", Wt. 160#, Age: 30. Fighting Prowess: Good with bare hands, otherwise poor.*

Myre is the current beggar King. He is a handsome man with a full head of curly black hair, black beard and brown eyes. His upper body and arms are powerful, and his hands are huge and well callused. In fact, if he had been born with legs instead of stumps, he would have been a powerful warrior or fearless adventurer. His manner dealing with beggars is gentle yet firm. In relations with outsiders he is swift and ruthless when they threaten him and his people, though can be a friend to those who treat the beggars with respect.

Myre's elevation to King came in a recent election. He was one of four beggars who met the prime requisite for candidacy: he was maimed in a manner similar to the injuries on Ysrai's statue. The beggars elected him because of his youth, intelligence and especially because he was the only Ysraiget up for the office. In fact, Myre is extra-special because he was born to Ysraiget parents and the beggars see that as sure sign he is loved by Ysrai.

Myre is a good and wise King. He has stressed the importance of gathering and sifting information. He's even gone so far as to encourange Fakers to leave off begging and join Upworld society to gather information. To do his part Myre spends time in Domdaniel's Gate speaking with Tranq.

Myre is willing to help people, including non-magicker adventurers, but bases his decisions on what use he feels that person will be to the beggars in the future. Many of his advisors use their genius to extrapolate the likely consequences of various actions, and more than once their estimations have prompted Myre to leak information to certain parties to enhance their plans, or to prevent others from succeeding against them. This has angered the Big Fish Gang, but they have no good way to strike at the beggars.

Talissa *Human, Tribe: Spoiled, Ht. 5′ 8", Wt. 110#, Age: 26. Fighting Prowess: fair with a stiletto used in secret, otherwise poor. No magical ability.*

Talissa is the beggar Queen and Myre's willing consort. She was a courtesan who angered a rival, spurned a client's profession of love, or earned the wrath of a client's spouse. Whoever it was, and Talissa desperately desires that knowledge, the offended party hired men to kidnap her and burn the left side of her face with a red-hot iron. When she regained consciousness, she smashed her mirror and tried to slit her wrists with a large sliver of the glass, but beggars stopped her. She wears that same fanglike sliver of mirror as a pendant.

Talissa was, and still is, beautiful to look at. Her long blond hair shimmers with life and cascades down around her shoulders. She is slender, desirable and it is easy to understand why her former paramours, like Nightside Inferior's Judge, pine after her. In addition to physical attractiveness, she has a sharp wit and the grace to treat everyone as if they mean a great deal to her. Talissa has fashioned a black lace half-mask to hide the maimed half of her face, but it cannot hide the energy shining from her bright blue eyes. She has developed an unnerving habit, however, of closing her right eye and staring out from behind the mask with her left when furious with an individual (like Boko in the Shadow Riders).

When the beggars, having been attracted by her screams of terror, stopped her attempted suicide, Talissa fainted. The beggars took her to their warrens and Myre instructed his

— Talissa, the beggar Queen —

doctors to help her as much as they could. He visited her and stayed with her while the beggars' poultices leeched the poisons from the burn and calmed her infection-spawned fever. She finally awoke and saw Myre, then she raised her left hand to cover her face. Myre stopped her and shook his head slowly. "Your beauty is not so easily destroyed," he told her. His compassion reached her even through her self-pity, and blossomed into mutual love.

Talissa has organized the beggars' espionage network and honed it to a fine edge. She added what she knew about the City's hoi polloi, including their most embarrassing fantasies, and she's carefully employed that information to extort more knowledge. She is obsessed with learning the names of the men who maimed her, or the identity of the person who paid them to do so. (It should come as no surprise that this crime can be laid at the door of Garowin "Sheets" Eddrad, though the men he had do the job have since "passed on" and he thinks himself safe because he believes Talissa committed suicide.)

Talissa is the Lace Lady who exchanges beggar babies for children born Ysraiget. In this role she wears a heavy cloak that shadows all her face except the lace covered profile. Her identity as Talissa is kept absolutely confidential, even when the parents are people she once knew and liked. She records who the parents of each and every child were, and is prepared to use the information for her revenge or the beggars' welfare.

The Captain *Human, Tribe: Wardregs, Ht. 5′6", Wt. 200#, Age: 50. Fighting Prowess: Very good directing siege machinery, Good with mace. No magical ability.*

The Captain is a thickly built, grizzled war veteran who had his right arm pulped by a trebuchet-thrown stone. Until this accident cut his career short he was a highly regarded Siege-master, but when the rock crushed his arm, something inside his head snapped. He abandoned his calling and rejected the generous offers of nobles who wanted him to serve them as an advisor. Rumor had it that he believed himself a "Changeling" and he saw his injury as a divine confirmation of his rightful

place in society. The rumor is unconfirmed and, while true, none of The Captain's old compatriots believe it.

The Captain, since he joined the beggars, has improved the warrens immeasurably. He's served under three Kings during his 18 years in the warrens, and he likes Myre the best of all. He takes great joy in directing the recovery efforts and has developed some skill at restoring artwork himself. He drives himself hard and cannot "take it easy" because he sees so much work that still needs to be done.

The Captain is obsessed with protecting the beggars, and he's particularly protective of the Ysraiget. He knows Ysrai himself directed the stone that maimed him, and he daily praises the god for reminding him of his true mission in life. The Captain is determined that his defenses will make any crusade to wipe out Ysrai or his people impossible. Indeed, through his efforts he has made the warrens a very tough nut to crack. In fact his precautions, as he fully intends, have made the Undercity so strong that if the City above was ever besieged and cut off from supplies, the Upworld would have to come begging to the Undercity or face death.

Haanta "Creeper" Shatterhip *Human, Tribe: Spoiled, Ht. 6'7", Wt. 225#, Age: 17. Fighting Prowess: Average with bare hands, though his long reach does give him a bit of an advantage in a fight. Magic Ability: he has the "right stuff" for it, so he could learn, but he's had no training.*

Haanta Shatterhip is the only Haansfolk among the beggars. He's a tall, slender, coppery skinned youth with dark hair and bright brown eyes. The beggars nicknamed him "Creeper" because his height forces him to crawl through many of the tunnels where others merely stoop or pass unhampered. His left hip is bumpy and twisted from where it was broken when his parents (Tuhaan Del and Linohaan Hyr) dropped the infant during a fight. Creeper left the Haansfolk when he was 12 and has made no effort to communicate with them since that time.

Creeper is very intelligent and recognized the name Ysrai from an obscure reference made by the Haan elder during a religious ceremony. Creeper's learned everything he could about the Ysrai religion and has decided the Haan are mistaken when they accuse Ysrai of having shattered the Tree of Life. He believes Ysrai was struck because he tried to assist Haan in repairing the tree, but this reconcilliation of his two faiths is invention supported by bare hints and desire.

Creeper is one of Myre's inner circle of advisors. In addition to studying religion, Creeper devoted himself to learning about the City's criminal structure. His ability to correlate data makes him invaluable to Myre when the beggar King has to decide if an action will anger the Big Fish Gang. Creeper does know Garowin Eddrad burned out Lugal Joywright's mother and suspects Garowin was behind Talissa's injury. Creeper does play down Haansfolk exploits and Myre, if he suspects anything, has given no sign that he minds. Creeper does not know where the Steel Man is, but he knows where the assassin is <u>not</u>, and that is information the Shadow Riders would give their souls to learn.

Creeper is well liked by the beggars despite his lineage, and he has made the Undercity his home. His only tie to Haan is his private devotion to the god of the Long Boughs.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

Scenario 1: Despite the beggars' ability to defend themselves, someone has been bagging beggars. Beggars, starting with one who has "adopted" the adventurers, just start vanishing. Myre has the adventurers conducted to him for an interrogation, and the late-night kidnapping and dragged travel through the warren tunnels should be enough of a scary journey to make almost any character fear for his life. Once the beggar King has determined the characters had nothing to do with the disappearance, he'll ask them to investigate within Upworld circles to try and locate the lost beggars.

Things can get really strange depending upon who you decide is behind the kidnappings. An insane, guilt-ridden parent searching for a child given up to the beggars long ago would be odd enough, but a cult sacrificing beggars to a godling devoted to Chaos that appreciates the irony of getting damaged goods from his worshipers would be truly odd. Forcing the characters to go "undercover" as beggars could also be an interesting way to give someone a lesson about prejudicial attitudes before continuing into the mystery.

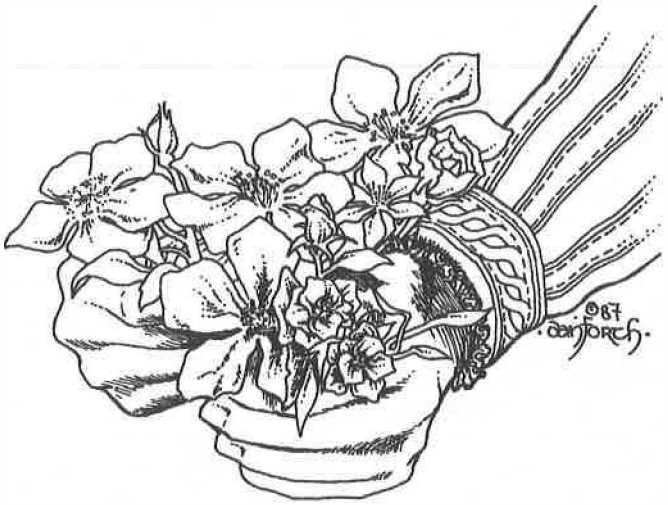
Scenario 2: A plague is sweeping through the City. The beggars know what it is, and how to cure it, but someone sees a beggar treating a person who later dies. This individual lets authorities know what happened and suddenly the citizens decide to get rid of the beggars once and for all. The cattle-call goes out for any brave, able-bodied warriors who want to head underground and clean out the warrens.

Scenario 3: An interesting sub-plot for a character or two is to have his parents reveal he is a Changeling. This could be the source of lots of soul searching and some fascinating character play, especially when the beggars come to their "brother" for aid in a dire situation.

The Undercity is less an establishment than it is a whole city within a city. Often overlooked, despised and forgotten, the beggars have a purpose in the society, and have a subtle power that is stronger and more forceful than any of them could be alone.

Best not spit on a beggar, says an old City proverb, for tomorrow he could be your only friend.

The Big Fish Gang



Evil and crime flow through Nightside like sludge through the sewers. Crimes take place everywhere, and criminals seemingly strike randomly whenever they hit. But crime is less a chaotic avocation of poor citizens than it is a highly organized business under the able, and iron fisted, control of a felonious mastermind. At best you can hope the Big Fish Gang will ignore you, and at the worst you better pray they kill you, because the alternatives are not at all desirable.

The Big Fish Gang operates out of a florist shop located midway down a commercial street centered in the poorer section of town. First impressions of the building give no real clue to the darker secrets that tie this modest-seeming enterprise to the deadly nightside of City life. A few hours of casual observation, if the proprietor let one get away with such, might reveal a sinister trend in the quiet shop's clientele.

The owner is a robust, healthy man with a ready smile and a happy greeting for all passers-by. The flowers are many and varied, from cheap run-of-the-mill wildflowers gathered outside the City, to very exotic blossoms that have no business being sold in the "lower City." Prices vary from appropriate for the common flowers to nothing short of extortion for the rarer plants. The prosperous exterior belies the lack of sales, and the patrons who do enter seem to express little interest in floral arrangements, except, perhaps, large funeral bouquets.

This unlikely shop does far more business through the back door than ever passes through the front. Faces peering out of the second story windows, at various intervals as they search the streets below for rival gang members, nosy City guardsmen and snoops are enough to chill the bones of even the most hardened adventurer. From this simple and surprisingly peaceful location, the Big Fish Gang runs most of the City's protection rackets, gambling, drugs and vice.

AN EXPURGATED GANG HISTORY

Twenty years ago Daiodach "Danny the Big Fish" O'Grunnion was nothing more than an alley-basher and sneak whose plans extended no further than the next day and plotted a course toward the nearest gallows. Then, with a skill at manipulation, planning and ability to avoid repeated attempts to betray him, Danny clawed his way out of the gutter to pull together a criminal empire unrivaled in the history of the City.

Whether by luck or design, Danny's early moves bought him enough time to solidify his grasp on Nightside. His initial efforts brought down some of the other gangs, including the brutal Street Dog Bunch (a group of ex-mercenaries who defied the City Guards' attempts to root them out). The City guards, realizing he accomplished something they could not, left him alone because they believed they could get him later.

Then Danny secretly engineered a daring series of kidnappings of people from the richer section of the City. Publicly, Danny acted as an intermediary and got all the victims back alive, though the ransoms were never recovered. Grateful, and influential, people held the City guardsmen off Danny because of his actions on their behalf. Danny, on the other hand, has commented that a few fingers from a missing loved one is a surer way of producing gold than a Dwarven Mine!

The successful kidnapping schemes sparked the Gang's protection racket. Danny approached businesses throughout the City and offered them, for a modest price, preventative insurance against "accidents." When one bold shopkeeper, may he rest in peace (wherever he is), observed that some of those buying Danny's insurance still had accidents, Danny shrugged and replied, "Yeah, but anyone who doesn't buy insurance always has a catastrophe!"

Danny's gang grew and 15 years ago he absorbed the prostitution kingpin of the City, Zak "Onions" Mudmind, and his operation into the Big Fish Gang. Zak, soon thereafter (and to his eternal regret), met a half-elf named Garowin "Sheets" Eddrad. Zak knew "Sheets" was a pimp, and had been kicked out of the brothel he worked through, but sensed no deception when the elf told him that the same brothel was the reason Zak's profits were down. Zak had the brothel torched and

James "Bear" Peters shamelessly exploited his close personal relationship, and gross size advantage to get this establishment into this Citybook. Actually, the Big Fish Gang preceded the Cock and Bull in delivery, but follows it in the actual book. The Big Fish Gang is the heart of crime in Nightside, and covers all the bases.

brought "Sheets" in as his Lieutenant. That relationship lasted for 7 years, then, when Lugal Joywright and Karig Netter killed Mudmind, Danny promoted "Sheets" to his present, exaulted, position as the City's whoremaster.

"Sheets" is one of Danny's two "Pillars of Evil" supporting his underworld empire. The second Pillar was a very important addition to the gang. Thranx "Silver" Steel is a hitman with no equal in the City. His nickname comes from his passion for silver, and he is a familiar figure in the open market when the Silver Merchants arrive from the east to display their wares. Rumor has it that his collection of silver statuettes is unrivaled in the City, though no one passing that rumor on has ever claimed to have seen Thranx's hoard. Another rumor suggests the elusive "Steel Man" had one of his coins struck in silver as a token of respect for Thranx's skill, but neither man has confirmed that story.

With Thranx to eliminate competitors, either before or after they made their peace with Danny and joined him, and "Sheets" to offer his manipulative skills to squeeze even more profits from each evil enterprise, Danny's control of City crime is nearly absolute. The only people who remain beyond his grasp are those who control enough magic or have powerful enough friends to hold the gang at bay.

LAYOUT

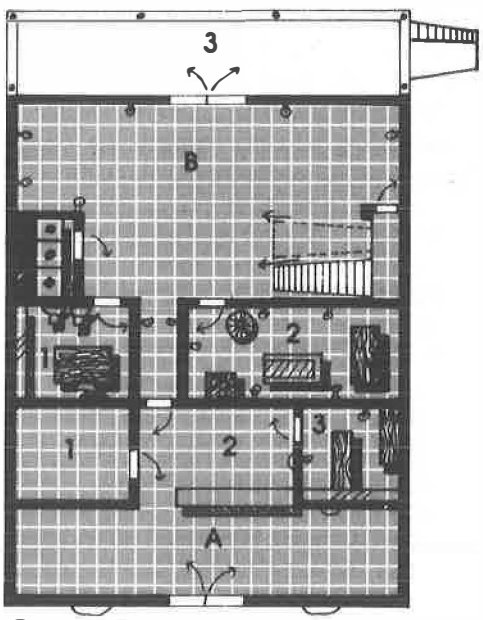
Ground Floor

A. The Flower Shop (20' x 40') The Flower Shop is just that, a flower shop. Danny's love for flowers is probably the only normal thing about him, and he personally arranges all the bouquets on display. His wares are some of the finest in the City, so people will brave Nightside to buy from him. Buy flowers from Danny and you have a friend for life. (With friends like these...) The cold room (1) keeps the flowers on display fresh day after day. From time to time the odd corpse can be found in here. The office (2) is where flowers are paid for and special arrangements are made. The cash box rarely contains more than 50 gold pieces and the last guy who tried to rob the store was last seen around town, in little bits and pieces. The potting room (3) is where Danny works on the flowers. From time to time he'll take a street kid in to help him, but Danny generally works alone here if he has no customers. A narrow window lets him look into the shop while working.

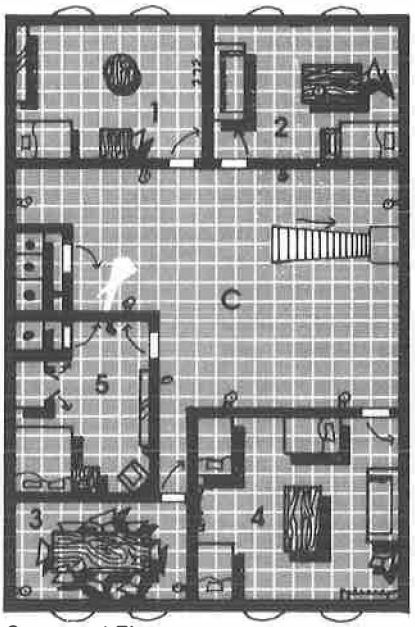
B. The Back Room (40' x 40') This is crime central and serves as a gathering place for Danny's gang. Upward of a dozen soldiers will be here at any one time and the place feels like something halfway between a neighborhood bar and a major civil rights violation waiting to happen. The accounting office (1) handles all the income and outflow for the Gang's various operations (gambling, drugs, prostitution, theft, murder and kidnapping). The books are kept in a complicated code known only to Danny, the bookkeepers and Eddrad. The crooked gambling device shop (2) Danny forced Dicey McFarland to set up is staffed by nameless, faceless women from the Nightside section of town. None of them know what they're doing, really, and just work for Danny's respectable wages. They assume Danny can't be all bad if he's willing to pay them a living wage and only wants silence in return. The raw ingredients of crooked roulette wheels, loaded dice and shaved card decks abound here, but fixing gambling is the least of the Gang's crimes, so the evidence presents a threat to no one. The loading dock (3) backs to the alley behind the shop and is where fences come to offload their take. Large items, like furniture, chests and statuary get stored on the dock itself, while the smaller stuff is taken up to the second floor. The gang members wandering around here make stealing anything from the loading dock close to suicidal.

The Second Floor

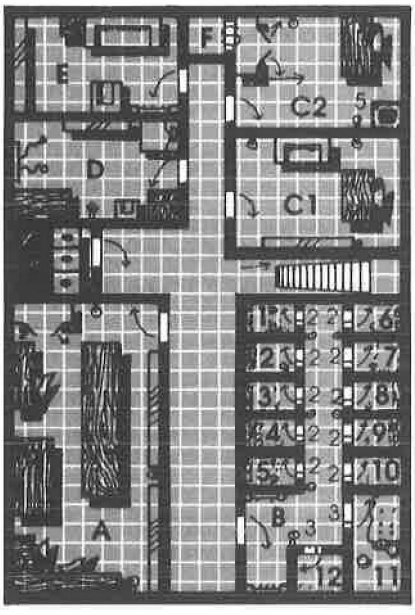
C. Storage (40' x 30') The center of the floor is given over to storage of smaller stolen items. Most of the things here, like silver serving sets, fine crystal, small statues and works of art, get moved out quickly after they come in. On any sort of a normal schedule you might find a stolen item here a week after it was stolen, but it would be gone again 3-4 days after that.



Ground Floor



Second Floor



Basement

SCALE: one square = 2 feet

While that makes for lots of loot, all this stuff is stolen. Trying to sell something lifted here would be a problem. All the fences are Danny's, and someone else owns the item.

C1. and C2. (14' x 20') These two apartments are used by Gang staff members (or foreign couriers) and are prized for their easy access to the back alley. They are a bit spartan, but contain a few of the resident's personal items to make the rooms more comfortable.

C3. The "Board Room" (10' x 18') This room is generally reserved for strategy sessions and high level meetings within the Gang. If some Gang members hatch a plot to steal something really big (like the Mayor's office), Danny and other advisors will review the plans here and either reject, improve or approve them. Because this room looks out onto the street there is always one soldier on watch duty up here.

C4. The Ready Room (19' x 21') The Ready room is used as a dorm for Gang members before and after a big job. As paranoid as Danny is about security and being double-crossed, he likes to have his men on site during an operation. Most of the men like using the room because it is a sanctuary for them until the heat immediately following a job dies down. Because this is used by lots of people who are about to commit or who have just committed a crime, the room is very spartan and devoid of anything than can be connected with any one person.

C5. Danny's Apartment (18' x 15) Danny has another, far more posh, apartment elsewhere in town, but keeps this apartment for difficult times or when he just does not want to walk home. The most remarkable thing about this room are the flowers which get changed every day, even if the only time Danny spends in the room is changing the flowers. The room has its own privy and a large bed. The cabinet contains a few sets of clean clothes and the shelves hold a number of colorful vases that Danny uses to put flowers in.

The Basement

A. Doc Mindwort's Lab (30' x 15') The lab is used for the refinement of the Gang's drugs and 80% of the Gang's supply can be found stored here. The plants themselves are raised out the in the countryside. Doc, sometimes accompanied by Silver, visits them on a weekly basis. He leaves at noon on Tuesday and returns with his raw drug material at noon on Thursday. Aside from lab equipment (alembics, drying pans, etc.) the only thing of value in here is the Gang's drug supply.

B. Holding Cells (30' x 16') **Cells 1-10** are used to hold Eddrad's women while they undergo their "indoctrination." The cells themselves are little more than thick walled cages with straw thrown down and a water bucket. The prisoners are fed once a day, and the process resembles hog-slopping more than it does a meal. **Cell 11** is a little nicer because the Gang uses it to hold kidnap victims meant for ransom. These individuals are usually kept under the influence of the Gold Lotus because it is not addictive, but effectively blanks the victim's memory while under the drug. **Cell 12** is a small box where Danny deposits snitches, rivals or other individuals he wants information out of before he kills them. Magic keeps the walls hot and the cell closely resembles a sauna. Danny likes the cell being hot because he assumes the next stop for anyone in there is Hell, so they might as well get used to the heat.

Note: all the cells have especially thick walls to dampen all sounds.

C1. Accountants' Office (12' x 18') While receipts come in from the streets into the office upstairs, the final and full picture is assembled here. The shelves contain the various ledgers, all coded, and provide the only good look at the appalling vastness of Danny's empire. While no money is kept in this room, at least one soldier is present at all times and, during daylight hours, one accountant will be scribbling in a massive tome.

C2. Danny's Office (12' x 18') This is where Danny conducts most of the Gang's business. The corner safe[5] holds 20,000 - 50,000 gold pieces in bullion, gems and various coins sacked up in amounts ranging from 50-500 gps. The safe is only opened when Danny is putting money in or taking money out, so the chances of catching it open are very slim. The safe is built of Dwarvish iron, but runes worked into it render it immune to magic designed to open it.

The wardrobe in the northwest corner is hinged to slide forward and provide access to **F**, the tunnel to the sewers. Only Danny and Silver know of it.

D. Doc Mindwort's Room (10' x 18') No one but Doc Mindwort ever goes into this room, and it's just as well. Everything is overgrown with verdant mosses, vines and flowering plants. The room looks less like an apartment than it does a grove in a rainforest! Fairly often a captive woman will be restrained against the west wall. If anyone ever rescues one of Doc Mindwort's prisoners there is 1 chance in 100 she'll be "infected" with the spores of a flesh-consuming plant, which will make for a very strange fungus infection soon spreading through the City! Aside from a captive, there is nothing of value in here because Mindwort only values his plants and keeps nothing else.

E. Silver Steel's Apartment (10' x 18') Like his boss, Steel maintains other quarters in the City, but this room is his to use when he wants or needs it. Appointed more like a sitting room — Steel sleeps on the couch — it holds a few of his more favorite silver statues. They are quite valuable, but the cost of stealing one certainly will not be worth the return on it unless, of course, Steel can no longer protest its theft.

F. Tunnel to the Sewers Access to the tunnel comes through a secret door hidden by the wardrobe in Danny's office (**C2**). It leads directly into the sewers and, thereby, has access to almost anywhere in the City.

PERSONALITIES

Daiodach "Danny the Big Fish" O'Grunnion *Human, Ht. 6'2", Wt. 220#, Age: 36. Fighting Prowess: Good with knife, club and hands, Fair with sword and projectile weapons. Magic Ability: none, except for the ring described below.*

Outwardly Danny is a dark haired and brown eyed flower shop owner. He glad-hands everyone and is always laughing at life. Unlike other members of his gang he does not frighten children just by looking at them, and has been known to make gifts of flowers to people on the street from time to time. Anyone in Nightside stupid or naive enough to be unaware of Danny's real stock and trade could never believe he is the heartless ruler of the Big Fish Gang.

In reality Danny is a ruthless fiend who has systematically

crushed all other criminal gangs and underworld independents. Danny hates anyone he sees as horning in on his "territory," territory that is defined largely by his whim. Those who cross or defy the Big Fish are easy to identify, and can be seen all over town (an arm here, a torso there). When dealing with opposition he will negotiate freely and plan an ambush. He likes to take enemies by surprise and from behind!

Danny's success, and his ability to smother "palace" revolts stems from a lucky break in his early career. He and a partner worked a simple scam: the partner drops a crate from a building roof onto a pedestrian, and Danny runs up to help. Danny would rob the stricken victim and run off before any pursuit could be organized. One victim was a frail old Elven moneylender who died when the crate hit him. Danny took the elf's purse and pulled a ring from his finger. Danny split the money with his partner, but kept the ring for himself.

The ring was magical, and the reason the elf had lasted as long as he did in his business. The ring immediately alerts the wearer to the hostile thoughts of anyone within a ten foot radius. Danny discovered, at his next meeting with his partner, that the man planned dissolve their partnership (with extreme prejudice). Danny suggested they switch places for that day, and the crate, which somehow got filled with rocks, just happened to drop on Danny's partner.

From that point forward Danny danced through plots and built up his gang. He's always on the lookout for new soldiers and, for obvious reasons, he interviews them himself. Of course, Danny sees a thin line between recruiting new thugs and eliminating prospective competition, so the Big Fish Gang is a only a place for men with small ambitions.

Garowin "Sheets" Eddrad. *Half-elf, Ht. 6'7", Wt. 225#, Age: 72 (fairly young for an elf). Fighting Prowess: Very good with knife, Good with garrote, Fair with swords. Magic Ability: Very good C5.*

Sheets is tall and slender, like most elves, but the lines on his face betray the human blood in his veins. His black hair is worn at shoulder length and his blue eyes give him an intimidating stare. He has a two inch long scar running from nose, beneath his left eye and back toward his ear.

Nothing is known of Sheets' life before he arrived in the City. His first job was as a bouncer in a local brothel. The customers respected his strength and apparent skill at arms while the women liked his looks and tried to melt his iceheart. Sheets, however, did not fall prey to their charms, and instead devoted himself to solving the perennial problem of families or "lovers" stealing the best girls away from the brothels. He knew training the women was expensive, and a high turnover rate cut badly into profits.

Sheets started working with a combination of magic and hypnosis to keep the women in the business, to get them to give him money on the side, and then to forget the payments and what he was doing to them. One harlot discovered what he was doing to a new girl and reported him to the "Madam" (who thought the time Sheets spent alone with the women was for normal purposes). Angered at what she learned, she dismissed Sheets. Sheets did not want to leave, but after an altercation that left him the scar on his face, he departed.

Sheets went straight to Zak "Onions" Mudmind and got

— Garowin "Sheets" Eddrad —

him to burn his old employer's brothel to the ground. The Madam perished in the fire and Sheets was hired to oversee most of Mudmind's prostitutes. Later Sheets let his "friend" Lugal Joywright know that Zak had ordered Lugal's mother's death. When Lugal and Karig Netter killed Onions, Danny elevated Sheets to take his ex-master's place.

The problem of trained women leaving the "business" still drained the operation's resources. Sheets presented Danny with a plan to eliminate such waste, and Danny gave Sheets free rein and money to put his plan into effect. Sheets introduced "Mind Spring" into the training process and forced the women already working for him into the addiction, to produce loyal workers. The fact that the women hate Sheets does not bother the elf at all, and actually pleases him to no end.

Sheets is the only member of the Gang who exceeds Danny in contempt for and hatred of anything approaching nobility. Sheets plans to take over Danny's gang, but he's recognized Danny's ring as a fabled Elven treasure. Sheets is content to wait, because he knows he'll outlive Danny, and in the meantime he has so many people to build up and destroy (like Lugal Joywright) that he needs no other diversions.

Thranx "Silver" Steel. *Human, Ht. 6'5", Wt. 185#, Age: Unknown. Fighting Prowess: Very Good with knives and hands, Good with swords, Excellent with dart projectors, blow guns, and spring loaded mechanisms (like his walking stick). Excellent toxicology skill.*

Silver has white hair streaked with black and wears it at a moderate length. He is almost skeletally thin. Despite his

remarkable height, his ability to change facial expression with disguises and vary his height by stooping has made him impossible to identify on the rare occasion he was actually seen near a victim.

Silver is a hitman par-excellence. He has never been suspected, accused or caught, and he can count the failures in his long career on the fingers of one hand. He is not a leader, and never will be. He kills only on order, or in pursuit of silver trinkets, but other than that cannot be provoked to do for "free" what others pay him so well do to. Silver Steel is a studious, quiet man who spends long hours in the flower shop basement discussing various drugs, poisons and organic agents with "Doc" Mindwort (see below).

Steel's only outward vice is his collection of fine silver artifacts. These items have no real order to them, though Silver can recite the history of each and every one without recourse to notes, and vary from cast silver doorknobs and finely crafted statuettes to a particularly fine silver trimmed cabinet door. Every item in his collection exhibits a high level of craftsmanship. Periodically Silver can be found in the City's shops and bazaars adding to his collection. The collection itself is left unguarded in his rooms, but his reputation wards the items well enough. Even a theft threatened in jest is enough to attract Steel's murderous attention.

Silver kills on Danny's orders, or will supervise the job if so directed by his master. Silver will use whatever method Danny dictates, but if left to his own devices he prefers to shoot a poisoned dart into the victim with his spring loaded silver and ebony walking stick. The device has a range of 100 feet, and though it is difficult to reload, Silver has never needed more than the cane's single shot to kill anyone.

Minodar "Doc" Mindwort. *Hobbit, Ht. 3'10", Wt. 110#, Age: 60. Magic Ability: Fair in C2, except as pertains to plant growth, in which case he is considered Excellent.*

This grey-haired, grey-eyed hobbit is a bipedal thunderstorm ready to lash out at anyone who gets in his way. By his way of thinking there are, aside from himself, only two other useful animal lifeforms alive: Silver Steel (his only true friend) and Danny O'Grunnion, his benefactor. Mindwort's alliance with the Big Fish is unstable, from his point of view, and if the gang ever stops supplying him with women small enough for him to subdue, his supply of drugs for them will vanish and ruin the whole organization.

Mindwort is a bitter hobbit who hates animal life and reveres plants as a superior lifeform. As a child Minodar noticed the perfection of plants. They make their own food, can shatter rocks, are patient and cannot be defeated. Even when a fire consumes a whole forest, the first things to come back to the burned landscape are plants. They are beautiful and lack all the vices and crudities that make animals vicious and hostile. Plants waste nothing and are the epitome of life.

As Minodar's facination with plants grew, his horror at the treatment of plants by hobbitkind likewise expanded. It became apparent to him that animals were merely parasites controlling plants for their own purposes. He opposed the annual harvest festivals as bloody massacres and had to be restrained from attacking scythe-armed farmhands. He withdrew from the hobbit community, then fled and tried to preach his gospel of plant superiority across the land. His small size and radical view earned him many nights in jail or, even worse, a night spent battered and bleeding in an alleyway. Even as humanoids rejected and abused him, however, plants provided the products that healed him, and for that he was eternally grateful.

Mindwort came to Danny's attention when he wandered into the florist shop and started talking to some of the plants. Danny almost threw him out, but he watched as Mindwort touched ailing plants and they began to flourish. Danny quickly approached the hobbit and asked if he'd like to work in the shop. The hobbit accepted the job and Danny found that even the most exotic plant thrived when Mindwort tended it. With this discovery Danny offered the hobbit anything he wanted to work on producing more potent narcotic plants. Mindwort agreed and Danny loses no sleep over the women who enter Mindwort's rooms and never make it back out.

In addition to his experiments, Doc tends to the gang's physical injuries, but only when ordered to do so. This is quite a concession on his part, after all, because he feels the vast bulk of humanity is fit only for fertilizer!

Soldiers The gang's footsoldiers fall into several classes. The lowest class, called thugs, is made up of strong, young humans ranging in height from 5'9" to 6'3" and 170-230#. They're Good with clublike weapons, Fair with knives and Average with anything else. They're recruited from all over and generally are used as cheap labor or fighters in a pinch.

The next step up, soldiers, tend to be about the same size as the thugs, but they're smarter and more skilled. They're Good with knives and projectiles and Fair with swords. They can be trusted to keep their mouths shut when they hear things, and to obey orders. Danny keeps four of them around as bodyguards and lookouts. The highest rank is enforcer. The elite of the gang's warriors, they are selected for size, skill, cunning and ability to be absolutely cold-blooded about certain things. The enforcers are Very Good with clubs or knives, Good hand to hand and Good with arson devices.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

Scenario 1: The characters are hired by an individual of dubious background to transport a beautiful, small silver statuette out of the City. He pays well and in advance. Unfortunately, the item was stolen from Steel and he is not in the least amused with the situation.

Scenario 2: A coalition of merchants hire the characters as an armed force to oppose the Big Fish in an attempt to get out from under his protection racket. Arrayed against them is Danny's army and the battle joins in one horrible night of fire and fighting as Danny tries to reassert control over Nightside!

The Big Fish Gang is the evil heart of Nightside, and it beats strongly. The best way to deal with it is to avoid dealing with it at all, but honest folk can only be pushed so far. Still, Danny's been resilient enough to survive other challengers to his rule. And if you eliminate him, Garowin Eddrad waits in the wings to assume control. Is Danny the lesser of two evils?

The House of Infinite Dreams

The House of Infinite Dreams is a specialty establishment providing a man of means with the feminine companionship most suited to his physical or emotional needs. But the House also offers complete privacy and total discretion in specific business dealings of a very special nature, serving as a rondezvous for certain individuals whose wealth, rank, position, employment, politics — or all of the aforementioned — deny them the opportunity to meet elsewhere.

Catering to the wealthy, influential and up-and-coming — in addition to the momentarily fortuitous — The House of Infinite Dreams is a place of understated elegance and quiet class, lacking the garishness of so many establishments of a similar order. Outwardly, the three-story house — with buff-toned adobe walls and russet canvas awnings providing a frieze around the roof timbers, over windows and the arched atrium entryway — resembles the private residence of a prosperous merchant or influential politician. There is no hint of its true purpose; only an etched brass nameplate beside the entryway divulges the name of the establishment: *The House of Infinite Dreams — For the Discerning Male.*

Inside, instead of red lanterns and lurid appointments, the House offers muted yet sufficient candlelight, the warmth of natural woods in walls and furnishings, the tasteful touch of brass and glass. It is many things to many people, depending on mood or requirements.

By its very nature and the services offered, the House's "business day" is limited to the hours between dusk and dawn. For happenstance and ordinary customers, these times are strictly observed by the staff. But, for certain individuals, it is possible to gain entry to the House during the day. It is understood that such entry is restricted to invitation by the proprietor, Gilada Nev, or by special permission via a generous compensation for disturbing the peace of the House during daylight hours. Only Gilada Nev and her major-domo, Haakon Slashe, have the authority to permit entry during "non-business" hours.

Jennifer Roberson is one of the premier fantasy writers in the world todsy. Her *Cheysuli* Series has already won her a large following, and *Sworddancer*, a novel in another series, is highly regarded by critics and readers alike. Ever since she worked on Citybook II she'd laid claim to whatever brothel ended up in Citybook III, and The House of Infinite Dreams is an excellent addition to this book and the City!

LAYOUT

The House is built in the shape of a hollow square, with the central opening rising from the ground floor to the roof above the third floor. All the walkways on the second and third floors are visible from this common room, and the opening provides the House with a comfortable airy atmosphere that unconsciously soothes both customers and staff.

A. Atrium (35' x 10') The arched atrium entryway — heavily foliaged — is more than it seems, serving as a buffer zone between the street and the House itself. The gate is always locked[4] and entrance is gained only after the patron has identified himself to the staff member serving as streetside liaison, who then carries word to the major-domo or Gilada Nev herself for permission. Meanwhile another staff member, secreted in the foliage, keeps an eye on the prospective patron. Because the House is one of the few places not under the Big Fish Gang's control, Gilada takes this precaution to make sure the client is not a gang member who will then be supplied with items needed to create an "inflamed incident" at the House. This precaution was initiated after the former favorite courtesan vanished without a trace.

B. Common Rooms (35' x 25') Upon entering the House proper through the front door, also customarily locked[5], guests encounter a foyer with openings in three directions. The largest opening leads directly into the common room, where the patrons may pass the time in simple camaraderie, quiet entertainments with the ladies, or in divertissements such as a large assortment of games of chance. The cost of an evening's entertainment and companionship is high, therefore food and drink are provided free of charge: an added incentive for certain patrons to develop loose tongues and incautious fellowship.

C. Withdrawing Rooms (10' x 8') These are private drawing rooms for those men wishing to pursue business of a more private nature, man to man. Not even their companions will enter. Food and drink is served only upon request, and then by the castrated deaf-mute, Dichali, who — like others — was rescued from begging in the streets by Gilada Nev.

D. Kitchen (12' x 10') The House offers plain food as well as delicacies of a gourmet nature. The kitchen is fully appointed and quite capable of serving a full-fledged banquet. Gilada's cook, Ossi, has a great reputation; though Ossi says little, rumor has it he once served as head cook in a royal palace.

E. Pantry (5' x 10') Ossi's private storage area, containing all manner of foodstuffs. Unknown to all but Gilada Nev, Slashe and Ossi himself, there is a secret panel that opens into a passageway leading into the conduit most commonly used as a sewer, leading to the sea, but certain structural additions have rendered it an alternative escape route, just in case.

F. Stairway/Wine Cellar (20' x 20') In a corner of the pantry is a trapdoor and wooden stairway leading down into the wine cellar. This stairway is not hidden, and is well-known to staff. The wine cellar is carved out of bedrock and routinely cooled by the nearness of the underground sewer conduit carrying refuse to the sea. The cellar contains tuns and casks of fine wines, in addition to kegs of ale, lager and cider. Two special 6' high wooden racks, built to conceal the secret passageway from the pantry and the entrance to the conduit, stand in one corner. A mechanism lets both racks swing out.

G. Banqueting Room (20' x 20') Formal banquets are infrequent at the House, but not unheard of. At least once a year Gilada invites valued patrons to attend a Revel, presided over by the most popular companion. All food, drink and entertainments are provided free of charge: Gilada's way of saying thanks for the good business. At other times the room is rented out for those patrons who wish to entertain on a grand scale. Most often this is a noble who wishes to entice Karig Netter into taking a "questionable" job.

H. Privacy Closets (8' x 4') Garderobes for patrons wishing to relieve themselves. The only access is through a single unlocked door. Waste drops into and is carried away by a conduit to the sewers.

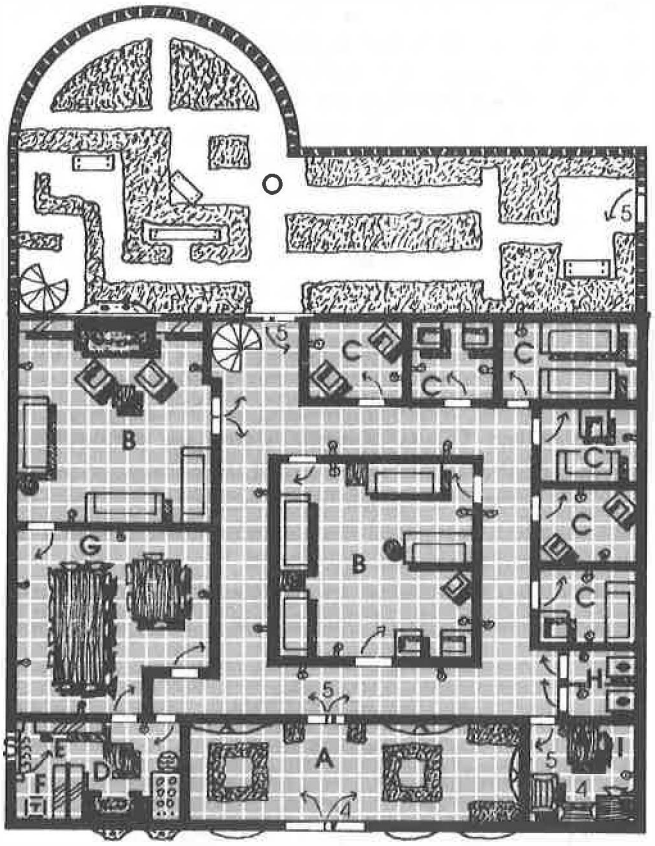
I. Office (12' x 10') Here Gilada Nev keeps the accounts. Furnishings are spartan rather than sumptuous, as if to underscore the utilitarian nature of this office. Haakon Slashe has a table, but only rarely do they ever share the office. Gilada's personal effects are kept in a locked[5] chest. Slashe also has a chest[4].

SECOND FLOOR

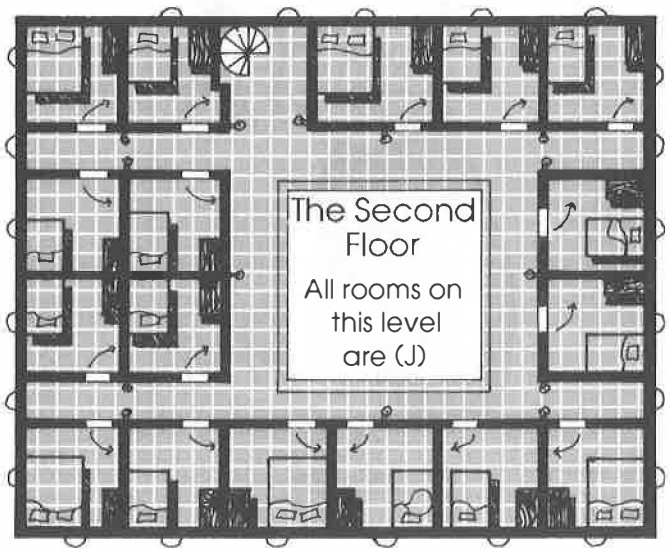
J. Private Chambers (usually 10' x 10') The House characteristically provides comfortable private chambers for those couples preferring pleasure to business, or a mix of both. Discretion and security are the bywords of the House. The second floor belongs to the clients, and their needs are carefully attended to by competent staff members. Each room contains a sumptous bed, a grilled window, a small table and a pedestal armoire for clothes storage.

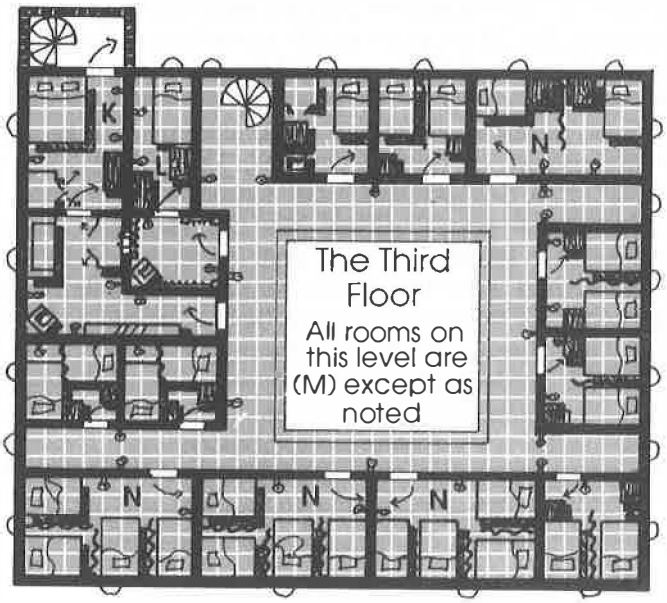
THIRD FLOOR

The third floor is entirely given over to private living quarters. Only the ladies, the household staff, Gilada Nev and



SCALE: one square = 2 feet





Haakon Slashe are allowed on the third floor.

K. Gilada's Suite (25' x 20') Because of her position, Gilada naturally occupies the largest and most comfortable of the living quarters. Her suite is a corner penthouse. The bedchamber is luxuriously appointed, and kept in a perpetual state of semi-darkness in order to promote intimacy. The sitting room itself is bright and airy, serving as a comfortable place of retirement for conversation or contemplation. The walls are lined with bookshelves. One section is mechanized much like the wine rack in the cellar, opening into the sitting room next door. That room belongs to Haakon Slashe. Grilled windows emit sufficient light, and a narrow door opens onto a private balcony, from which a spiral staircase leads down into a walled garden at the back of the establishment.

L. Slashe's Suite (18' x 15') Smaller and less sumptuous than Gilada's, Slashe's suite is nonetheless comfortable and highly personalized. Here his past is best displayed in the sitting portion of the suite, where the walls are bedecked with weapons of differing national origins, lending truth to the rumor that Slashe once served as a mercenary. There are no books, but the secret panel to Gilada's suite is hidden by a wooden weapons rack. From Slashe's sitting room or bed chamber, there is no access to the balcony or stairway. In order to leave the House unnoticed, Slashe must exit normally into the corridor and then enter Gilada's suite, or go through Gilada's room via the secret panel.

M. Private Chambers (10' x 10') Small rooms are allotted the ladies for personal use apart from business. Clients are never allowed on the third floor; hence, these rooms are highly private and personal. Two girls share each room, except for the one ranking the highest in client popularity, earnings and intelligence sources. The only entrances to these rooms are a door from the main corridor, which is accessible only via the main stairway. Each room contains two beds, pedestal-type clothing chests and two nightstands. The highest ranking of the ladies enjoys a larger bedroom, and shares it with no one. Appointments and furnishings are much the same, if a trifle more lavish and individualized.

N. Staff Rooms (18' x 10') Those individuals whose employment within the House depends on serving Gilada, Slashe and the ladies share smaller quarters. Ossi and Dichali share one room, divided by a curtain; the apprentices — depending upon their numbers —- share two or three other small rooms.

O. Back Garden (67' x 32') Much like the atrium entrance, the back garden is walled and gated, although with an eye toward security rather than elegance. The gate is always locked[5]. It is only unlocked when individuals with specific directions pass word to Gilada Nev that they have secret intelligence to impart. When the word is thus passed, Gilada will meet them in the garden. The garden is accessible to the common room through an obvious back door, and all may enjoy the fragrances of the varied flowers and foliage. But the gate itself, mostly hidden in shadows and vegetation, is only rarely used, providing a second, more discreet exit from the House for clients who require special attention.

PERSONALITIES

Gilada Nev *Human, Ht. 5'6", Wt. 125#, Age: unknown, but thought to be around 40. Fighting Prowess: fair with a dagger, otherwise poor.*

Gilada, whose name means "My joy is eternal," or "My hill is a witness," personally welcomes clients of wealth and substance, men whose business and personal needs only she can serve by providing the finest in feminine companions this side of Dionysia. No one is certain of Gilada Nev's age; no one is impolite enough to ask. She is exotically lovely with dusky skin, black hair, liquid amber eyes and a flawless, almost alien bone structure. Her past is as unknown as her age, although desultory talk claims near nearly forty, attributes her accent to island locales, and suggests she was formerly a courtesan to a very powerful prince in a foreign land, and was forced to leave him because of his new — and insanely jealous — wife.

Curiously this supposition, built from old caravan tales and one, now long since burned, copy of a warrant brought to the City by a bounty hunter, is very close to the truth. The Prince, after delaying as long as possible, agreed to a political marriage and, although he consumated the union, had no intention of letting Gilada get away. His wife, on the other hand, used her personal bodyguard company to make life miserable for Gilada; from public insults to the destruction of anything she owned, nothing was beneath the Princess' wrath. Things got yet worse when the Princess bore a son and could not stand her husband's love for the child when it was contrasted with his absolute loathing of his mother. The Princess even had Gilada severely beaten for a fabricated offense, but the Prince still did not send the courtesean away. Everyone knew the two women hated each other and most of the court favorites, who liked the charming Gilada, waited to see how the concubine would strike back!

Soon thereafter the Princess was poisoned. Her bodyguards went mad and, in a night of utter horror, stalked the palace

— Gilada Nev —

and slaughtered innocents in their quest for Gilada. Gilada, helped by Ossi and Haakon Slashe, fled the Palace. She left a note for the Prince that assured him she was innocent, and he believed her. His efforts to find her and bring her back to justice, though appearing dilligent and complete, lacked any enthusiasm and backing. Only the Princess' kin, who helped raise the son, berated the Prince for never finding the fugitive.

Gilada is subtly exciting, intellectually stimulating, discreet, discerning and delightful, as well as very shrewd. Pillow talk is valuable babble; Gilada Nev pays excellent bonuses to the ladies who divulge what has been divulged to them in the afterglow of "companionship," and therefore knows as much, if not more, of how things work in the City than any other person. This gives her an incredible power base in the City. Gilada has her fingers in various pies, including blackmail, commodities speculation and kingmaking. Ostensibly a powerless woman — merely a high-priced madam — Gilada is, in truth, the person behind much of City policy. And although her manner gives away nothing but subtle serenity and delicate diplomacy, all know Gilada Nev is a stiletto sheathed in silk. But no one knows when the stiletto will strike, or how deeply it will cut.

Haakon Slashe *Human, Ht. 6'3", Wt. 225#, Age: unknown, but probably mid to late forties. Fighting Prowess: Excellent in all regards and, despite their origins, the skills have become part and parcel of Slashe.*

Haakon Slashe is Gilada's major-domo, the associate who provides the masculine physical presence sometimes required in the day-to-day operation of the House of Infinite Dreams, and in the occasional business dealings with those who will not consider discussing such things with women. Slashe is an unknown quantity, save for his obvious and unparalleled loyalty to Gilada; in the past, rivals and would-be partners seeking Gilada Nev's favors, influence and, occasionally, even disfigurement or death, have learned the hard way that he cannot be bought or physically persuaded to take up other loyalties. Physically imposing, Slashe's height, strength and build, in addition to numerous nondescript nicks and scars on hands, arms and face, suggest a former occupation as a mercenary soldier. His prowess and experience is undoubted; occasionally it is necessary for Slashe to suggest certain clients remove themselves to other establishments, and he has yet to lose verbal or physical confrontations. Wagers are often laid, at long odds, on his success.

To the untrained eye Slashe goes weaponless; to those who know weaponry and mercenaries, it is obvious he wears a sheath knife on each forearm, in addition to a throwing knife at the back of his neck, beneath his collar. Bets say he also carries one or two knives in his boots, but no one has ever seen them to settle the wagers.

No one is quite certain of the relationship between Gilada and Slashe, although it is no secret within the House that their suites adjoin. It is generally believed they were passionate lovers in the past, but have grown from that bond to one of mutual comfort and habit. There is no hint of rivalry or dissatisfaction; Gilada occasionally takes lovers, and Slashe has been known to spend an evening with one of the experienced ladies or with an apprentice when she makes the transition from girl to woman. Oddly, even Gilada does not know as much about Slashe as she believes she does.

Haakon Slashe was one of the first innocents the Princess' guards attacked in their blood frenzy. Mortally wounded, Slashe lay close to death and vowed he'd give his soul for power and skill enough to insure Gilada's safety and the undying irritation of Princess' family. Suddenly a slick, dark haired man stooped over him and, smiling all the while, helped Slashe make his mark with his blood on a piece of parchment. The man vanished in a brimstone cloud (see Two-scratch Dickens in Domdaniel's Gate) and Slashe found himself hale, hearty, and gifted with supernormal combat abilities. He found Gilada and Ossi, fought free of the palace with them and safeguarded them all the way to the City. Gilada beseeched him to remain with her, as her guardian and partner, and he agreed.

Slashe remembers nothing of the bargain he struck with Dickens that night in the Palace, though he would recognize the man if he saw him again. Slashe does not realize that the date for collection on that contract has long since passed (because of Dickens' accident) and the skills he got that night have become part of him for all time. The combat skills are so good that Slashe eschews swords and spears because they make killing *too* easy.

Like Gilada Nev, Slashe is obviously a foreigner. His blond hair, blue eyes and fair skin lead one to conclude he is from well north of the City. He is Gilada's silent partner in more ways than one: rarely does he speak to anyone but Gilada. But when he does speak, it pays to listen.

Lirit *Human, Ht. 5'2", Wt. 100#, Age: 19. Fighting Prowess: be serious.*

The most desired of all Gilada's ladies, flame-haired, green-eyed Lirit holds the highest place in the hierarchy of companions because of her beauty, client popularity and unparalleled skill. She can afford to be at her leisure more often than others, selecting clients with great care even as they select her. She is pampered to a certain degree by the household staff because she gives them little gifts or tips them well. Because she entertains only the most influential of men, her information is of greater value to Gilada, and she is paid accordingly. But, although her position is desireable, it is also risky. It occasionally rouses petty jealousies and spiteful arguments. There are whispers that Lirit's high position — unusual at her young age — was gained through violence rather than merit; Lirit's predecessor Talissa, although popular with the other ladies as well as most of the clients, vanished without a trace. Rumors abound, and the unkindest implicate Lirit in Talissa's disappearance.

Ossi *Human, Ht. 5'8", Wt. 170#, Age: 50. Fighting Prowess: Fair with a knife, poor otherwise.*

Ossi, the slightly heavy, silver-haired cook at the House of Infinite Dreams, is intensely loyal to a man he's not seen for over twenty years. Gilada's Prince bought and freed Ossi from slavery when both of them were quite young. That one act — an act for which the Prince was chastened by his father — earned him a lifetime of loyalty from the cook. Not only did Ossi struggle, from that day forward, to present the Prince with only the best of food prepared with fresh ingredients, but he did everything he could to insure the Prince's happiness.

Ossi took great delight in preparing special meals for the Prince and Gilada, and even earned the Prince a delay in his marriage by complaining no wedding could be held without a proper feast, and the correct food would not be in season for another eight months. And even after the wedding, to the Princess' disgust, Ossi always saw to it that Gilada fed on the same food as the Prince and Princess.

Finally the Princess, dreading what Gilada would do to avenge herself for the beating, ordered Ossi to poison the concubine. Ossi knew Gilada's death would destroy the Prince, so he poisoned the Princess instead, then ran off to warn Gilada and help her escape from the palace. Though he loathed leaving the Prince, he knew keeping Gilada safe would make the Prince happy, and he has served Gilada as faithfully as he ever served the Prince.

Dichali *Human, Ht. 5'4", Wt. 110#, Age: 15. Fighting Prowess: Good with bare hands — using the beggars' peculiar brand of fighting — otherwise poor.*

Dichali was born deaf to a poor family, yet was normal in all other respects. Then his family, in debt, sold the child to slavers who castrated him and cut out his tongue. They planned to sell him to a temple or patron who needed a servant whose discretion was physically insured, but beggars freed the boy and took him in. He is a member of the Spoiled tribe. When the opportunity to place an agent inside the House of Infinite Dreams presented itself, Dichali was chosen. Gilada Nev, known for her merciful rescues of "street children," pulled Dichali from the streets herself.

While physically immature, and destined to remain that way, the dark-haired, bright-eyed youth is actually very quick-witted. He always has a smile on his face, and all the women mother him. He quickly completes any task given him, and some regular patrons have learned that treating Dichali well earns them the House's good will. Most people, if they notice him at all, speak freely in front of the highly accomplished lip-reader. Dichali, in turn, reports to the beggars regularly.

Despite his tie to the beggars, Dichali is devoted to Gilada. His faith in Ysrai will one day make him whole, he fervently believes, then he will be like Slashe and can protect Gilada. If he learned something that threatened the House, Dichali would find some way to let Gilada know, preferably without making his skills known. If it came down to it, Dichali would give his life for Gilada.

Apprentices These staffmembers are always young girls Gilada has rescued from bad situations or other brothels. Their apprenticeship includes reading, writing, music, cooking and other, more delicate, skills. They study and serve within the House until they have gained the companionship skills needed to command a price worthy of the House of Infinite Dreams. Because Gilada is a fair, considerate and generous employer, her staff is intensely loyal. No one has ever been bribed to provide unapproved entry or other special considerations.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

Scenario 1: One of Gilada's blackmail schemes backfires. The victim, an influential politician, publically admits his infatuation with Lirit, and confesses that he did pledge to divorce his wife to marry the courtesean. But his wife and her father — a wealthy and powerful merchant — publically forgive the politician, and he embarks on a well-publicized campaign to close the House of Infinite Dreams. Many others, who fear their "pillow talk" will be used against them, back the politican's drive to run Gilada out of town.

Then, suddenly, the politician is found dead! The townspeople are furious, but the politicians (under Gilada's subtle pressure) hire some impartial adventurers to conduct an investigation into the murder. Did the merchant kill his son-in-law to privately pay the man back for dishonoring his family? Did the politician's wife, assuming a leopard cannot change his spots, hire a man to kill her faithless husband? Did Gilada herself have Slashe kill the man, then force the City to hire outsiders who she believes can be bribed or duped into laying blame at a door other than the House's? Finally, did one of the other politicians with a skeleton in his closet decide killing the politician and ending this crusade was preferable to having everything come to light?

This whodunit, when interwoven with City politics, can form an interesting puzzle that won't appear dangerous on the surface, but could turn out to be more hazardous than any dungeon adventure ever was.

Scenario 2: Gilada's Prince is gravely ill because of a curse laid on him by a sorcerer and his 20 year old son now sits on the throne. His mother's kin have poisoned his mind against Gilada, and his first act is to renew the search for his mother's killer. Assassins locate her in the City, but cannot infiltrate the House's security. To complicate matters, a confidential agent from the Prince comes to tell Gilada that the curse can only be lifted by a kiss from the victim's true love.

This scenario has the makings of a small campaign, especially when broken into three parts. The assassins could hire adventurers as back-up muscle to assault the House, but the characters would be better involved if, as customers, they are in the House on the night the assassins assault it and try to kill Gilada. United in adversity, the adventurers would then be asked to accompany Gilada, Slashe and Ossi on the perilous trek back to the palace. Lastly the adventurers would have to work their way through court intrigue, the trio's silence about their backgrounds, and the Princess' kin to get Gilada to the Prince. And they may not realize it, until too late, that helping the "murderess" in any way is considered as much a crime, in this nation, as the murder she was supposed to have committed so many years ago.

Whether the players are mere adventurers on the trail of wealth and women, or more power-hungry individuals with Machiavellian intent, all will find The House of Infinite Dreams — with its superb intelligence network and lovely inhabitants — infinitely exciting and invaluable.

The Steel Man

Death lurks in the shadows of Nightside and serves as a constant companion for any who live or work in this crumbling section of the City. At times Death comes suddenly and strikes from ambush in the form of thieves out to share others' wealth. At other times it comes with forewarning, as in a duel, or comes inexorably, as with a wasting disease or a runaway cart on a crowded street. Still, Death almost always seems to choose its victims at random.

But there are times when Death is deliberate. At those time Death is escorted by the Steel Man...

The Steel Man's organization is very much an outlaw group. It has no set hours of operation; indeed it seems willing to strike at any hour of any day. The City guard would pay dearly for someone to deliver the Steel Man's head to them, but they dare not offer a bounty for it, nor pursue any sort of investigation of him. In fact, "unsolved" murders are kept in two separate cabinets: "open" and "Steel Man."

Reaching the assassin to engage his services is difficult, and many people are surprised by finding one of his "calling tokens" — a stainless steel coin with a fist on one face and a dagger on the reverse — before they have decided they need his unique talent. Those actively searching him out will run into a number of people who promise they can get him, but those informants generally just take their "finder's fee" and run; or they are eager and foolish City guardsmen on the lookout for the Steel Man. If a client is persistant enough, though, one of the coins will find its way to him, and he is on his way.

Along with the coin comes a note listing a time and place. If the client appears at the scheduled appointment, a woman meets him and leads him off through the twisting alleys and byways of Nightside. The trail they take winds back on itself a number of times and is traveled at such a pace that memorization of the path would be most difficult. Once the woman has satisfied herself, and the various lookouts along the route, that they have not been followed, the client is led into a ramshackle, old building.

Here the client is blindfolded and led on another journey. Though they travel less swiftly on this leg of the trip, their course is just as confusing. Hidden stairways and doors, in addition to giant turntables that deflect the course of travel by 90°, makes comprehension for the sightless client impossible. In short, there is no way to reach the Steel Man unless you are lead by one of his women.

The client finally finds herself seated in a comfortable chair with a high back and armrests. Her guide removes the blindfold and turns the client over to the half dozen or so beautiful and young serving women scurrying about the room in various states of dress. They offer the client food and wine, but seldom does the prospective client accept the Steel Man's generosity. This is less out of caution than it is the shock of actually seeing the Steel Man!

The Steel Man sits in a massive stone throne across from and facing the client. Torches burn in the wall brackets high behind him, and all details are hidden in deep jet shadows, but all the shadow in the world could not disguise his stature. Standing he would be at least 9' tall, and his build suggests, where he a normal man, a comparable weight of 500 very lean pounds. But he is not normal, and the yellow torchlight skitters across his blackened steel flesh as if the metal caught at it and held it for a short time. His eyes are glowing green orbs of malachite.

Once the client has recovered himself, the guide returns and prompts him to tell his story. The Steel Man listens intently, but does not interrupt or comment. The guide asks for clarifications and details. Finally, after the tale is told, and the guide sees The Steel Man has enough information, she cautions the client to wait for the assassin's decision about the job. The Steel Man either accepts the commission with a nod of his head, or rejects it with a slow shake.

The guide blindfolds rejected clients and leads them out through a path different from and more torturous than the way in. If a client's "undertaking" is accepted, the guide leads the client to an antechamber where the price is negotiated. Once the bargaining is finished, and arrangements are made to collect the fee, in advance, the guide takes the client back to the place where they first met.

Michael A. Stackpole produced this variation on the idea of an Assassins' Guild because, he says, he has a hard time imagining assassins tolera-ting the bureaucracy needed for a true Guild structure. Whatever the reason, the Steel Man will certainly confuse and daunt players everywhere.

To date no one has been able to retrace their steps to the Steel Man's lair. Or, at least, no one has returned from such a successful trip....

PRICES

The Steel Man's prices are more based upon the client's ability to pay than the difficulty of the job. If the assassins have an agent established in the victim's household the price will actually be higher than it would be otherwise. The rule of thumb to follow to determine price is this: 5% of the client's net worth as a base, 1,000 gps minimum, and an additional 1-10% depending on social standing or complications (like requiring the death to look like an accident).

HISTORY

Despite the hundred years the Steel Man has been working in the City, no one outside his "family" has even guessed at the reality behind the assassin or, more properly, the *assassins* working in the City. The Steel Man can do little more than move his head. All of the killings attributed to him have been performed by the "serving women" who attend him, and their counterparts elsewhere in the City.

Just over a hundred years ago a madwoman ran a roadhouse about a week's travel outside the City. She and her four daughters — each gotten upon her by transients who stayed at her Inn — took to murdering moneyed and footloose travelers, and they disposed of their bodies in ways far too deliciously disgusting to mention.

The eldest daughter, in violation of a family agreement, murdered a man with a wagon. Because they could not hide the wagon, the daughter, Valora, was driven out and took the wagon with her. In the back, beneath floorboards, she discovered the Steel Man. At the time the Steel Man had limited mobility. Valora took him into Nightside and secreted him in the basement of an old, abandoned temple, where he sits today. Unbeknownst to Valora her choice of hiding places was fortunate because the Steel Man had dealings with the god to whom the temple was dedicated, and the god's power prevented the Steel Man from leaving her.

Valora used the Steel Man to work con games on unsuspecting, superstitious types, but switched to assassinations after her sisters murdered their mother and moved to the city to join Valora. They brought street girls into their company, taught them all the things they'd learned from their mother, and slowly built up an Assassins' "Guild" that functioned unsuspected within the Steel Man's shadow. Very quickly the Steel Man's reputation exceeded that of any other assassin in the City, and when his closest rival was found slain, with his neck pulversized by a large hand (so the bruises suggested), the Steel Man reigned supreme.

PHILOSOPHY, TRAINING AND STRUCTURE

The Assassin philosophy could be classified as Amazonian, but that would simplify things too much, and would suggest the women hate men. In fact they do not hate men, but they see the Steel Man as their true husband. They kill for him, protect him and love him. In the uncertain world of Nightside, he is a constant. He does not run out on them as parents have or lovers might; he is always there for them. He listens to them, and they know he cares. To the assassins, a single nod from him is the highest praise possible.

The women are trained in various methods of killing during their younger years. Each is proficient in poisons and simple weapons like needles or daggers. All undergo strenuous physical training which includes excercises to improve balance and flexibility. Through their training the women are able to perform incredible feats, like leaping from one building to another or swimming great distances underwater, which make the murders they accomplish seem impossible for anyone but the legendary Steel Man.

After they complete their training they work as assassins through their young adult years. A very few of them — only those descended from Valora or her sisters — will enter the administrative/training structure of the Assassins. The rest of them are married off, or work as servants, within the noble houses of the City. Those slated for marriage, by virtue of their attractiveness, are given a complete background and introduced to their prospective husband by a mutual friend — usually a woman who is, in reality, one of the assassins. In this way, as wives, concubines, and servants, the assassins have a devastatingly accurate information network that lets them get the coins in to prospective clients, and enables them to monitor the activities of their victims. Not even the beggars suspect this network exists.

While it is rare among working assassins, if an assassin becomes pregnant, her pregnancy is taken care of depending upon who her lover was, and/or the sex of the child. If her lover was a man she murdered, the child is aborted or killed at birth. If the child is male the assassins leave him on the doorstep of a weathy family where they have an agent employed. If that family takes the child in, the family will be "protected" until the child is 13, or is turned out, whichever comes first. During that time no member of the family will be accepted as a target for assassination. If the child is a girl the assassins will keep her and raise her to be an assassin.

The group's structure is fairly simple. The leader, known as the Mistress, has to be descended from Valora or one of her sisters. A Mistress may assume leadership by murdering her predecessor but, in practice, this is rare. A Mistress always designates a successor in her will and, in most cases, abdicates to her successor before violence is necessary. A retired Mistress leaves the City, never to return.

The only other officer is the Executrix. She is often of Valora's bloodline and generally is assumed to be the heir-apparent of the current Mistress. She is the assassin who is given the honor and duty of making sure all informers are slain by a method that reinforces silence and fosters the Steel Man's legend. The method is so effective its use is seldom called for.

The first ritual assassination victim was the Steel Man's rival. The assassins drug their victim — males are often seduced first, whereas females are just kidnapped. The Executrix uses a nutcracker-like device with a steel hand on the business end to crush the victim's throat. The resultant injury looks as if the Steel Man has wrung the victim's neck. It is not a pretty sight. And, if the wound was not enough of a warning, one of the steel coins gets left on the right eye of these ritual victims, just so everyone knows who did what to whom.

PERSONALITIES

Edana *Human, Ht. 5' 8", Wt. 130#, Age: 24. Fighting Prowess: Very Good with Dagger, poison, garotte and crossbow. Good with bare hands and sword.*

Edana is Valora's great, great-grandniece and the current assassin Mistress. She is rather slender and dark skinned, despite the great amount of time she spends inside and out of sight. Her black hair is full and falls to her shoulders, but cannot hide the triangular scar on her left shoulder her cousin Salome gave her during a training exercise. Her deep, dark brown eyes reveal her love for the other assassins and, although she rarely smiles, she does have a sense of humor that makes everyone feel a part of the "family."

As Mistress of the assassins she stands behind and to the side of the client while he tells the Steel Man his story. When the client is finished she nods her head, or shakes it, and the Steel Man silently apes her signal. She assigns the women to plan the assassinations, reviews the plans, and either agrees with them, or modifies them so they will succeed. She is very good at selecting and planning jobs and, during her reign of the past seven years, not one undertaking has been bungled, nor have any of her women been caught.

Because she was only 17 when her aunt was poisoned, many assume Edana murdered the woman. She did not, and was as surprise as anyone (save perhaps Salome) when her aunt's will named her Mistress. She thought rule should have passed to Salome, and consequently reappointed her Executrix.

— Edana —

As Mistress she has learned the Steel Man's secret, and this knowledge rips her up inside. Edana loves the Steel Man, really loves him, and she spends as much time as she can with him. When they are alone she asks him questions that merely confirm the veracity of her information, and she dearly wishes she could free him from his paralysis. She knows she can, but to do so would destroy his "family" and she would not do that even if it would make her deliriously happy to do so.

Salome *Human, Ht. 5' 11", Wt. 150#, Age: 27. Fighitng Prowess: Excellent with a dagger, Very good with poison and garotte, Good with sword or crossbow.*

Salome is long, tall and lean. Her hair is honey-blond and reaches her mid-back. Most often she wears it braided and, when working or instructing, she tucks the braid down the back of her blouse. Her eyes are a deep blue that is very close to the color of a cool gas flame. Except for the sense of danger about her, she could easily be described as beautiful. Many men have wooed her, only to be used and discarded like a bone once the meat has been gnawed from it. Salome has murdered the lovers who came and begged her to return.

Many of the women refer to her as the "lioness" behind her back, and this pleases Salome. She much prefers it to being called "an ice-hearted bitch," which is far closer to the truth and much less insulting to a noble beast. Salome served as her mother's Executrix and murdered her mother after the Mistress suggested she would change her will and name Edana as her heir. Only after the act was done did Salome discover her mother outsmarted her and changed her will before the "chance" remark that prompted Salome's preemptive strike.

Salome let Edana settle in as Mistress for two years, then planned her murder. Salome gloated about this plan to the Steel Man once when alone with him. He shook his head No! with such vehemence that she felt compelled to goad him even further by describing what unbearable pain Edana would die in! She roared with laughter as the Steel Man continued to shake his head, then her laughter died in her throat.

The Steel Man moved his hand and made a grab for her! She managed to dance back away, and his arm returned to its place on the throne. Since that time she has avoided any solo audience with him, but the incident did nothing to change her desire to become Mistress. In the past five years she has worked to build up her own following among the assassins and when Edana dies "accidently," Salome will be able to take her rightful place as Mistress of the assassins.

The Steel Man *Human, sort of. Ht. 9', Wt. 1900#, Age: 2000 years old. Fighting Prowess: not applicable in current situation. If mobile and still steel, he'd have to be considered Very Good at anything. His steel body makes him very strong and, as long as he did not collapse the floor because of his weight, nothing short of a god, dragon or powerful wizard could slow him down.*

The Steel Man was once a human giant — of his present proportions — who established an empire far to the south of the City. It lasted until relatively recently when civil wars and outside invaders ripped it apart and ended the dynasty started by Emperor Balin. As a human, Balin forged his empire by hard work, personal heroics, and a ruthless use of power. He divided

his enemies, slew their sorcerers, unleased horrible warriors (like the Shadow Riders) upon them and crushed their armies. Once he'd secured his lands against exterior enemies, he broke the back of the resurgent Tel worshipers and stamped that repugnant religion out once and for all time. Many of the City's bards still sing of Balin's exploits. His tale ends with the gods taking him up into the heavens to dwell with them.

The ballads are a bit more generous in their treatment of Balin than he really deserves. He was a harsh ruler who made the mistake of judging everyone against himself. While he understood, intellectually, that others were not capable of the things he did, he could not help feeling, emotionally, that they were not trying hard enough. At great cost in money and lives he ordered a new capital built to celebrate his victory, and decorated it with more than one lifesized steel statue to this god-man. Balin hoped the magnificence would inspire others to feats of heroics to rival his, but the people despaired at their inability to please the Emperor.

Though his motives were noble, his methods were faulty and the people suffered from his lack of tolerance for their plights. One night a god drew Balin's spirit from his body and took him on a tour of his realm. The god showed him families flooded out because they'd built too close to a river, but Balin had no pity. "I told them not to build there," he informed the god. When shown people starving because they tried to cross mountains and were trapped by blizzards Balin had warned them about, the Emperor said, "It is not my place to save them from their own stupidity."

This disgusted the god because he knew Balin could be of great value, and had the best intentions for his people in mind, but refused to forgive those who ignored his advice. The god cast Balin's soul into one of the steel statues and stole his body away. "There you remain trapped until you learn how to rule," he told the Emperor. Balin remained motionless, watching and listening, as generations passed.

Balin's rage and anguish as he watched his empire collapse were enough to grant him movement. He stalked the shattered ruins of his capital and destroyed enemy soldiers, but even he could not stop the conquest. An enemy wizard hit him with a spell that befuddled him, and weakened his grasp on his anger. Thieves dealing in antiquities took the statue and one of them ran afoul of Valora on the way to the City.

Valora, who was probably latently telepathic in addition to being very quick witted, guessed the Steel Man's real identity and even hazarded a guess at an old proverb that might, upon proper reflection, free the Steel Man. The proverb is: *The successful master serves more than he is served,* and would indeed give the Steel Man the key to his freedom. Her guess as to his identity and the proverb are recorded in a book passed from Mistress to Mistress, but none of them, including Edana, have ever said the words that would free him.

The Steel Man returns Edana's love. If mobile he would immediately seek his flesh and blood body, then make her his wife and try to reestablish his empire so he could administer it correctly. He is not aware of Tel and her Shadow Riders and, if made aware of them, would first use his steel body to destroy them, then proceed with his own plans. Oddly enough, though virtually invulnerable, accepting the key to his freedom would prompt him to ask for aid in any enterprise he undertook when freed.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

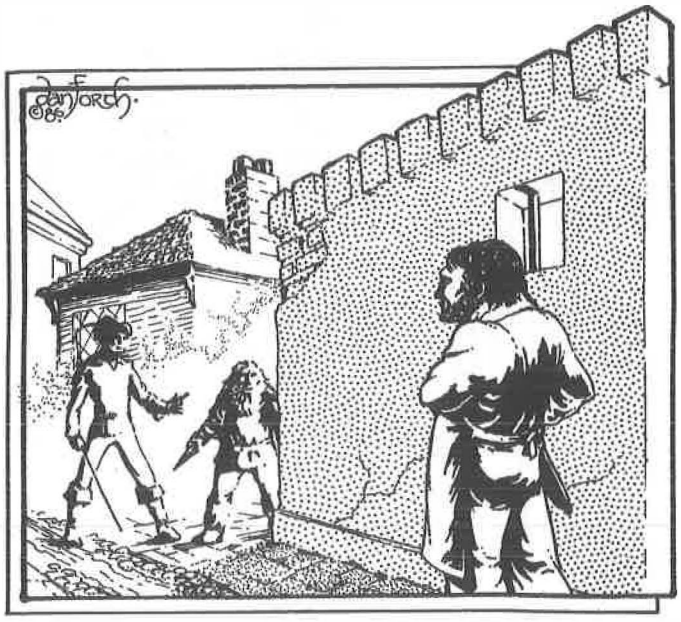
Scenario 1: A very frightened individual approaches the adventurers and askes them to help him. He's the sort of person they've seen around, perhaps even a merchant or innkeeper they've had dealings with. He says that a recent series of murders are all related and concern an adventure he went on long ago. He believes the person sponsoring the killings has only a limited time in which to murder him — something having to do with a religious celebration upcoming — and he wants the party to protect him until that time limit expires.

This looks to be a simple job — after all, the Steel Man is only one man, right? — but the party won't be looking for a very adept woman to be doing the job.

Scenario 2: One of the characters gets an anonymous note that reads: I just wanted you to know that because of what you did to my child, I've set the Steel Man on you. I will enjoy hearing of your death.

The scenario takes two quick paths from there. While the character who gets the note tries to duck the assassins' attempts to kill him, he and his compatriots have to figure out who sent the note, and what it's all about. Worse yet, if they locate the person who engaged the Steel Man's services, and reach an agreement to figure out what really happened to this person's child, the folks who really hurt the child might hire the Steel Man to prevent any revelation of their role in the whole mess.

Assassins are a horror: they threaten to strike unsuspecting folks and rob them of life. Some might suggest assassins have a code of honor, but not so this crew. Death is what the Steel Man asks of them, and death is what they give him. The best thing that can be said about The Steel Man is that not everyone can afford his services.



Domdaniel's Gate

Every town has its dangerous places, places that are unsafe to visit unless escorted — preferably by a squad of the city guard. Situated within the ruins of an older establishment, Domdaniel's Gate is a bar that serves mystery and intrigue as readily as others serve wine and ale.

It is almost impossible to find Domdaniel's Gate tavern without assistance, for it is little more than unmarked ruins in a district filled with abandoned buildings and collapsed structures. The few who do find this subterranean watering hole on their own often wisely realize that they have pressing business elsewhere and quickly depart, occasionally with purse and skin still intact.

The tavern, if it can be called that; serves ale, beer, wine and some hard liquor to the undiscriminating local bullies, ruffians, thugs, and punks who are its regular patrons. Fights occur frequently and deaths are not uncommon. No food of any kind is served and the quality of the liquor varies from week to week. Drinks are served the way they come out of the keg or bottle and are usually of fair to good quality. Drink prices are low to average.

The original tavern was opened about fifty years ago by an enterprising ex-thief named Two-Scratch Dickens. It thrived amongst slowly decaying surroundings. One night about twenty years later, a great "!MOOB" was heard inside Domdaniel's Gate that caused both passersby and debris from the street to be sucked into the collapsing walls of the tavern. The building was entirely destroyed. The locals estimate that thirty people died in the tavern's apocalyptical destruction. Only two survivors were found in the rubble, a strange foreigner named Tranq and the tavern's proprietor. Nevertheless, some of the victims reappeared years later, unaged, remembering the accident as if it had just happened minutes before.

The tavern, its owner and patrons were the victims of a time implosion, caused by the crash-landing of a time vehicle. Its pilot, Tranq, a man from the far-flung future found himself stranded in the past; pieces of his time machine scattered across the near past and future like a debris trail from a sinking ship.

Paul Jaquays is best known as an artist and his artwork has graced many covers and interiors in the game industry. Paul is another hideously talented person who can wield a pen (or word processor) with the same efficacy as a brush. Domdaniel's Gate is undoubtedly the oddest tavern in Citybook history, and many a campaign. The only thing it lacks is the sinsiter, gleeful chuckle Paul had in his voice when he first described it to me..

With the help of Two-Scratch, Tranq excavated the ruins to find the remnants of his time craft. In doing so, he expanded the sub-basement to create the subterranean rooms now used by the underground tavern. At Two-Scratch's request he left undisturbed the odd door found in the common room.

Domdaniel's Gate is generally open from around sunset until the last customer leaves some time after two a.m. Even though it boasts nothing resembling hospitality, warmth or congeniality it has a hard-core group of regular patrons who call it home when the sun goes down.

LAYOUT

Even in its prime, Domdaniel's Gate was never an imposing structure. Now it is nothing but ruins above ground, with a stinking cellar for the tavern's entryway and a number of smallish, low-ceilinged rooms deep beneath the surface. The ruins are ringed by decaying tenements on all but the west side, which faces onto the street. Although the general location of Domdaniel's Gate may be known, there are enough ruins in the district to make its rediscovery difficult without assistance.

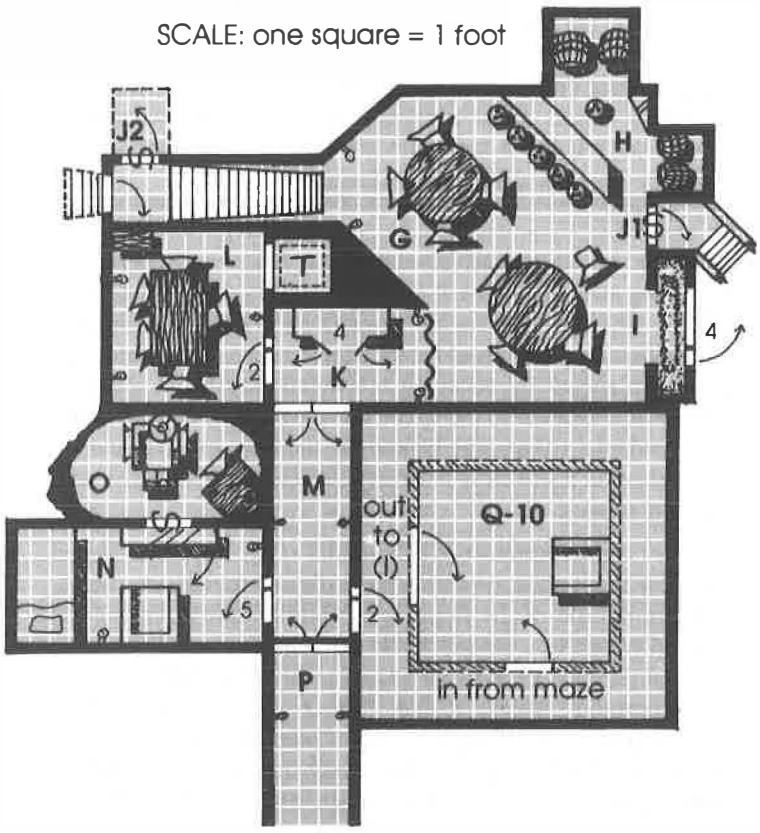
UPPER RUINS

The original structure of Domdaniel's Gate has been reduced to a few standing stone and brick walls and foundation rubble. A large portion of the flooring has burned away, leaving the old cellar open to the air. Little remains that would indicate original purpose, except to a trained architect or archaeologist.

A. Common Room Ruins (20' x 11') A rotted door swings loosely to allow entrance. Charcoal and rubble litter the floor of the orignal tavern's main room. The walls bear inscriptions like "I intended to pay him back," "I plan to devote the rest of my winnings to charity,""I'm doing this for you and the kids" and "Let's set up a national pension plan that will support itself." The gnarled apple tree in the corner bears bitter fruit.

B. Kitchen Ruins (10' x 11') The charred remains of the original wooden sign rest in one corner. The sign shows a arched doorway with the words "Domdaniel's" below it. Try as one might, it is impossible to remove or even move the sign. A path in the dirt connects the old common room with the stair to the cellar.

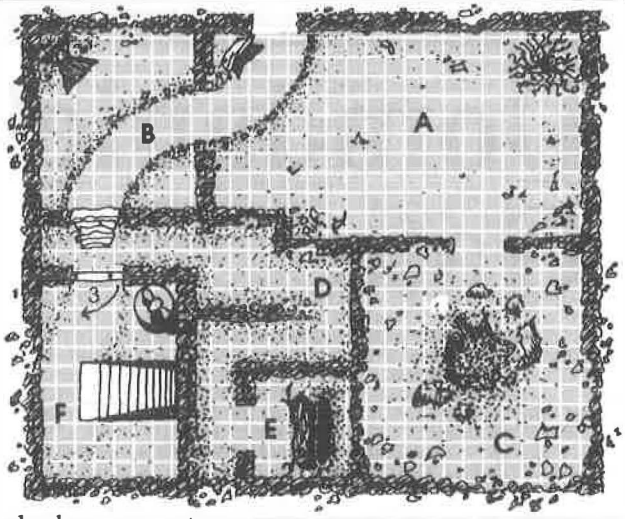
C. Private meeting rooms (11' x 12') Like the kitchen and common room, the floors are littered with rubble and



trash. A large crater (8' diameter and 3' deep) occupies the center of the room. The crater was formed by the implosion of Tranq's time vehicle.

D. Basement Hall (10' x 12') Small piles of rubble and broken glass clutter the floor of this roofless hallway. Regardless of traffic, a path never seems to form here.

E. Latrine (6' x 5') To call this a restroom, a privy, or even a garderobe would be poetical exaggeration. This stinking open air ditch is provided with little in the way of comfort. Members of the Regular Fellows gang often wait here to



ambush unwary patrons.

F. Entry Room (7' x 8') The sole occupant of this room is a leering statue of a demon whose servile bow indicates the entrance to the "new" Domdaniel's Gate. Once there were two statues who flanked the door to the original tavern. The second "escaped" (or so Two-Scratch says) the night of the "accident." The door to the tavern is locked[3].

G. Common Room and Bar (14' x 16') In a cesspool, scum floats. However, down here can be found what sinks to the bottom. Even as one descends the stair, the stale mingled odors of rancid beer, unwashed bodies, open sewage and the faintest hint of brimstone attack the nostrils with vigor. The bar is occupied by what may be the surliest, ugliest, most unpleasant customers in the city. The ruffians and thugs are often balanced by an equal number of beggars, who use the tavern as a meeting place for transactions with normals. Newcomers are rare here and the "regulars" like that. This is not the place one comes to have a few drinks with the fellows, toss some darts and chuckle at others' misfortunes.

The steep stair descends to a ramp which opens on the bar. The ceiling is low, very low, often graced with damp cobwebs and dangling worms. Characters taller than 5'11' must constantly duck beneath the rough ceiling beams. Orange light streams steadily from the strange fireplace (I) which also keeps the temperature at 75 to 80 degrees fahrenheit. The bar stools seat five and the tables will handle about 11 more. Nevertheless, even with such limited capacity, it is rarely crowded in this room.

H. The Bar (8' x 8') Located in the northeast corner of the common room, the bar and its stools are finely crafted, ornate pieces of brass and teak furniture, salvaged from the ruins above. The stools are filthy, but the bar is polished and clean. During business hours, Two-Scratch Dickens can always be found here. He never seems to leave.

Domdaniel's Gate serves unusually good liquor. Although the selection is often limited to beer, a red wine and several hard liquors, prices are low to average and credit is often extended (some patrons are often willing to sell their souls for a drink). All the alcohol is obtained on the black market and is brought up from the Undercity warrens along the supply tunnel. The beer and wine are tapped from kegs behind the bar. Shelves behind and beneath the bar store the hard stuff.

House security is lax, but about every sixth bottle is spiked with a deadly, tasteless poison as a deterrent to pilferage. Only Two-Scratch knows which are safe and he never serves from the poisoned bottles.

Tranq can be found on the end stool most evenings. Often he is too drunk to notice his surroundings. Two-Scratch's usual last job of the night is to toss an unconscious Tranq onto the bed in Tranq's quarters.

I. The Fireplace (3' x 8') The north wall of the common room is dominated by this eerie, ornate fireplace with its heavy mantle carved with figures writhing in torment and the flaming orange coals of the firebed that give off heat and light, but never smoke or need replenishing. The back wall of the fireplace is formed by a massive arched door, much taller than the fireplace itself (a full 8 feet tall). The door is locked[4], but will open with a touch for the right person. The door is framed in black stone and the keystone is carved with a flaming skull.

This door is the true Domdaniel's gate. Where it leads, no one knows. The regular patrons accept it a feature of the tavern and neither Tranq nor Two-Scratch will speak about it.

The door is the gate to another dimension, possibly even to Hell itself or someplace even worse. Opening the door is like opening up a blast furnace. It will shrivel an unprotected adventurer and make it possible for creatures of power and evil to enter our own world until it is shut.

J_1. Bolt hole to the Sewers Once opened the distant stench of the sewers becomes apparent. This narrow (3' wide) passage slopes down to a stair which leads to a ladder which descends 30 feet to a side branch of the city's ancient sewer system. Most regular patrons know of this secret door.

J_2. Bolt hole to the thieves' tunnels Built to provide an entrance and exit for guild thieves to the tavern and the city above, this ladder shaft descends to a maze of tunnels beneath the city, separate from the sewer and the beggars' undercity. Its presence is only known by Tranq, Myre and the thieves.

K. Curiosity Room (5' x 5') The three shelves of the sparkling glass and brass cabinet on the room's east wall contain curios from Tranq's travels. Prominently displayed are an ornate pistol with a ruby where the barrel opening should be, the egg of a small dinosaur, coins from all eras, a crystal skull and a typewriter. The cabinet is locked[4] and has been enchanted by Two-Scratch to have the strength of steel. The south door to room L can be locked[2].

L. Meeting Room (9' x 8') Tranq makes this conference room available to both the Beggars and Thieves' Guild for meetings with outsiders. A pot of coals from the fireplace in the common room lights and heats this room. The broom closet in the north wall has a trap door in the floor which opens on a shaft descending to the undercity of the beggars. This is occasionally used by personages who wish to enter and leave entirely unnoticed.

M. Hall (4' x 13') The swinging doors at the east end of this sloping passage open onto new construction created by Tranq and Two-Scratch. The walls and vaulted ceiling are constructed of salvaged brick. The west wall is a clever facade that hides the entrance to the supply tunnel. The lock[5] on the south door to Tranq's room is of exotic construction (it is an electromagnetic device salvaged from the time machine). The lock[2] on the north door to Two-Scratch's quarters serves only to keep the door closed.

N. Tranq's Room (13' x 6) Tranq's cramped quarters are reminiscent of a comfortably furnished ship's cabin. The tall bookshelf on the east wall is heavy with books of history, many in strange languages and some that speak of current events as if they occured long ago. Still, if the catch is located, the bookcase swings out easily to reveal the hidden door to Tranq's workshop.

O. Tranq's Workshop (9' x 6') Tranq carved this oval-shaped room out of the rubble by himself. He has been assembling the pieces of his time machine in here for over thirty years. He has located all the pieces that appeared "before" his time vehicle crashed and is patiently awaiting the pieces that are to come. The time machine is a chairlike construction along the east wall. It has gem-like lights that flicker and pulse. A control panel has a number blank spaces and loose wires as if pieces were missing. Of course, the time machine does not function yet. The small work desk near the north wall is covered to a depth of a half foot with time debris, artifacts from various times and places that are often sucked into the temporal vacuum created by time travel.

P. Supply Tunnel (5' x ?) This sloping passage descends gently to the subterranean undercity of the Beggars' Guild. This is the route that Myre, the Beggar King and his folk use to visit the tavern.

Q. Two-Scratch's Maze (∞ x ∞) To enter Two-Scratch's Maze is to leave reality behind. The misty-floored maze does not exist in what we would perceive as normal space-time. It may be that it loops back upon itself or that it extends infinitely in all directions. Magic will not work here, time does not pass here.

The way the maze works is as follows: Each time an intruder passes over a dotted line on the map, heading in the direction of one of the arrows, roll a 10 sided dice. The resulting number is the point at which the maze loops back on itself. Thus, an adventurer who passed over the dotted line on his way to arrow seven might find himself reentering the maze by rounding the corner from arrow three. A die roll of 10 would lead the adventurer to Two-Scratch's chamber (Q-10). Alternatively, if the adventurers concentrated on finding Two-Scratch instead of being distracted by the maze, they might find him the next time they rounded a corner.

Q-10. Two-Scratch's Chamber (10' x 10') Regardless of the time of day when the adventurers enter the maze, they will find Two-Scratch in this featureless gray room. He sits in an straight-backed wooden chair facing the door in the "north" wall. The door is a twin to the one in the common room's fireplace. If molested in here, Two-Scratch can make full use of his magical powers. The door leads to the common room, but in passing through it, the adventurers will get glimpses of things that might destroy their sanity forever.

PERSONALITIES

Two-Scratch Dickens *Human avatar of a supernatural being. Ht: 6'5", Wt: 140#, Age: appears to be about 55. Fighting prowess: Poor. Magic ability: Good C1 - C8. Can be wounded but not killed by mortal weapons.*

Ancient evil came to earth when Two-Scratch Dickens first opened Domdaniel's Gate tavern over two generations ago. The dynamic, gregarious proprietor seemed to have an unlimited ability to loan money, provide gifts and make friends. Oblivious to the squalor around it, his establishment prospered while the surrounding neighborhood slid into disfavor, disrepair and finally decay.

Two-Scratch Dickens is or was the earth-bound, semi-mortal incarnation or avatar of the supernatural being of ultimate evil. Once, he had the disarming, dark, slickly handsome features often associated with confidence men. He would strike deals with mortals that almost inevitably brought grief to them. That was all before the accidental time implosion destroyed both the "Gate" and his mental faculties.

Vacant eyes now stare out of a gaunt, dark face with a nose and chin that jut sharply forward like twin blades. A half smile seems to constantly foreshadow a mad, humorless chuckle that never comes. Greasy black hair, bound with a thong at the back of his neck, falls past his waist. Filthy, louse-ridden clothes of archaic style drape sack-like on his tall lank frame. He is difficult to look at for long without feeling forced to look away.

Although once used to walking to and fro about the world, in his addled condition, he is content to perform the duties of bartender at Domdaniel's Gate. Few city residents remember Domdaniel's Gate before the accident. None of them now associate Two-Scratch with the former charsimatic con man. No one suspects that he is other than a befuddled charity case whom Tranq has taken under his wing.

Two-Scratch never leaves the bar during open hours and he rarely speaks. When he does talk, his rambling mutters hint at offers of fantastic bargains in trade for some nebulous, never-named commodity.

After hours, Two-Scratch always returns to his quarters to sit and stare endlessly at the ominous door. No one goes in there except him ... ever.

Two-Scratch never seems to be quite all there. Still, in spite of his fallen condition, there is an aura of evil about him. On the rare occasions when he has his wits about him, he can still function as a powerful mage. Should Two-Scratch ever be restored to normal, he will become a powerful creature. He is certain to torment those who have caused him ill, reward any have been his benefactors over the years and begin collecting on all those long overdue contracts.

Tranq *Human, Ht: 6'3" Wt: 170#, Age: 71. Fighting Prowess: Good when sober.*

Tranq is the current owner of the gloomy "Gate" and plays well the part of a semi-retired foreign mercenary who has seen things he would rather forget. He spends much of his waking time drunk and leaves running the tavern to Two-Scratch.

Tranq's appearance is much younger than his years would indicate. Tall, scarred and weathered with close-cropped chocolate hair running to salt and pepper and gray at the temples and below the ears; he wears a patch over one eye and a glove on his left hand to disguise that they are artificial-mechanical. Tranq is a time traveller, stranded in the adventurers' era by the implosion of his time machine. He has been here for over 30 years. (In his time, the average lifespan

—Tranq—

is easily 120 years, with the afflictions of age appearing only in the last 10 to 15 years.) Tranq seeks to rebuild his time machine from the pieces that appear at regular intervals. He expects to be here another 20 years before all the missing pieces are back in place. Tranq feels deeply sorry for the misfortune that he has caused Two-Scratch and does everything he can to keep the bartender at least comfortable. Except for Two-Scratch, the only other living being who knows Tranq's true nature is the Beggar King, Myre. Myre discovered Tranq's secret as a child and would often help him find the missing pieces of the time machine. When he became king, it only seemed natural to use Tranq's establishment as a formal link with the "normal" world. Tranq often uses his futuristic technology to aid the beggars in whatever ways he can.

The "Regular Fellows". The Regular Fellows are a gang of thoroughly decadent, ruthless thugs. They prey primarily on the weak. They are known to covertly attack children, women, the elderly and drunks. One of the Regular Fellows often waits in the latrine to ambush lone or drunken tavern patrons. They have no friends outside the gang. It's well known that they hate beggars and despise their presence in the tavern. Unproven rumors suggest that recent attacks on beggars have been at their hands. They talk big, drink voluminously and are free with threats and insults. They nothing more than bullies, cads, bounders and cowards.

Cardiff Throm *Human. Ht: 5'9", Wt: 160#, Age: 40. Fighting Prowess: Fair with weapons, Very Good in barroom brawling. Excellent with the thrown knife and the sap.*

Acknowledged leader of the Regular Fellows. Brawny, bearded, hairy with balding red brown hair, a florid complexion and green teeth. He is a mediocre thief. Chews a wad of vile herbs

and spits a lot. Always accompanied by "Dog" a large one-eyed fighting mastiff of equally unpleasant demeanor.

The rest of the Fellows can be fleshed out by the GM if desired: Oiken "Oinkin'" Blane, Jon "Speg-leg" Spegali, Guido Dergus, Big Pfhil Pflilegm and his pet bag of noisome goo.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

Scenario 1: Fifty years ago, Most Holy Oliathan Thang, the high-priest of the predominant local religion learned through divine inspiration that a being of ultimate evil existed in the city. Oliathan chose to fanatically devote himself to the cause of expunging the evil. His congregation quickly replaced their Most Holy with a more conservative spiritual leader.

The now ancient priest has at last located the evil being (Two-Scratch) and wishes to hire adventurers to aid him in its destruction.

Scenario 2: The anniversary for the appearance of another time machine piece has come and gone without one appearing around the grounds of the tavern. An unusually sober Tranq is worried that one of the patrons or even Two-Scratch may have found the piece and taken it away.

Tranq hires the adventurers to act as private detectives for him, searching out the homes of all the tavern regulars (and Domdaniel's Gate only has regulars) and finding his lost artifact. He gives the adventurers a folio of crinkly blue papers, each with a drawing of a missing time machine part.

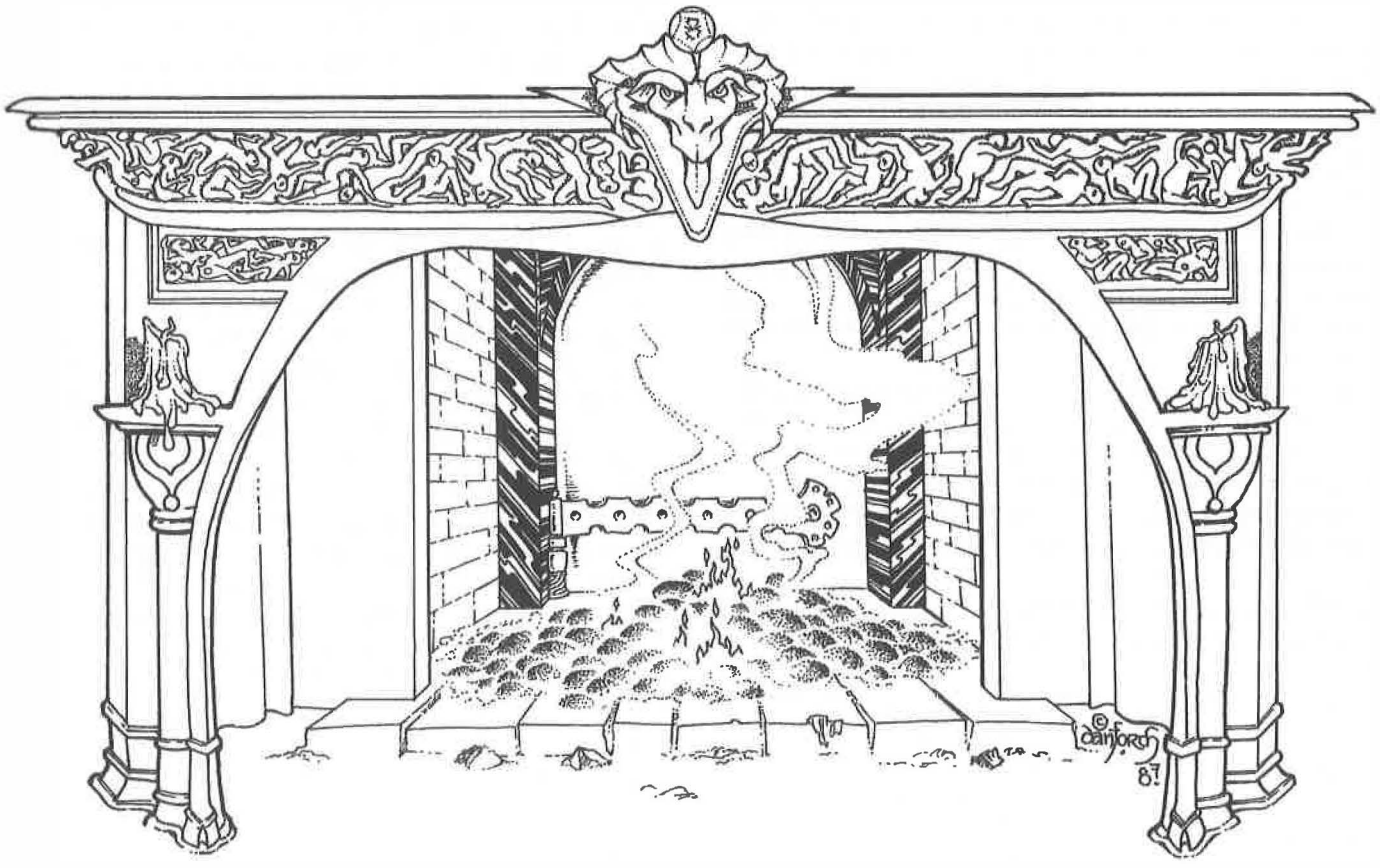
In Cardiff Throm's tenement room, the adventurers find a glowing red orb. Tranq is confused, for what has been found has a timelost aura, but is not a missing piece of his machine.

Instead, it is a missing piece of Two-Scratch — the immortal part that was lost in the accident. If set down anywhere in the tavern, it will streak to join up with Two-Scratch, making him whole again.

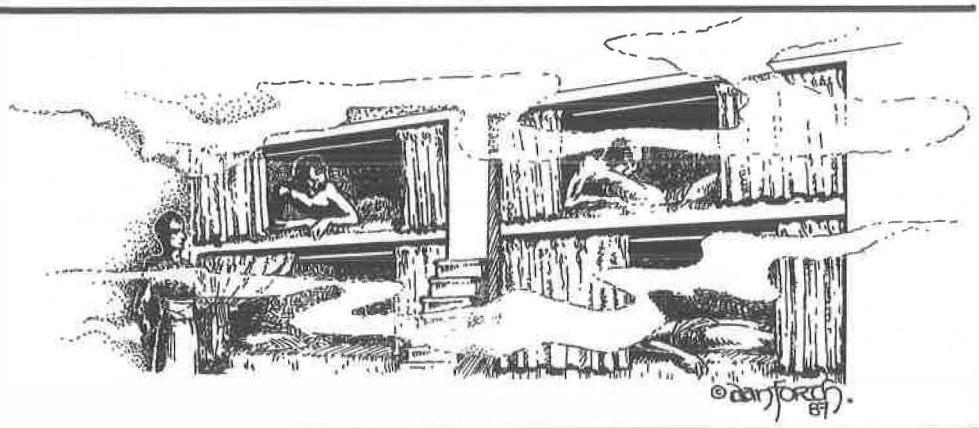
Meanwhile, Cardiff Throm and the other regulars have discovered who has been rummaging around in their places ...

Scenario 3: One of the courtesans at the House of Infinite Dreams has been ravished and severely injured by a gang attack near the "Gate." Haakon Slashe, the house's major-domo, has traced the thugs to the Regular Fellows at Domdaniel's Gate. His preference for solving his own problems brought him face to face with Two-Scratch Dickens. For the first time in his life Haakon knew true fear, for in Two-Scratch he recognized the man to whom he had sold his soul years before, trading it for strength, physique and skill at arms. Torn between his duty to the House and fear of Two-Scratch, Haakon hires adventurers to dispatch the thugs and find some way to cancel his debt with the bartender. He is unaware that Two-Scratch's current condition makes him unaware of any previous deals that were made. Attempting to make a deal might refresh Two-Scratch's memory.

It may indeed be true that there are "things that men were not meant to know." The mysteries behind Two-Scratch Dickens and the gate in the tavern seem best left undisturbed. There is enough evil in this world without having to leave it to discover more.



The Yellow Poppy



Near the heart (if not at the very center) of the illicit quarter, lies ***The Yellow Poppy****, a foul den of iniquity, dealing in contraband drugs and forbidden illusions, and other unchaste dealings. There a strong-stomached adventurer might go to gain knowledge of poor souls who may have disappeared under mysterious circumstances, or to gather information concerning illegal activities in and around the City. Yet 'ware, traveller, for both life and limb are in jeopardy even before you cross the threshold of The Yellow Poppy.*

The Yellow Poppy can be reached by travelling through the dark and dangerous back alleys of the seamy side of the City. The rat-infested route agonizingly twists through a dim shadowy maze of dank mews, awash with foetid garbage and discarded refuse. A trickle of foul water seems always underfoot, as well as the squish and slip of mud and other things of slime and excrement perhaps better left unmentioned. The reek of sewage and rot hangs upon the air, foul to the nose and causing your gorge to rise until you are near to gagging.

Occasionally, lurking in the shadows or lounging against a wall, you will espy a dweller or two, unsavory denizens of this squalid cesspool of a place. Passing by these citizens and having them at your back would be considered foolhardy by some, yet the well-armed or formidable or stealthy lone adventurer is oft times let be, while at other times he is ambushed, back-stabbed, mugged, taken captive... It is indeed a truism that there is safety in numbers, although here even that is no guarantee.

It is whispered that there are two "safe" routes through the alleyways to the Poppy, one used by certain nobility and other persons of wealth, the other used by the common folk. It is known that the wretches who frequent this foul den make repeated journeys to the Poppy unmolested. Yet whether these rumors of safe passage be true, it is for the adventurer to discover.

Should you survive the tortuous journey, at the heart of the foul labyrinth of alleyways you will come at last to The Yellow Poppy.

Dennis L. McKiernan is a name that should be familiar to fantasy readers everywhere. Dennis wrote the Iron Tower Trilogy and the Silver Call Duology. Dennis and I had been corresponding for about a six months when this project got started. I dropped him a card just to ask if he was interested in doing something. Virtually by return mail the Yellow Poppy arrived. It was quickly followed by another establishment that will go into the next Citybook. As they say, writers write, and Dennis writes very well.

GOODS AND SERVICES

The Yellow Poppy offers entertainment to its visitors in the form of escape through various narcotic and, though no one has identified them as such, magical means. While taverns within Nightside might offer some of the more mundane products of the poppy, the Poppy offers a more sedate, and perhaps hopeless, atmosphere for its selective clientele. Only here can one be certain of the quality of the diversions, and no other place on the world can offer The Forbidden Illusion.

Opiates and lotus derivative drugs form the bulk of the Poppy's trade. All their drugs are of premium quality, and Khassan only buys from local suppliers, like the Big Fish Gang, when his slaver connections have trouble delivering payment for their chattel. Prices, while the highest in the City, are actually reasonable and one evening's entertainment should run the same as a week's food and lodging in a good inn in the classier sections of the City. Special services, and exotic preparations or potions, cost more and actually get expensive.

Forbidden Illusions command exorbitant prices — 1000 gold pieces is a rock bottom, fire-sale price for one. Each of the five second-story rooms where a client enjoys the Illusion has silken throw-pillows scattered over lush carpets. Each room is intended to hold more than one occupant, most of whom, be they male or female, strip off all their clothing before spreading out on a small, attendant-provided satin sheet. The attendant also provides each client with a cup of honey-laced, spiced wine with enough opium in it to taste and suggest the drug, not magic, is the active agent in the Illusion.

Although it is said that the illusions are never the same, their effect upon the victim is always identical. Slowly the prey loses consciousness, then drifts under the web of the spell. His eyes lose focus, close, then the lids flutter as his eyes shudder and whip side to side beneath. Spittle drools from his mouth and his breathing becomes stentorious. Perspiration begins to bead upon his body until it becomes wet and slick; then a look of intense rapture crosses his features. His entire being tenses and spasms, only to fall completely slack (here it is that some lose control of their bodily functions, but attendants are present to care for these problems). Then the victim falls into an exhausted but natural sleep.

None will say what it is they have seen in their illusion, but all suffer the same consequences: slowly they lose interest in real life, and they become listless and completely

unmotivated. Their only source of joy is found on satin sheets upon silken pillows on a lush carpet within a room on the second floor of the Yellow Poppy!

No one has yet defeated the creeping apathy left behind by a Forbidden Illusion, but that should not suggest the same is impossible. The few people who have gone for treatment have stumped the sorcerers who examined them, and diagnoses are often just listed under: Wasting disease, etiology unknown.

The Forbidden Illusions are a by-product of the demons in the carpets nibbling away at the souls of the victims. Obviously this is difficult to detect, especially since the Poppy's patrons believe a drug is at work here, not magic. Still, if a victim can undergo one of many rituals of self-deprivation (commonly part of joining a holy order or warrior society) he can regenerate and strengthen enough soul to break free of the listless cycle his vice has plunged him into. Do note that a character who has enjoyed an Illusion will be much more difficult to resurrect or reincarnate upon death.

LAYOUT

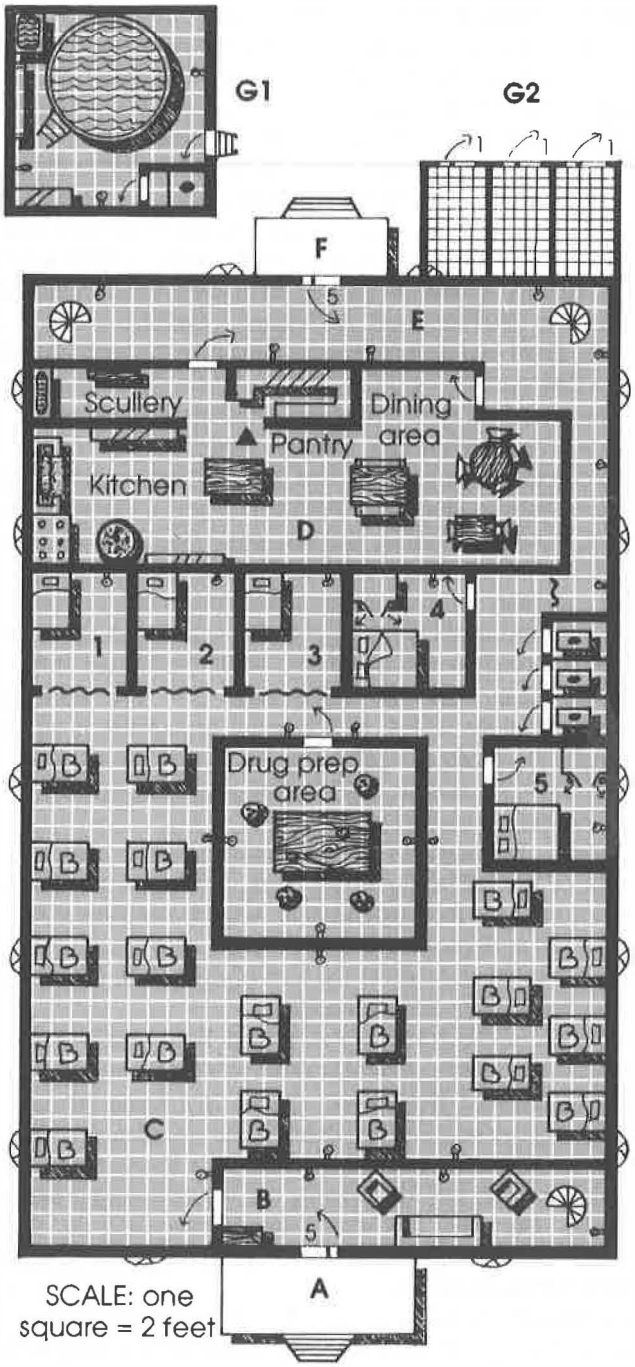
The Grounds. A rusted wrought iron fence surrounds the 200' by 110' plot of land upon which sits the Yellow Poppy. It is ten feet high with curved-over spear fangs to keep intruders out, and lo! to keep others in! At the front and sides, the fence is some 25' from the building, whereas in the rear a goodly sized yard stretches 75' before fetching up against the back barrier. A lone iron gate stands at the front, merely latched when the Poppy is open for business, locked[4] when it is closed... however, the last time the Yellow Poppy was closed was seven years ago when the former owner was assassinated by the present owner.

A single guard patrols the barren stretch of ground within the fence encircling the Poppy, accompanied by one of three savage mastiffs, while a second warder stands at the front gate, and a third lounges at the rear. There he oversees a small postern[4] to admit the discreet through the wrought-iron barrier.

The Outbuildings. At the back of the Poppy against the northeast corner of the building are the mastiff kennels, housing three killer dogs, one of which is usually on patrol with a guard. Also at the back of the Poppy, some 20' out from the northeast corner, is an oriental-style bathhouse. It stands on stilts and is quite unique in the City.

The Exterior. Though ramshackle, the building itself is surprisingly large: two-and-a-half stories high, it is made of wood. The building measures 100' from north to south, and 60' from east to west. The apex of the roof is 30' above the ground. How a building this size came to exist among the back alleyways, is a question none can answer. At the front, a sagging porch leads to a remarkably sturdy door, while at the back, another solid portal bars the way; each of these iron-bound oaken doors is fitted with a lock[5]. All of the windows seem boarded up, although at the very peak of the roof at the rear there appears to be a small, round glass port.

The Interior. The interior of the building consists of four levels: ground floor, second floor, basement and attic. Inside, on all levels, a cloying, sickeningly sweet odor pervades the air, borne on an omnipresent haze of bluish smoke. Shadows abound, pressing against the dim yellow light seeping out



from paper lanterns randomly scattered within.

The Ground Floor.

A. Porch (20' x 8') Three steps lead up to a roofed-over porch, above which is a boarded-up window.

B. Foyer (40' x 40') An attendant in the large foyer greets each visitor. Some seating is available for those who must wait for accommodations. To the right, a spiral staircase leads up to the second floor. To the left, a celestial Dragon decorates a door leading inward.

C. The Opium Den (60' x 60') This is the source of the sickly sweet smoke filling the air. This large room is filled with double-decker bunk beds. The nineteen bunk beds are usually full; at nearly any hour abusers can be found herein,

collapsed upon their beds, smiling their meaningless smiles, their unfocused eyes staring inward, their abandoned souls lost within unremembered dreams of paradise. Some of the bunks are fitted with padded shackles for those who use potions with a violent legacy, and stoic attendants wander silently among the wretches bringing them more opiates to feed their dreams.

Three prives are in the northeast corner. **Rooms 1,2, and 3** (10' x 12') each are curtained off for those who wish to partake their opiates in private. Each room contains a single bed. **Rooms 4 and 5** (12' x 12') have doors rather than curtains to close them off. Additionally, each has a double-bed (in the event two or three companions take the room together) and a free-standing clothes closet. A curtain shields the hallway in case the client entered discreetly through the rear entrance.

D. Kitchen, Scullery, Pantry and Dining Area (22' x 56' collectively) Here meals are prepared and consumed by the Yellow Poppy's staff. The kitchen contains a fireplace, oven, wood, water, worktable, shelves, pots, pans, dishes, cutlery, etc. The scullery holds a large sink, worktable, and storage for pots and pans, brushes, soaps, cloths and so on. The pantry is home to consumables piled upon shelves, though much of the food is stored in the basement, while perishable items are brought fresh from the market each day. The dining area consists of three tables, with benches and chairs to sit upon. Usually the Master is served in his quarters on the second floor. The cook and the scullery boy sleep, respectively, in the kitchen and the scullery.

E. Back Hallway. (8' x 60') This hallway runs the full width of the house across the back, and down the east wall until it joins the main opium den. A spiral staircase at the end of the hall in the northwest corner leads up to the second floor. Another spiral staircase at the turn of the hall in the northeast corner leads down into the basement.

F. Back Porch. (14' x 6') A roofed back porch wards the rear entrance. Three steps lead down to the ground.

G1. Attendants' Bathhouse. (20' x 20') Some 20' in back of the Poppy, standing on stilts, is the attendants' bathhouse. Eight steps lead up into this oriental-style laving room. Inside there is a scrub tub for cleaning off before entering the main hot tub. The privy sits beside the doorway and the shelves contain scented soaps, towels and various unguents and oils to insure bathing pleasure.

G2. Mastiff Kennels. (6' x 12' x 4' each) Attached to the northeast corner of the building are three mastiff kennels. Each has a latched[1] gate and a wooden doghouse to provide shelter for each savage killer. Each dog is considered Very Good in combat with his teeth. Above the kennels is a boarded-up window, and the dogs will bark loudly if anyone is foolish enough to stand on top of the kennels to get at the window.

The Second Story

H. Rooms of Forbidden Illusion (72' x 60' collectively) The only significant differences among the five rooms are their dimensions and the dominant color of their carpets. **Rooms 1 and 1** are 20' x 22' and have red and orange carpets respectively. **Rooms 3 and 4** run 20' x 20' and house the yellow and green carpets while **Room 5** is home to the blue carpet and is 16' x 32'. The carpets, though they differ in dominant color, boast similar, elaborate designs. The patterns are very complex and geometric in nature. Though no one has ever tried to memorize the pattern, an observant client might notice a slight variation in the pattern on a return visit to the same room. Silken pillows are strewn about in a random pattern on top of each carpet, both for comfort and to help conceal the "fluidity" of the designs.

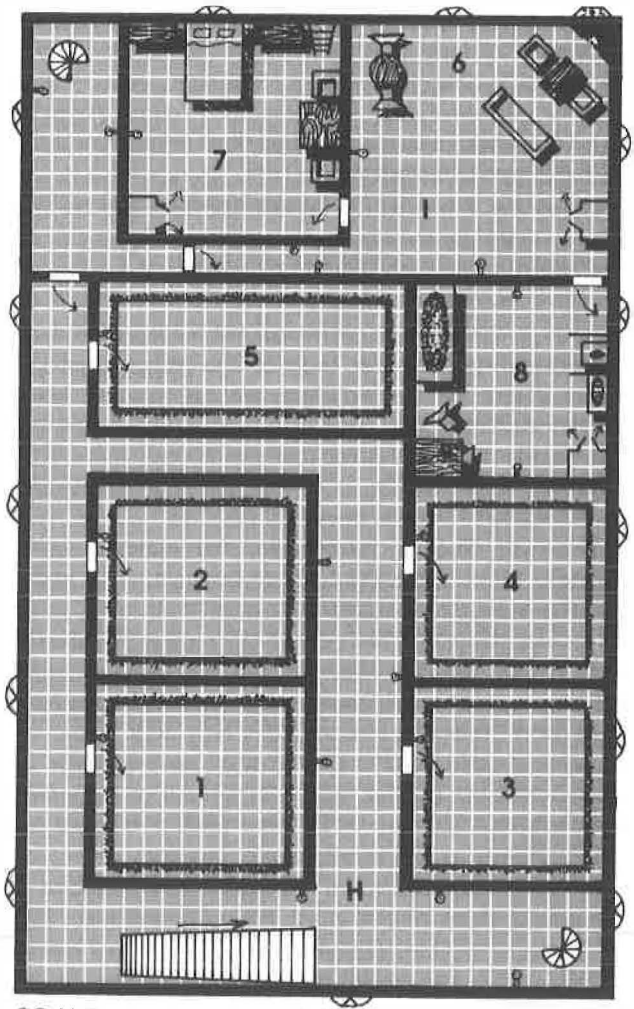
Each room is attended by a servant who provides a satin sheet for each dreamer. The attendant also has water basins, sweet-scented soaps, and towels for those who need laving.

The staircase in the front of the building leads up to the attic, while the spiral staircase in the southeast corner goes down to the foyer.

I. The Master's Quarters:

Room 6, Master's Living room (26' x 28') The living room contains a fireplace, sofa, chairs, a dining table and chairs, a cabinet and is carpeted with normal rugs. The furnishings match each other, but appear to have been selected for function and comfort as opposed to aesthetics.

Room 7, Master's Bedroom (22' x 22') The bedroom contains a large double bed, carpets, cabinets, a table with chairs, bedside end-tables and a lantern on each end-table. A ladder in the northeastern corner leads up to an overhead trapdoor into a closed-off room (O) in the attic. Only the Master is permitted in this or the attic room.



SCALE: one square = 2 feet Second Story

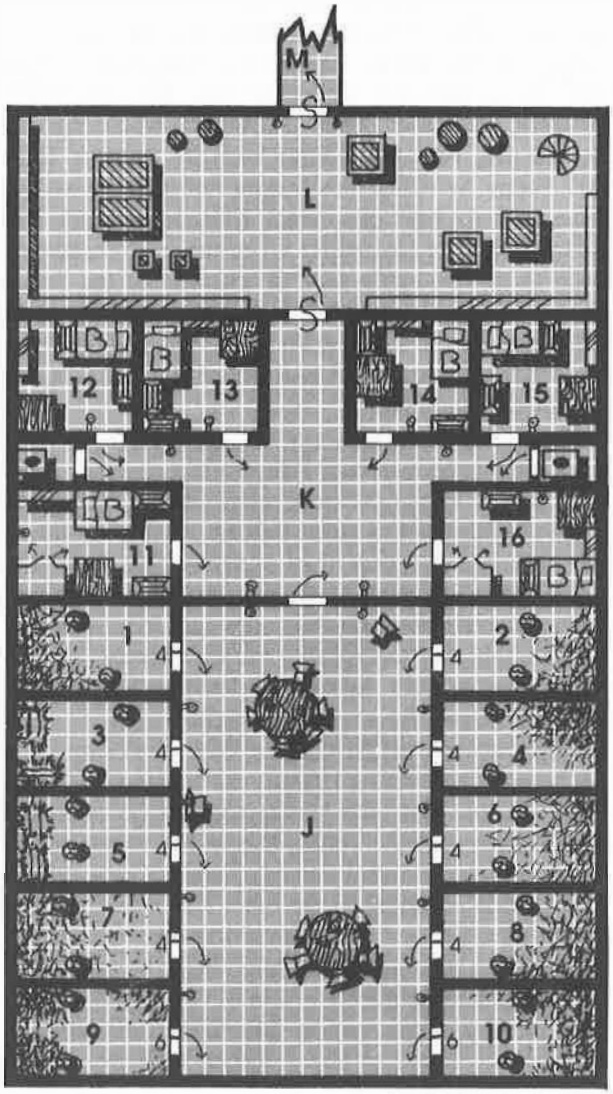
Room 8, Master's Bathroom and Privy (20' x 20') This room contains a curtained-off porcelain tub, an enclosed privy, a table with chair, cabinets, soaps, towels, cloths, basins and so forth.

In the hallway to the west of the Master's Quarters, in the northwest corner, is a spiral staircase leading down to the back hall of the floor below. It is via these stairs that those discreetly entering the building through the back way gain access to the rooms of illusion.

The Basement.

J. Cell Area. (60' x 50') Here the "merchandise" for slavers is held until they can be turned over to the slavers. There are ten cells (each 10' x 16'), capable of holding several prisoners each. Two of the cells (9 and 10) are special and have magic-dampening properties. In them some spells do not work at all, whereas others are but five to ten percent effective, hence these cells are capable of holding strong magic users. These two cells are locked[6], while the other cells are locked[4].

Each cell contains a water bucket and a privy bucket, though the water is so bad it is not certain which is which. At the back of each cell is vermin-infested straw for sleeping upon. The cell-doors are solid, iron-bound oaken portals, each with a small peep-window latched on the outside.



SCALE: one square = 2 feet Basement

Outside the cells proper is a large assembly area, furnished with two tables, where the guards at times play at cards or knucklebones. At other times the tables are used by the slavers to make out their tally sheets.

The floor and walls of the entire cell area are made of stone, although the ceiling is of wood.

K. Guards' Quarters (60' x 30') There are six rooms where the guards live two to a room, and two privies at either side of this area. Two of the rooms (11 and 16) are slightly larger (12' x 16') than the other four (12' x 12') and house the guard leaders. Each room has a bunk bed, two chests, a table, chairs and shelves. The larger rooms also include a free standing closet that doubles as a weapons locker for the guards.

Centered in the north wall is a hard-to-detect secret door that leads to the basement storeroom. From the Guards' Quarters side a small blue dot in the door's lower right-hand corner is pressed to open it.

L. Storage Room (20' x 60') Bales and crates and barrels and boxes of goods are stored in the basement, as well as jars and sacks and tins and boxes piled upon various shelves. All of the goods are consumables, none are treasure or weaponry.

The hard-to-detect secret door centered in the south wall is opened by pressing a small blue dot in the lower left corner. Another hard-to-spot secret door opens into the tunnel used by the Slavers to get their charges out of the Poppy. It is opened by pressing a small red dot in the lower right-hand corner.

A spiral staircase in the northeast corner leads upward to the back hallway on the ground floor.

M. Slavers' Tunnel This hard-packed earthen passage leads through twisting streets dug out of ruins beneath the City — similar to but not part of the Beggars' warrens — and out to a remote place beyond the City's walls. The Shadow Riders' agent, Mikel Dorbo, uses this tunnel to haul their cargo out of the bowels of the Yellow Poppy. The secret door leading into the Poppy — well hidden in the old mine tunnel — is opened by pressing a small red dot in the lower left hand corner. Only Khassan, Mikel and Tach nar Tel know of the tunnel.

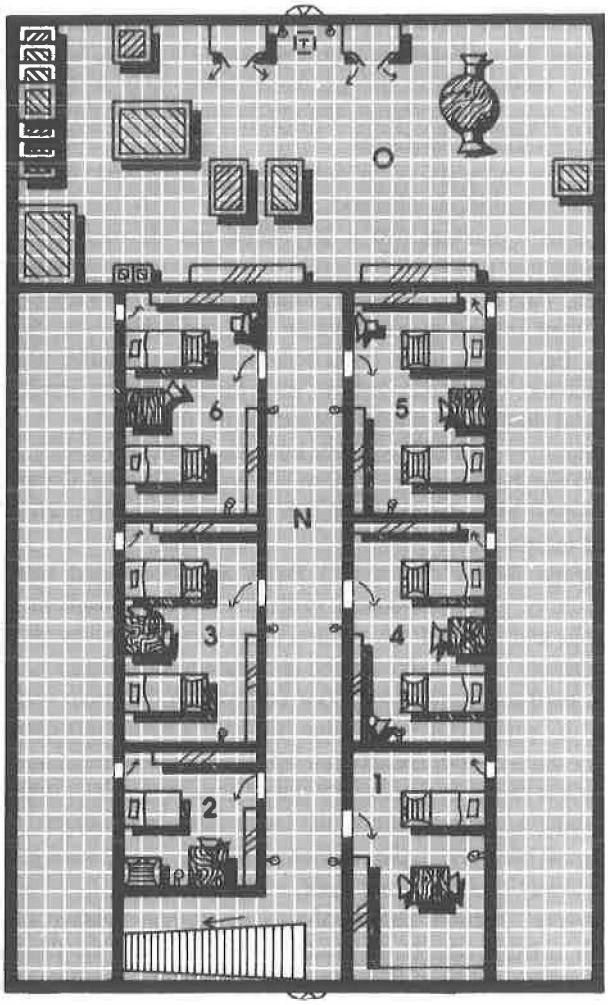
The Attic

All the rooms on this level have access to the under-eaves storage area. The staff keeps seasonal clothing, linens and other such items there, but nothing of great value can be found in here. The under-eaves storage would, however, make a fairly good hiding place for an escaped slave.

The convention stairway at the front of this area leads down to the second floor.

N. Attendants' Quarters:

Room 1 (14' x 24') This is the First Attendant's room. It contains a bed, table, chairs, a chest and shelves. The furnishings, while sparse, are delicate and combine to create a harmonious atmosphere. Hung upon the walls are several ink pictures, complete with commentary in oriental lettering down the side. There are many more stored in the chest, and if someone has cause to visit this room several times, it would be easy to notice the selection of pictures changed with regularity. Blank rice paper, brushes and ink are also kept in the chest. Careful study of the landscape illustrations, or attentive reading of the comments, might suggest where the



SCALE: one square = 2 feet Attic

First Attendant lived before she joined the Yellow Poppy staff.

Room 2 (14' x 14') This is the Second Attendant's room. It contains a bed, table, two chairs, a chest and shelves. As with the First Attendant's room, the furnishings blend well together and provide a feeling of warmth that would surprise visitors. No works of art hang from the walls here, but the shelves are filled with incredibly intricate bone and ivory figurines. On top of the table are several carving tools and an elephant tusk. The tusk looks half finished and depicts, it appears, a series of one-on-one combats between one "Samurai" warrior against a host of supernatural foes.

Rooms 3, 4, 5, and 6 (14' x 23' each) These are the Under Attendants' rooms. Each contains two beds, two chests, one table, two chairs, and two sets of shelves. None of these rooms boast the individual feel of the other two rooms, but the shelves do contain the personal effects of each Under Attendant. They vary from beautiful teak and mother-of-pearl boxes to silver statuettes.

O. The Master's Attic Storage (28' x 60') This room contains all the things the Master holds dear. Khassan's treasure, a king's ransom in profits from the Yellow Poppy, and the personal effects of all the slaves that have passed through the Poppy's basement are gathered here. The discovery of some of this personal evidence would be enough to get Khassan hauled off and jailed or executed. (While trading in slaves is not illegal in the City, it is only permitted in a few sanctioned slave markets. Kidnapping people to sell them into slavery is very much illegal in the City, and, depending upon the victim, can carry a capital sentence.) Most damning of all, in more than one way, is a small box that contains a lock of hair from anyone Khassan has murdered in his career as an assassin. A wizard, perhaps on adept in Clarvoyant magic (C3) — like the City's forensic specialist — could identify the toxins in any particular sample if the poison, like arsenic for example, is taken up into the victim's hair.

A trap door near the north wall leads down into Khassan's bedroom. Above it is a round window that looks out over the Poppy's back yard.

PERSONALITIES

Khassan. *Human, Ht. 5'10", Wt. 170# , Age: 54. Fighting Prowess: Excellent with assassin's tools, especially heavy metal poisons.*

Khassan, the present Master of the Yellow Poppy, has black hair, black eyes and swarth skin. A scar runs along his left cheek. He is a slender man, yet his long fingered hands are very strong, and his reflexes are extremely fast.

All the public knows about Khassan is that he somehow has access to a seemingly endless and independent supply of opiates. It is rumored by some that he runs the local underworld, and while Danny O'Grunnion would dispute that claim, the Big Fish Gang does keep its distance from the Yellow Poppy. Someone locally once remarked he would look at home upon the back of a camel. Khassan promptly insulted the man, then slew him easily when the man challenged the assassin to an honorable duel. It was one of the few times Khassan fought fairly, and that man was one of three men who faced Khassan when the assassin killed him. Still it is true that Khassan has a desert nomad look about him, but this is never noted aloud around him.

No one aside from Khassan and the Attendants can even guess at his true background. Khassan is a renegade Assassin. He was trained within the strict religious sect, but broke free and started killing out of greed instead of religious fervor. He knows no honor and took most of his victims from ambush. The first exception to that rule was an Oriental ambassador named Mutaro Kiyoshi. Khassan slew him in a fight about an imagined slight, but had insured victory because he'd had an agent in the Mutaro household feeding the ambassador quantities of arsenic for a month or more.

Khassan arrived in the City to slay the Yellow Poppy's owner because he'd refused to pay for a shipment of opium. Khassan realized that with his connections he could turn an incredible profit with the Yellow Poppy. He challenged the old owner to a knife throwing contest. Khassan won the contest when his blade ended up in the other man's throat, while the other man's knife only sliced Khassan's cheek.

Khassan is a man utterly without honor: he is a sociopath. His only avocation is the collection of "mementoes" from his victims, be they people he has slain or sent off into slavery. He's more than likely to hire someone with the promise of gold, then pay them off with cold steel, delivered in the dark,

— Khassan —

from behind. The best thing that can be said about him is that he was an only child.

Lady [Mutaro] Ming. *Human, Ht. 4'10", Wt. 84#, Age: 32. Fighting Prowess: Excellent with any oriental weapon or any poison, Good with less familiar (to her) weapons. Excellent at disguise and stealth/ambush/silent movement type skills. She is, for all intents and purposes, a ninja.*

Lady Ming is the First Attendant. A tiny thing, she has long black hair with the sheen and texture of silk, and a slender figure. She could, with her hair disguised, pass for a child. Her almond shaped eyes are even darker than Khassan's, yet their tilt adds mystery to her beautiful face. She moves with such deliberate grace that no one who has met her once or twice could ever believe this delicate creature can be as swift and deadly as a striking Cobra.

Lady Ming does not mix more than necessary with the customers. Several men who tried to force their attentions upon her were, at first, politely rebuffed, then found themselves flat on their backs (sooner than they'd planned) if they continued to insist. The fate of those who persisted beyond that point is open to speculation, but they've not been seen at the Yellow Poppy again.

Mutaro Kiyoshi was Lady Ming's grandfather and she was sent to avenge his death by killing Khassan. She picked up his trail where her grandfather was slain and, unfortunately, learned Khassan had slain him in a "fair" fight. (Khassan's agent had long since been slain.) Khassan was skillful enough to hold her off when she first attacked him, and he accused her of being as dishonorable as her grandfather had been. His rebuke shamed her, and she laid down her sword. He refused to kill her, and told her she had not yet earned an honorable death.

She entered his service to work toward that release, and has spoken with the other assassins — her sisters and cousins — sent to succeed where she failed. When they heard her tale of grandfather's death, they also surrendered to Khassan.

Although she would not mind Khassan's death, she feels bound to defend him against any assassination attempt.

Lady [Mutaro] Huwai Mi *Human, Ht. 4'11", Wt. 91# Age: 29. Fighting Prowess: Excellent as Lady Ming above.*

Lady Mi is the Second Attendant and looks enough like Lady Ming to be her sister, which, in fact, she is. The only difference between them, aside from an inch in height, is the lighter, golden color of her eyes. She shares her sister's comtempt for the crude and forward men who proposition her, but she has taken a lover or two when a man seemed predisposed to accept *her* invitation to a liason.

Lady Mi, while feeling the same shame her sister does, harbors the conviction Khassan has lied somewhere along the line. The half carved tusk in her room is an unconscious reflection of this conviction. She'd seen her grandfather fight, and she has seen Khassan fight. In addition she has, by clumsily spilling hot tea on Khassan or dropping something that explodes loudly behind Khassan's back, determined that Khassan is just not quick enough or skilled enough to have beaten her grandfather in battle. Only the fact that her sister confirmed Khassan's version of the fight with statements from neutral observers keeps Lady Mi from slaying Khassan.

The eight remaining Attendants. Each of them is a Mutaro and, while not as proficient as their cousins, they have as wide a base of skills. Being somewhat younger than Ming or Mi, they are more willing to interact with citizens. None of them will reveal anything about their history or the reason they are so bound to Khassan.

Guards. The guards are twelve mongrel humans and they live-in at the Yellow Poppy. Their main task is to watch over the prisoners in the cells, which they do in three shifts. When not on duty the guards sleep or engage in leisure activities. Nine other guards — more fully blooded humans — do not live on the premises, and in three shifts they ward the gates or patrol the grounds with the mastiffs. They seldom enter the Poppy. All of the guards, human and quasi-human, are fair fighters, especially with cudgels and dirks.

Staff, Visitors and Patrons. The cook is a fat, overbearing woman who goes by the name of "Cook," but has learned not to annoy the attendants. The scullery boy is a skinny, 14 year old youth who answers to just about anything and is probably brighter than he acts.

From time to time Khassan has mages of various stripes on hand to deal with troubles of the magic kind. A very few are scholars who are doing research on the carpets; others are just those who come to enjoy the Poppy's diversions. These magic users drift in and out, and when in residence, they usually quarter in one of the bedrooms (room 5) on the ground floor.

Bearing in mind the Yellow Poppy is an opium den, the GM should patronize the Poppy with suitable people. In the evenings there should be as many as 20 people in the illusion rooms, and 30 or so in the opium den. During the day about a fourth that number are present. While most of the patrons are the dregs of society, do remember that occasionally the nobility and the wealthy attend, especially the illusion rooms.

SPECIAL PERSONALITIES

Tipperton Thistledown *Warrow, Ht. 3'6", Wt. 70#, Age: 30. Fighting Prowess: Very Good with Bow, Fair at hand to*

hand combat. Magic ability: Good, C1, C3, C4, C5 and C7.
***Peregrin Rushlock** Warrow, Ht. 3'6", Wt. 85#, Age: 32. Fighting Prowess: Excellent with bow, Fair at hand to hand combat. Magic Ability: Fair C5 and C6, Good C4. Note: his abilities are focused through song because he is a bard, but he does not need an instrument to use the magic.*

(Note: Warrows come from Dennis L. McKiernan's Iron Tower trilogy and Silver Call duology and are used with his permission.)

These two Warrows, from Mithgar, are locked in cell #9, one of the magic-dampening cells. At first glance they might appear to be Hobbits, but their leaner bodies, tilted jewel-like eyes (Tip's an emerald green, Perry's a sapphire blue) and their pointed elven ears give them a unique look. Khassan does not know what they are, but he knows they're unique and will fetch an extremely high price on the slave market.

Neither Warrow is certain how they came to the City from Mithgar. Tip managed to talk Perry into trying to combine their abilities at Conveyance Magic (C4) to accomplish a longer distance teleport, but something bizarre happened during their experiment. Unbeknownst to them, Tranq (see DomDaniel's Gate) was passing though their dimension and time, and their spells triggered a Time/Dimension imbalance in his time machine. The time machine disintegrated and stranded the Warrows in the City.

The Warrows, disoriented and confused, actually appeared on the Yellow Poppy's grounds and Khassan realized his good fortune. Khassan did not discover, however, the piece of the Time Machine Tip managed to palm. While tiny, it is the key to Tranq's ability to repair his device.

Even though imprisoned, Tip's unquenchable curiosity burns brightly ("Hiyo! Lookit this bug, Perry, its legs work backwards!...Hey! This straw smells funny!...Lor! You can see patterns in the wood grain on the door!"). Tip became an adventurer because he is driven to discover "Secrets!" to the extent that at times he takes foolhardy risks. The cruelest part of captivity is that he can't explore the new world he's discovered.

On the other hand, brusk Perry has little patience, and is given to quick action...sometimes too quick. He paces the cell, scheming to escape. It's a wonder that he hasn't throttled Tip by now, what with all of Tip's babblings. Yet Tip does not seem to trigger Perry's fiery temper, and the two of them get along well, making a formidable team.

Khassan did try to pass the Warrows on to Mikel Dorbo for delivery to the Shadow Riders, but when they were removed from the cell they nearly escaped, raising bloody havoc there under the Yellow Poppy. It was all the slaver and a visiting wizard could do to get them back into the magic-quelling cell. Once the Warrows had been subdued Mikel refused to take delivery and told Khassan to market them himself.

Though Khassan doesn't know it, the Warrows plan on going meekly the next time — until they can reach a place where escape is more easily done.

SPECIAL MAGIC ITEMS

The five carpets in the Illusion rooms are potent magic artifacts. No matter what size room they are installed in, they expand or contract to fit its dimensions (up to 100' x 100') Even when carried rolled up, the carpets dimensions continue to alter as it passes from room to room through hallways, which makes one devilishly awkward to cart through the Yellow Poppy. When removed entirely from a building, they shrink to the size of a handkerchief. Each is a different color: red, orange, yellow, green and blue, and each has a geometric pattern portraying a Demon of that color. These Demons are real, trapped in the weft and warp of the fabric, and not overly pleased about their imprisonment. They are dangerous and, should one escape, literally, there will be all Hell to pay.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

Scenario 1: The Mutaro clan sends yet another assassin to finally get rid of Khassan. Because all their superior warriors have failed this mission, and because they're running short of people to send, this Mutaro is a young woman, Kana, known for her wit more than her skill at arms. She meets Lady Mi in a market and learns what has happened. Because Mi has doubts, Kana does not feel bound to surrender. Instead she decides to hire help so she can break into Khassan's storage in the attic and discover what he has hidden there.

She approaches the party and enlists their aid. She'll probably suggest that her sisters and cousins are held in foul thralldom, which should be enough to motivate any sot to help out. Remember that if she has proof Khassan has lied, and the lock of her grandfather's hair will prove he has, the Mutaro ladies will be very nasty in their revenge.

Scenario 2: Tranq recovers a piece of his timeship and is able to replay the section of the log that shows the Warrows ending up at the Yellow Poppy. Unable to deal with Khassan on his own, but desperately needing the element Tip has, he hires the characters to stage a break out for the Warrows. In return he promises them an opportunity to plunder any treasure spoken of in folktales via a trip in his time machine!

The possibilities for roleplaying at the Yellow Poppy are endless, for it can easily be a festering sore of evil in the City. The NPCs can be of all types: from those bold ones who stand four-square against vileness, to those arch-villains who give the world more than its share of grief. The Poppy offers hack and slash adventurers a tough nut to crack, and more thoughtful characters an arena for locked-room puzzles or subtle political/religious intrigue.

Use the Poppy well: It's a helluva good bad place!

Sutaka's Beasts and Beauties

In the more affluent parts of the City, one would expect the slaves to be clean, learned in a trade, and more than willing to do a good job for the "Master." One might even find a slave who was quite proud of his or her lineage and quick to point out the number of famous figures from history who his ancestors served. After all, who's to prove him wrong?

But here, where even the species of the merchandise is questionable, here it is doubtful one would find a trained cook or a skilled craftsman. But then, this is not the part of town to come looking for that sort of thing.

The patrons of Sutaka's Beasts and Beauties seek three things: laborers, pit fighters, and companions. No one is certain of Sutaka's source of merchandise, nor do any care — as long as the goods are delivered on time, and no one in the City can easily recognize them. Sutaka's prices are, depending upon the buyer's ability to pay, reasonable and always negotiable. The market is open from dawn to dusk, and once a month Sutaka hosts a public auction where the minimum bid starts at roughly half the normal asking price for each slave.

Sutaka's wares are usually the victims of kidnappings and village raids. Though no one has ever proven it, rumors fly that Sutaka has on his payroll the infamous Shadow Riders. If one looks hard enough, he may find one or two slaves who have noble blood running (perhaps even unadulterated) through their veins. The slaves, even when provided with such natural leaders, seldom rebel or cause trouble, as Sutaka's "School of the Whip" has taught them everything he feels they need to fulfill a subservient role in society.

The "companions," better known as Sutaka's Beauties, are trained by the pleasure mistress, Letiara. It is her duty to see that her students are well-versed in pleasing their masters-to-be. Not all of these beauties are female, as Sutaka sends the pretty and more frail boys to Letiara also. Letiara and Sutaka make an effective team, and their results are usually most appreciated by the patrons. However, the slavers have been known to drug a slave or two into submission, hoping the patron and his new acquisition are far away before the drug's effects wear off.

All sales are final, but Sutaka will re-purchase a slave at a minimum of 50% discount of the original price.

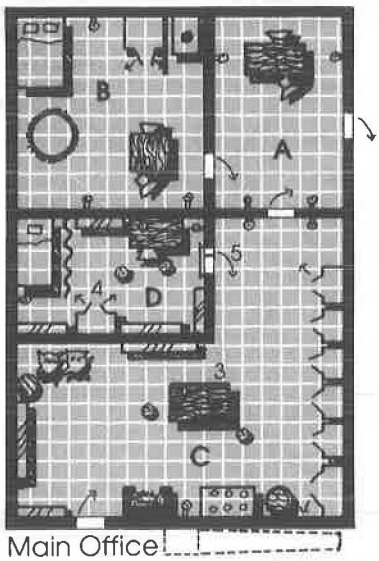
The laborers, the Beasts, are left pretty much to themselves because Sutaka knows anything they need to learn they can pick up on the first day of their new jobs. Pit fighters, on the other hand, if they are not already trained warriors, are instructed by a man known as Slaymaster Bannon. Bannon is a veteran of many skirmishes and battles, as well as a trained professional fighter. He drills combatants daily in a crude pit that lies a few yards from the slave quarters. This part of Sutaka's enterprise is the most costly because the training results, all too often to Sutaka's thinking, in the death of stock. Still, these losses are often recouped during the auction when Sutaka matches fighters against each other in demonstrations, and makes book on the fights.

The City guard frowns on the brutal treatment some of Sutaka's slaves suffer, but they are paid well enough to keep their concerns to themselves, and their hides well away of the slave pens. Rumor has it that one inquisitive guardsman discovered a noble in the pens and freed him. Sutaka was left one slave shy for an order from a local salt mine, yet the order went out on schedule. The guardsman was never seen again.

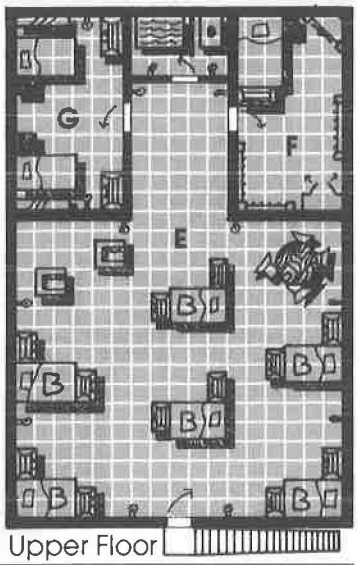
LAYOUT

Sutaka's slave compound is actually an abandoned temple, but the slaver has never inquired who it belonged to before he acquired it. The three white-washed brick buildings are

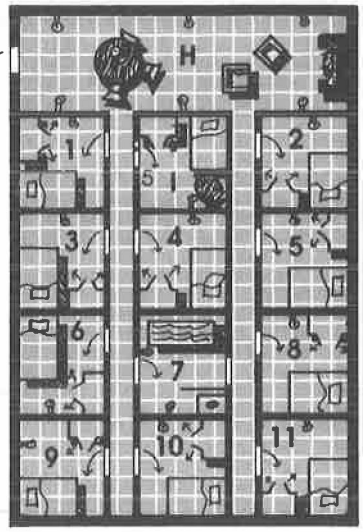
Ed Andrews is a first rate writer who has done everything from short sotires to screenplays. He's one of the few writers in gaming I dared trust to handle a delicate subject like slavery, and he proved my trust was well founded. Sutaka's offers a workable solution to the reality of slavery.



Main Office

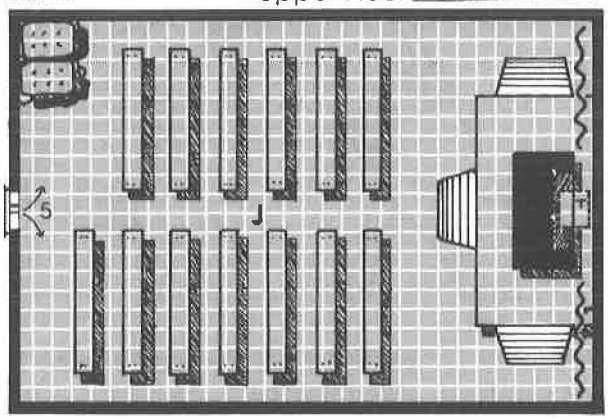


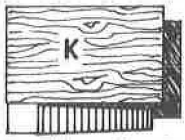
Upper Floor



Pleasure Suites

SCALE:
one square = 2 feet





Auction Block

L

surrounded by a 20' wall. The dirt courtyard within the walls provides ample room for training and the monthly auctions.

MAIN OFFICE

A. Office (20' x 14') This room is a simple one, with only two chairs and a desk. Here Sutaka does his bartering between auctions. The furnishings are more fuctional than comfortable in the hopes no client will be inspired to sit around and chat as opposed to bargain and buy.

B. Sutaka's Private Quarters (20' x 20') Sutaka's room may only be entered through the main office. There are no windows here and the furniture consists of a simple bed, dining table and two chairs. The round rug at the foot of the bed conceals a floor safe that Sutaka keeps locked[4] except when depositing or withdrawing money from it. It usually contains 1,500 gold pieces, but the night after the auction it generally holds 7,500 to 10,000 gold pieces. That amount drops back to normal when the next shipment of slaves arrives; an event scheduled to occur two to three days after the auction.

C. Kitchen (20' x 34') Deely O'Carn's work space contains little more than the usual cooking utensils yet he manages to prepare all the food for the slaves. He has two slave helpers who change rapidly when sold off, but they do little more than fetch, carry or tend the hearthfires. Food is delivered through the door in the south wall, and stored in the cabinets on the east wall or, in the case of sacks and barrels, stacked along the west wall. The ovens (three stacked atop each other to save firewood) a massive stove and a big black cauldron lie against the south wall between the door and the cabinets. Because slaves do work in the kitchen, Deely keeps all his knives locked[3] in a compartment beneath the chopping block. He has the only key and wears it tied with a string to his right wrist.

D. Infirmary (20' x 12') The infirmary has a dry, herbal scent to it that makes all who enter the room uncomfortable. Shelves line the walls and each is cluttered with vials, jars and clumps of dried vegetation. The healer, Hynun, stores his potent mixtures, drugs and valuable instruments in the cabinet on the south wall, and keep it locked[4] except when he's treating a patient. Hynun also stores his clay homonculi on the cabinet's bottom shelf.

The Infirmary has room to house one patient. The medicines are sufficient to treat scrapes, cuts, burns and bruises, but very little else. Hynun has become quite adept at stitching fighters back together, and often asks his patients about diseases in their homelands and cures they use. He's amassed an encyclopedic knowledge of illness and is secretly delighted to be able to put this knowledge to use.

When Hynun is not treating a patient, and especially if he's working with clay, he keeps the door locked[5] and barred. His notes about clay and disease, which he keeps in a strange code, are locked[2] in the bottom drawer of his desk.

UPPER FLOOR

E. Barracks (25' x 27') The exterior stairway leads up to the second floor. The barracks contains six bunks and lockers for Sutaka's guards. The lockers contain clothing and little else as

the guards really live in town and stay here only during their two week duty rotation. Gray wool blankets cover the beds. Oil lamps, located along the walls every few feet, provide the only illumination as there are no windows in this room.

F. Slaymaster Bannon's Room (20' x 11') Bannon's bed is little more than a straw mattress held off the floor by a rough wooden frame. The chest at the foot of his bed contains only a minimum of clothes. Assorted weapons and martial artifacts hang on the walls. The northeast corner of the room contains a rack for his sword Slaymaster, and a single candle stands, bereft a candle holder, on his nightstand.

G. Hynun and Deely's Room (20' x 11') The cook and the healer share this room. Each half of the simply appointed room mirrors the other. The room contains two beds, two nightstands, two oil lamps, two chests and two sets of bookshelves. Only in the books on the shelves do the contents differ. Deely's shelves, the ones on the north wall, contain piles of paper scraps with notes on dishes the various slaves have described to Deely. Deely has laboriously copied most of them, annoted by his experiences, into three fat volumes that comprise a fairly extensive survey of the world's cuisine.

Hynun's shelves contain fat, leather-bound books on subjects from poetry to healing, or so one would surmise from the titles on the spines. In reality Hynun has placed ordinary bindings on some fairly nasty alchemical texts. Several of the books have been banned by the nicer religions currently holding sway, and the possession of any one of them is a capital offense. Still, sold to the right collector or debauched noble, the books would bring a high price.

PLEASURE SUITES

Letiara houses her students in what were once the priests' quarters. The stark rooms have whitewashed walls and bricked-over windows so the slaves cannot escape. Letiara has convinced Sutaka to spend some money on furnishings so cheap rugs cover the floors and wall hangings hide the pockmarked walls.

H. Receiving Hall (10' x 34') Here Letiara receives patrons and exhibits the slaves in a cordial atmosphere. Most of Sutaka's decorating money went to furnish this room comfortably. Letiara pulls the overstuffed chairs away from the hearth and parades the slaves past the seated patrons. She does not let the patrons "sample" the wares, though they are allowed to poke, prod and examine the slaves.

Letiara knows her customers, and caters to their tastes. Usually she exhibits one or two slaves she knows the patron will not buy, then brings out the merchandise most likely to excite the customer. This simple process results both in working inexperienced slaves through the system, and drives the price of the merchandise up.

When a selection has been made, Letiara leads the patron over to the round table and they swiftly haggle over price. Letiara is a fierce negotiator and the only people she seems to respect are those who bargain hard with her. Sutaka sets a minimum price for each slave, which includes purchase price and the time, supplies and housing costs for the slave, then splits 75/25 with Letiara whatever she gets above that price during her bargaining.

I. Letiara's Room (10' x 10') Letiara's room is locked[5] with a magic spell, so it is impervious to normal lockpicking or other thiefly methods of covert entry. She allows no one to enter the room, and very few people can even remember seeing her enter or exit through the only door. In truth the room is rather plain and is furnished much as the other rooms in this area. A rumor persists among the pleasure slaves that her room is bare except for strange and mystical icons that bind her demon lover to a high backed chair, yet, despite the lack of verification, the rumor lives on, and gets embellished with each telling. Oddly, Letiara does maintain a small shrine on the round table at the foot of her bed, and it does include finely worked bone statues and icons painted on slabs of wood.

Rooms 1 - 11 (9 x 10') The slaves' rooms are remarkable only in that each houses only one pleasure slave at a time. Sutaka laments the extravagant waste of space, but Letiara correctly explained that a pleasure slave must have a sense of self to be attractive, and a private room is a simple cost for such a reward. Males and females are housed in these rooms containing a bed, chest of drawers and oil lamp set into the wall, but seldom do they enjoy each other outside training exercises. Letiara has let it be known that any "practice" of the things she's taught them will result in the woman being sold as unskilled labor, and the man being reduced to a eunuch. **Room 7** is the bath/privy and cleanliness is encouraged.

J. Slave Building (60' x 40') The laborers and pit fighters are housed in what used to be the temple. Despite the interior's decay, it still is obviously a temple. The altar is a mammoth piece of black basalt carved with mystical runes that only a scholar or highly trained wizard could read. They are lines quoted from the religion's sacred book and generally suggest that a sword, shield and faith are all any person needs to find paradise. Above the altar, set into the wall, is a carved stone disk with the image of a skull-faced god holding a jagged, lightning-bladed sword in one hand, and the severed head of an enemy in the other. The pit fighters like the image and have forced the common laborers to sleep back away from the altar.

The blankets and sleeping pallets are stored, during the day, in the northwest corner. The pit fighters pick bedding first, then the laborers fight over the remaining stuff, though almost everyone does get bedding. The laborers sleep on and below the benches, while the fighters arrange themselves around the altar.

The windows have not been boarded up because they are too narrow for escape. In fact they really are archers' ports and are filled with stained glass. The altar has a secret passage behind it leading down that the priests used for dumping sacrifices into the sewers. A catch activating it is located at the southeastern end of the altar, on the wall, but a martial tapestry (hung there to encourage the pit fighters) blocks it. No one knows it exists, but a similar device is standard in all the temples of this war god's religion elsewhere.

The slaves also take their meals here and are fed in the same rough pecking order as above. Pit fighters eat first, then the laborers fight over the scraps, but Deely's meals, often conjured from somewhat inadequate supplies, provide enough food for everyone.

The only doors in are two massive bronze doors that are bolted and barred[5] from the outside at night.

K. Auction Block (16' x 10') The auction platform stands

in the dusty temple courtyard and, for most of the month it does little more than provide shade for the ground. During the monthly auctions, however, Sutaka uses it to show off his wares. The pit fighters do battle on it and the pleasure slaves provide demonstrations of their charms. All sales are cash unless credit has been arranged before the sale.

L. Fighting Pit (10' x 5') This pit is nothing more than a hole in the ground about 10' deep. Bannon uses it in his training and here many pit fighter trainees lose their lives.

PERSONALITIES

Sutaka *Human, Ht. 5'10", Wt. 230#, Age: 41. Fighting Prowess: Good.*

Sutaka is a massive man, but it isn't all muscle. He wears his black hair pulled back into a ponytail and his black eyes have a mischievous glint to them. But those who know him also know any mischief he has in mind will be cruel in nature.

As a young man Sutaka worked as a prison guard for one of his homeland's warlords. He noticed other prison guards "lost" prisoners from time to time, and were well paid by slavers for those prisoners. Sutaka realized that if the slavers could pay that well for slaves, they must be making a great deal of money so he organized the other guards and worked as a negotiator to raise the prices. Soon he accumulated enough money to start his own slaving operation, and after kicking around for a while, he settled upon the City as his home base.

Sutaka is a shrewd businessman, and he always looks for ways to make the most of his gold. He is aware of the Yellow Poppy's trade with Mikel Dorbo, but he does not interfere with it. He eschews buying any well-known individuals the Poppy has taken. Though he would be more comfortable with shady investments, he's avoided them because he does not really want to attract the Big Fish Gang's attention. Consequently he has purchased tracts of timberland and is making a modest profit on a lumbermill he staffs with slaves.

— Sutaka —

Sutaka has one vice that eats up most of those profits, and, oddly, keeps the Big Fish Gang away from him. Sutaka loves to gamble, and is not very good at it, but he pays his debts promptly. He favors the Cock and Bull Gaming Club, and because most of his money flows through it into Danny O'Grunnion's pockets, the Big Fish sees no reason to take over the slaver's operation and actually have to work for the gold Sutaka freely supplies.

Hynun the Healer *Human, Ht: 5'9", Wt. 125#, Age: 45. Fighting Prowess: Poor. Magic Ability: Good, C2, C8.*

Hynun is somewhat of an enigma, in that his frail form and seemingly weak constitution do not exactly instill his patients with faith in his abilities. He is, in reality, a very healthy sort and is well-versed in nutrition as well as the healing arts. He works closely with Deely to insure the slaves eat healthy food.

Hynun says little of his past because he's hiding from the law and several religious factions. He has tried to create artificial life from clay objects, and when his preliminary efforts were discovered, he narrowly escaped the mob of religious fantatics who descended on his lab and burned it to the ground. Despite the risks, Hynun still experiments, but keeps the clay models on a very small scale. He hopes to succeed in creating life, and thereby be able to model severed limbs so they can be used to make maimed people whole again. On occasion he will show a trusted friend one of his "toys," and provide demonstration of the homonculus' dexterity and basic intelligence. (The creatures stand 5" tall, are mute, quite agile and, while cunning, are probably not much smarter than your average pig. Still, they are very good at mimicry and capable of memory and learning on a limited scale.)

There is no love lost between Sutaka and Hynun, but their alliance is one of mutual convenience. Sutaka needs someone to keep his wares in shape, and Hynun needs a place where the City Guards are paid to stay away. Sutaka does not know why Hynun stays with him, and really does not care, as long as the healer's demands for privacy and better food for the slaves do not cause him, Sutaka, undue discomfort.

Deely O'Carn *Human, Ht. 5'5", Wt. 150#, Age: 27. Fighting Prowess: Fair with a kitchen knife, otherwise poor.*

Deely O'Carn has always cooked. He started as a cabin boy on a merchant ship, then joined various caravans and traveled widely plying his skills. Deely was captured in a raid and attracted Sutaka's attention when he spit food out and refused to eat such poorly prepared slop. Sutaka decided to put this youthful upstart to the test, and Deely met the challenge by preparing his now infamous Spiced Fish and Pork Guts dish in hopes of burning out Sutaka's tongue. Deely did not realize at the time, nor has he since, that Sutaka was from the area where the dish originated and he loved it. He granted Deely his freedom in return for bonded servitude and the tow-headed, slightly overweight young man has cooked for the slaves ever since.

Deely grumbles a lot and complains his meagre budgets will not allow him to prepare the fine dishes suited to grace the tables of sultans and kings. He knows the complaints annoy Sutaka, but after the slaver expands his budget, Deely prepares another mouth-burning meal that pleases the slaver. This system of demand and reward has worked well, and Deely constantly searches for another dish that will scorch his

master's palate, but he hasn't succeeded yet.

Letiara, the Pleasure Mistress *Half-elf, Ht. 5'4", Wt. 100#, Age: unknown but she appears youthful to human eyes. Fighting Prowess: Fair bare handed, Good with a whip.*

Her elven features and mane of brown hair give her an exotic and alluring appearance. An amused and somewhat hauty expression seems permanently etched on her features. She moves fluidly, like the whip she wields and, while a stern taskmistress, she does reward success with a compliment or occasional maternal caress. Her job is to see that all her students leave Sutaka's care with at least a working knowledge of how to "behave" in a proper fashion in the courts and homes of their masters, and she does the job perfectly.

Her past is shrouded in mystery and rumors abound about her. One says she had a handsome offer to work at the House of Infinite Dreams, but she rejected it to work with Sutaka. It has also been suggested, generally by guardsmen who have been rebuffed, that she hates men but, in reality, she treats all men, including Sutaka and Bannon, with indifference. And, of course, there is the rumor about her room and its contents.

Still, observant individuals have noted certain things about her. First and foremost is her mixed blood: no pure blooded elf, or even a well-born half breed would be doing the things she does. Secondly, she hates aristocracy and takes an inhuman delight in training slaves who claim noble blood. This holds especially true for nobles from the southern states, and more than one of them has been "ruined" by overzealous use of the whip. Hynun has, over the years, noted these peculiarities about Letiara, and has considered the links between those things and the Elf massacres in the south during a nasty civil war, but he's said nothing to anyone about his suspicions.

Slaymaster Bannon *Human, Ht. 6', Wt. 198#, Age: 30. Fighitng Prowess: Excellent across the board. Magic Ability: Good, C1 — as tied to his sword Slaymaster.*

Save for the scar that lays across one cheek and the cruel downturn of his mouth, Slaymaster Bannon is a handsome man. His dark hair and smouldering brown eyes suggest an implacability his charges have learned to fear.

Bannon used to be a soldier until his nation ran out of wars and he decided that mercenary duty did not pay enough for the risks. He turned to professional arena fighting, but the premature and utterly unexpected death, at his hands, of a Sultan's favorite pet fighter ended that career. Bannon finally allowed himself to be lured into mercenary service and, on a jungle campaign against the Khasa savages in the west, he found his sword Slaymaster.

The blade is enchanted. It doubles its effectiveness when used in combat against a foe who believes himself good and pure of heart. The weapon was first created for a hero to wield against a fanatical horde of holy warriors who felt their savage crusade was the only way to heaven. The hero destroyed them, but realized as he did so that the weapon could really be used against anyone who had even a minimum of self-confidence or feeling of self-worth. He hid the blade in a temple he believed, incorrectly it seems, would never be located.

Armed with the sword, Bannon became somewhat of a legend. Quickly, though, he soured on the difficult and suicidal missions offered him, and accepted — to the surprise of many — an offer to join Sutaka and train his pit fighters. In this job Bannon does very well, and many of the fighters trained by him rank highly in the cities where they fight. Bannon, who wears Slaymaster at all times but never draws it against a slave, trains the fighters in his own martial style which he has put together from all the fighting he has seen over his lifetime. It looks a tad unusual, but no one has seen fit to criticize its success.

Slaymaster Bannon does not trust Deely or the healer. He knows who Hynun really is, and the ulcer he's nursing is aggravated by Deely's spicy food so he refuses to eat in the compound. He takes all his meals in a little open tavern across the street from the House of Infinite Dreams, where the food is all boiled and disgustingly bland, and spends his time watching Gilada Nev welcome patrons. When asked why he doesn't just spend a few coins and get much closer to her, Bannon puts the inquiries off with a shrug and a half-hearted complaint about prices. When jibbed about being in love with Gilada, Bannon casts a glare that silences all jesters and gives the distinct impression that he does not see her as a common courtesan.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

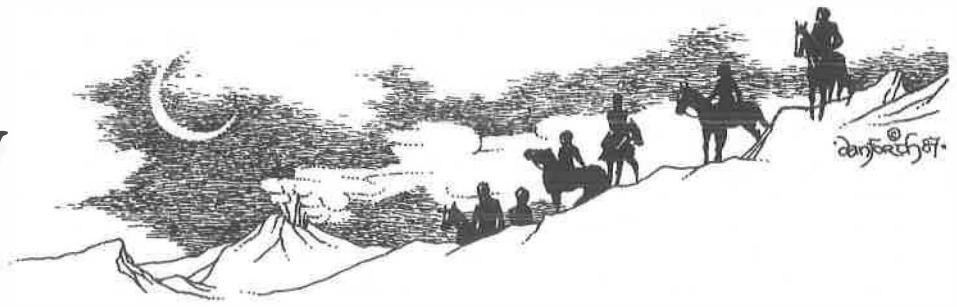
Scenario 1: The Khasa savages have once again begun raiding their neighbors. Various religious leaders organize an expediton to recover the Slaymaster blade. When they discover the blade is gone they spread the word and offer a huge reward for its recovery. The characters hear about the search and realize a fortune is very near at hand. But how do they separate Bannon and his sword without getting it used against them?

Scenario 2: The characters attend one of the monthly auctions to enjoy the fights and generally spend the day gawking and laughing at the rich purchasing slaves. Suddenly one of the characters recognizes a slave as an old friend/sibling/lover/cousin! The individual is hotly bid over and the price quickly exceeds anything the players can put together. The slave goes to the highest bidder — a foreign noble known for his harsh treatment of slaves — but will not be delivered until the first of the week. That gives the players three days to steal the slave away from Sutaka's operation or forever lose the chance to see him again.

Scenario 3: A character comes down with a horrid disease that defies magical cures. A former slave working with the local physician recognizes the malady and says she was cured of the same thing by Hynun. Even though knowing a cure is possible might sound hopeful, Hynun has been in hiding ever since the High Inquisitor arrived in town, and the Inquisitor's minions are searching for the heretic so they can burn him alive. The race is on!

Sutaka's Beasts and Beauties is an establishment that can provide decent slave labor, and specially trained individuals to suit anyone's needs and desires. It also hides a curious cast of characters who make the slave market more than just a place where human chattel is bought and sold.

The Shadow Riders



The City could not possibly contain all the evil that finds it way into the world, yet the City's prosperity attracts evil as a flame attracts moths. Outside the walls strange creatures lurk and wait to take the unsuspecting. Road agents and bandits prey upon the lone travelers or bold merchants who eschew the safety of a caravan. But even a caravan is not safe from the Shadow Riders—dreaded and cruel raiders who slay those they cannot sell into slavery, and who haunt a hidden valley north of the City.

The Shadow Riders is a group of men who prey on caravans and the smaller villages around the City. They ride only at night and it is rumored that they are "men who cannot die," or conversely, men who have died long ago and now roam the earth as the Undead. Whichever way you choose to look at it neither rumor is pleasant, and confusion about the group's origins is one if the Shadow Riders' trademarks.

Their method of operation is equally well known and roundly dreaded. They hit only where the chance for rewards is the greatest and where risk is the least. Somehow these raiders always seem to *know* which caravans are the richest and which villages are unprotected. The actual number of Riders is unknown, though is usually estimated at 60 or 70 on the basis of the destruction they cause in raids. The secret of their number is kept by the simple expedient of murdering everyone who is not taken captive; and their captives have never been seen again. No Rider body has ever been found, hence their rumored immortality.

HISTORY

The Shadow Riders started as a cavalry troop given leave to operate behind enemy lines in a war that is now long forgotten. Although atrocities are expected from a group of this type, this force was by far the worst. The leader, a man known as one 'who gets things done' (especially the nasty jobs no one else would touch), was given free rein to pick his own squad and he soon surrounded himself with men of like attitude and identical ancestry. This band of men, bound by blood and purpose, harried their enemies and shattered their will to fight.

Unbeknownst to his masters, the Shadow Rider's leader, the man known now as Tach nar Tel, had dedicated himself and his life to the proscribed goddess Tel. His men joined him in his covert Tel worship and they sacrificed each of their victims in her name. Their worship reawakened the slumbering goddess and so pleased her that she appeared to them and granted them immortality. At first the men cheered this change in their lives, but eternal life had its price: the men could no longer enjoy the normal pleasures in life, and their only joy came from seeing the suffering of others.

Unfortunately for the Shadow Riders, the Emperor installed partially through their efforts, especially loathed Tel and her worshipers. He turned his forces on his own empire and utterly purged it of all Tel worshipers, and the Shadow Riders were no exception. Emperor Balin (now known as The Steel Man) took the Tel worshipers utterly by surprise and within a month had rooted out that evil and destroyed it utterly, with one exception: the Shadow Riders. Thirty of the Shadow Riders escaped the massacre, both because of their ferocity and mobility, and with them went the spirit of Tel.

The actual number of Shadow Riders is 30 and the membership never varies above or below that number. Whenever a Rider is slain (damaged beyond any hope of functioning effectively), a new "member" is recuited from among the male captives. Tach nar Tel brings the captive to Tel's temple and, through her power, the spirit of the old Rider takes over the captive's body. The name Shadow Riders, which originally came from the band's propensity for attacking at night, has taken on a new meaning as each person is really "ridden" by the shadow of a man who should be dead.

The bonding of spirit to body takes a month to be complete, and might be able to be reversed if powerful magicks were used during that time to force the Rider out. Over the month the borrowed body begins to change and takes on the original Rider's features, including scars and marks gained throughout his career. In addition the personality of the individual who has been taken over does assert itself, mostly in speech patterns and easy recall of recent events, but it is soon stripped of anything humane or normal. In reality, though, all the Riders except Tach nar Tel are a composite personality made up of everyone they have ridden through the centuries.

While the Riders derive pleasure from abusing and torturing captives, Tel knows no such easy avenue to joy and elation. Her burning desire is the destruction of Balin, the Steel Man,

T. L. Riseden is a Flying Buffalo employee who expressed an interest in writing a Citybook establishment. Ed Andrews has created in Sutaka's a band of raiders called the Shadow Riders, but he'd not fleshed them out much. I handed Terry the title, discussed a few ideas with him, and turned him loose. In return I got the nastiest establishment in the book. Though Tel and Tach nar Tel may be sympathetic, no one will like them. But that's fine — The Shadow Riders are fun to hate.

but she can only "sense" him when he moves. She tracked him to the City when he entered it, and has tantilizingly elusive flashes about him when he nods or shakes his head, but she never gets enough to locate him. She has stationed her Riders in a place where they can strike quickly, and is trying to locate her sworn enemy through more conventional methods.

LAYOUT

The Riders' base sits in the mountains near the City in an area known as The Demon Hills. The natural volcanic activity in the area makes this a desolate and twisted region where trees are stunted and warped. Billowing clouds of fog choke narrow, winding canyons, and becoming lost in this area is easier than falling off a horse. The base sits built into the walls of a box canyon with only one way in or out. Ghosts of victims slain by the Riders for their pleasure and amusement haunt the area and can be heard shrieking day and night.

Local natives once used the large natural cavern and remains of their adobe buildings have been adapted to use by the Riders. A rival tribe slaughtered the natives, so their ghosts still haunt the cavern. Their shades do not frighten the Riders and, in fact, the Riders find their antics (when they terrify captives) amusing.

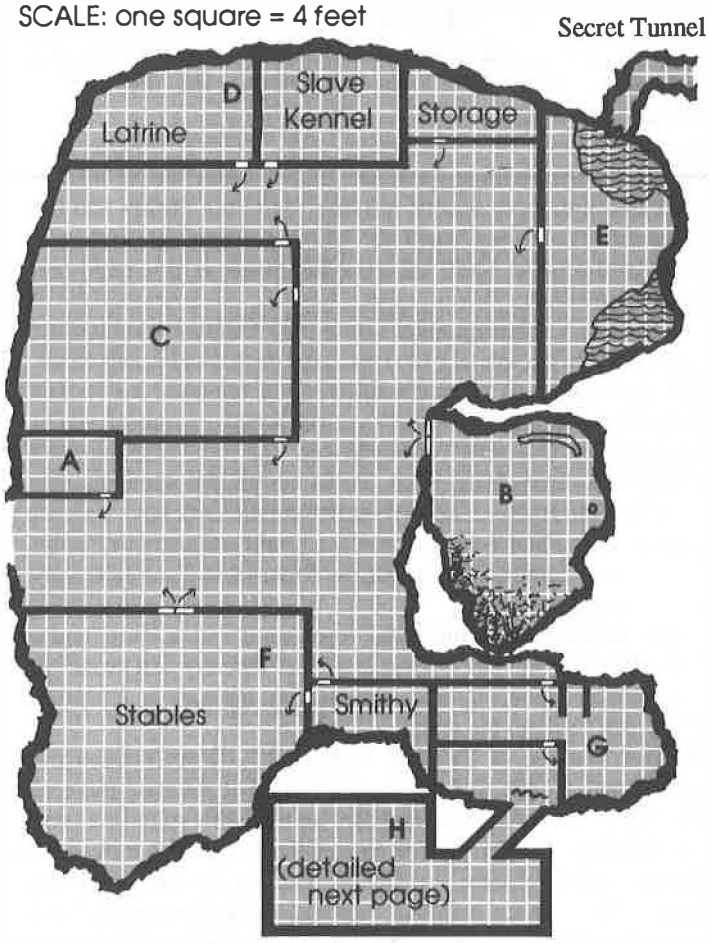
A. Guard House (20' x 12') A small guard house sits just inside the cave entrance. It is not manned, since the Riders fear nothing, but it does have two beds, a table and cupboard for food and drink. Mikel Dorbo stays here on those very rare occasions he cannot flee the valley before nightfall, although sleep in this haunted place is well beyond his ability.

B. Slave Enclosure (50' x 40') A strong wall of logs built by the Riders defines the outer edges of the slave enclosure. It occupies the same space as a temple the natives had used, hence their ghosts congregate there at various times of the month and scare the wits out of the slaves. The captives; men, women and children; are kept naked in this area until time for a shipment to Sutaka. The captives sleep on the bare floor (which the volcanic activity keeps warm), have a hole to use as a latrine and are fed once a day from a common trough.

C. Barracks (50' x 40') At the left of the cave entrance sits the two-story building the Riders use as living quarters. The first floor has a large common room used as mess hall and entertainment area, and a smaller room staffed by slaves where all food is prepared. The common room is sparsely furnished, but ample space is given to implements of warfare and torture. Often a dead body can be found within a steel cage hanging from a central beam.

The upper floor has 29 individual rooms, one for each Rider, which are furnished with whatever attracts the shattered attention of these creatures. The doors are never locked and items in each room are less likely to be valuable than they are likely to be a clue about where some of the individuals within the Rider have come from. With concentration (and an object helps this immeasurably) a Rider could recall information from the past as if it had happened yesterday — provided one of his "mounts" knew that information in the first place.

D. Kennels/Latrine (70' x 20') Behind the Barracks sit the hovels that house the work slaves. These wretches have the dubious honor of working for the Riders, caring for their



horses and preparing their meals. The Riders allow them a thin strip of cloth with which to cover themselves and the Riders abuse them somewhat less than they might any other slaves.

The Riders' latrine sits above a burial cavern used by the original dwellers in the cavern. The Riders find this use of "sacred" ground hilarious, and roundly laugh when ghosts appear to protest this desecration of their anscestors.

E. Bath House (30' x 60') The bath house was built by the natives. They channeled hot springs into it and have two pools of steaming water. The prettier slaves are allowed to wash up in the baths before they are taken out for sale, but other than that only the Riders use the baths. The Riders are not concerned with hygiene however, the baths leech some of the pain out of the process of taking over a slave.

Known only to the ghosts of the original inhabitants, and a fact they will never tell the Riders, a tunnel through the mountains exits back behind a seemingly solid wall of rubble. The other end of it comes out just below the surface of the earth in a geyser that erupts every hour on the hour. Anything caught in the jet of superheated water, including a Rider, would be boiled alive. Still, if the geyser is not erupting, the passage is clear and safe to travel.

F. Stables/Smithy (80' x 50') On the right of the cavern sits the stables and smithy. The stables could accomodate 60 horses, but seldom are home to more than 45. Tack is stored in a back room and the smithy is in a building attached to the side. Blacksmiths are favorite captives of the Riders because by

taking them over a Rider can gain the ability to work steel, which is quite useful to the band. Everything, from forge and bellows to anvil and tools, is present for the Riders' metallurgical needs.

G. Tach nar Tel's Quarters (45' x 20') Beyond the Stables sits the building Tach nar Tel has taken for his own. It is divided into three rooms: a living room, the library and the bedroom. The living room is sparsely furnished with two chairs and a table. Tach takes all his meals at this table and always eats alone.

The library takes up more space than the other two rooms. The walls are completely covered with books and scroll cases. Although Tach has no magical ability of his own, his library contains some very powerful magical scrolls, some of which are legendary and widely thought lost. The room also contains a desk and chair. Here Tach works on all the accounts and records of the Riders. The shelves behind the desk have a secret panel built in, and behind it are the seven volumes of Tach's diary. It is a complete record of the Riders and Tach faithfully adds to it every night.

The bedroom contains a bed, nightstand with a lamp, and a wardrobe. The only decoration is a faded tapestry of a peaceful, idyllic scene upon the wall. Behind this tapestry is a narrow tunnel that leads to the temple of Tel.

H. The Temple of Tel (56' x 27') The Riders created the magnificent temple in two months after Tel directed them to raid a Dwarven stronghold and capture a number of masons and metalsmiths. All the Riders except Tach nar Tel took over dwarves and used them horribly to create the temple. While the stonework, from the polished, black obsidian floor to the high vaulted ceiling, bears the unmistakable earmarks of Dwarven skill, the subject matter is abominable to man and dwarf alike. Figures writhing in pain are frozen in stone and attempt to claw their way back into the rock that once shielded them from their agony. Seeing the Temple is much like looking at a horrible accident: what you see both revolts and fascinates at the same time.

The altar to Tel was carved from a solid block of onyx. It measures 3' wide x 7' long x 3' tall and upon its black breast the Riders offer up a monthly sacrifice to Tel. Silver braziers stand on either side of the altar and provide the only illumination for the sacrifice. The myrrh scented oil burned during the ceremony provides a sickly-sweet mask over the odor of blood.

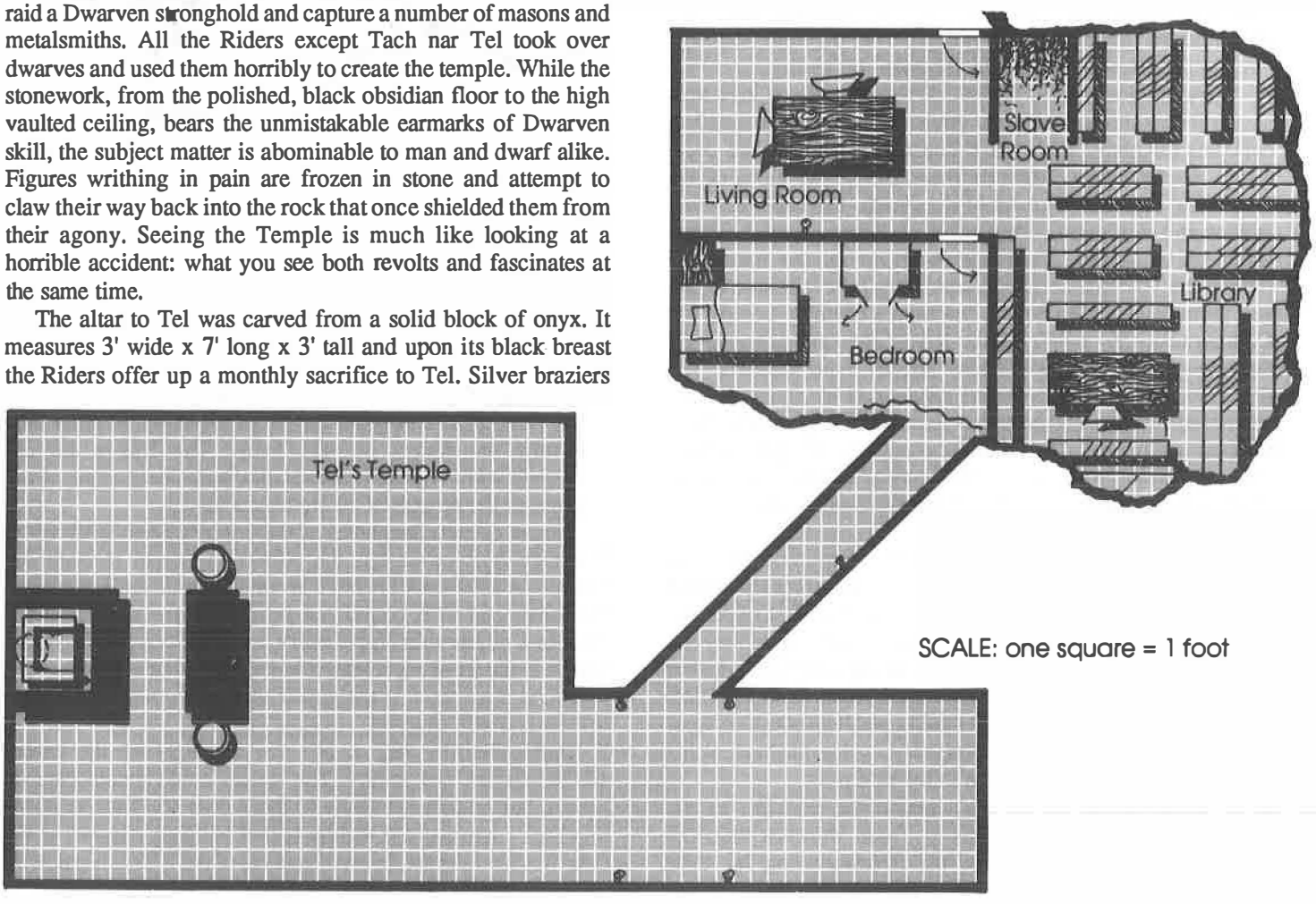
Behind the altar is an exquisitely crafted throne of silver. It sits upon an ebony dais and is traced with ancient writings and obscene etchings. Tel sits in this chair during the sacrifices, manifesting herself as a transluscent but solid form of an utterly evil yet beautiful woman. In this form she is vulnerable, but not to direct attack. Destruction of the bloodstone where her spirit normally dwells will destroy her.

The throne, which slides forward when a catch is tripped, seals a hole into a cavern where the Riders dump their treasure. The cavern below the temple is not nearly filled, but the treasure in it is a staggering fortune. The Riders, after all, have been collecting it for centuries.

PERSONALITIES

TEL *Goddess, size depends upon host, as does her weapons skill. Magic ability: Excellent overall, but limited in radius to about 40 or 50'.*

In the springtime of the world Tel was the goddess of love, beauty and innocence for a small tribe of nomadic herdsmen. She was most often pictured as a young woman, just coming into her bloom of maidenhood, with flowers in her long silky hair. Her voice was the sound of a gentle breeze singing



through the grass that fed the herds.

But civilization came and the young women of of the tribe were stolen by the more powerful "civilized" men for use as concubines, pleasure slaves and wives. In the eyes of a tribe lamenting the loss of their daughters, Tel's image changed and she became the goddess anguished parents prayed to for the return of their daughters. The young men vowed revenge upon the kidnappers in the name of Tel, and a fairly successful massacre of one particular town resulted in the first of many crusades to stamp out Tel worship.

Still Tel worship continued in secret, and was passed down in whispered rituals through the families of those with nomad blood in their veins. The strongest sects demanded human sacrifices and Tel gleefully accepted them. This made the religion more feared than ever, but the half-hearted efforts of kings and princes to destroy it failed until the Steel Man consolidated his empire then fell upon the Tellerites with a savagery they'd often shown their victims.

Balin's purge, perhaps even more merciless and cruel than the worshipers of Tel had ever been, destroyed Tel's worshipers to a person, with the exception of the Shadow Riders. Tel sank her spirit into a bloodstone set into a ring worn by Tach nar Tel, and escaped with him from the empire. The bloodstone is regularly reset in other objects, like a sword hilt or a brooch, and this piece of jewelery is presented to various people of import. Once they accept the gift and wear it for any amount of time, Tel forms a rapport with that individual and can possess him at will as she desires.

The victim's soul resides in the bloodstone while Tel uses the body and its knowledge to plan the next caper for the Shadow Riders. The victim is aware time has passed, but few speak of these "blank" areas in their memories. On some occassions, in the body of her victim, Tel will attend a raid and direct it. If Tel feels an agent has outlived his usefulness, she will compel that individual to commit suicide in a particularly gruesome manner.

Tel only appears without a host once a month, at the sacrifice. There she leaves the stone and remains seated in the silver throne until she devours the heart, torn still beating from the chest of a human sacrifice. If the bloodstone was shattered during that sacrifice, Tel would be left without a home, and she has nowhere near enough power to sustain life outside a physical form.

Tel does have some knowledge of her vulnerability, but until she has destroyed the Steel Man it does not concern her. After she's exacted her revenge, she plans to use Boko to subvert the beggars and turn them to worshiping her as opposed to Ysrai. If that happens she will gain enough power to begin a reign of terror the like of which the world has never seen before, and probably will not live to see again.

Tach nar Tel *Human, 5'9", 165#, Apparent Age: 35. Weapons skill: Excellent across the board.*

Tach nar Tel (which means slave of Tel) is the leader of the Shadow Riders. He is the only one of the entire group who still inhabits his own body. No one now, including himself, remembers what his name really was, with the possible exception of the Steel Man. His thick bronze hair, worn in a ponytail, is caught at the nape of his neck with a thick gold band. Only his disturbingly hollow eyes mar the handsomeness of his face. Some say that by staring into his eyes you can see the suffering of a soul residing in the lowest reaches of hell. Tach's slim, muscular body is crisscrossed with the scars he has earned during his long "life."

Tach is a man completely without humor. He has been known to kill simply because the sun was shining, or because it wasn't. He is extremely intelligent and his only normal passion is for knowledge. His collection of books and scrolls is unrivaled anywhere else in the world (at least in private hands) and contains work from every nation and time. He often seeks out the teachers and philosphers among the captives to make them "pet" slaves. They do no work, nor do they want for anything, as long as they keep Tach mentally stimulated. When he's drained them of everything they know, Tach rewards them with a swift, painless death.

Tach is a direct descendent of the nomads who once worshiped Tel. This placed him at the very bottom of the social ladder in the society with a class structure set in granite. He learned of Tel from legends told by his maternal grandmother. Being young and ambitious he prayed to Tel and asked her help in climbing from the social pit in which he lived. He promised vengeance upon those who destroyed his native culture, and Tel listened. Tach dedicated his soul to her service, and his rise began.

Tach received a junior officer's commission in the army. Even as Tel helped Tach rise through the ranks, she twisted him and made him more cruel with each passing day. His superiors gladly awarded him the renegade band just to be rid of him, but Tach did not care. His only desire was to destroy the enemy — as painfully as possible — and he demanded much of his men. Several made attempts upon his life, but he so pleased Tel that their efforts came to naught. He recruited men Tel told him shared his dedication and nomad blood. With Tel's help they soon became the most feared unit in Balin's army. Then Balin turned on them and all but destroyed Tel.

Tach bends all his efforts toward destroying the Steel Man. He, himself, does not care because he's forgotten the hatred that once existed in him for Emperor Balin. He is driven because Tel has promised his men their most fervent desire when her enemy has been eliminated. Whereas hundreds of years ago they all wanted life, now all they want is to be allowed to die. And Tel has promised they will die with the Steel Man.

The Riders The 29 individual riders are all humans of various shapes and sizes. Their weapons' skill is excellent, but variable if they are within the first month of controlling a new body. Their bodies are so utterly covered with scars that their flesh looks most like a robe that has been patched so many times that none of the original cloth exists.

The Riders do not really have separate personalities. After all their years they have a homogenized personality encompassing all the evil of everyone they have ever been. The only common link among them is their love of cruelty. They would, for example, go out of their way to break the back of a puppy just so they could hear it whimper and watch it die slowly. They care nothing for life, not even their own; and it is quite common for Tel to have to give several of them new bodies after a night of "games."

— Boko —

Boko the Hunchback *Human, Ht. 4'9" (if he was able to stand erect he would be 5'8"), Wt. 200#. Age: 23. Weapon prowess: Very good with a knife, but prefers to use his extraordinary strength and Very Good skill in hand to hand combat to crush his enemies.*

Boko has a face that not even a mother could love. In addition to being asymetrical, it is covered with a particularly hideous form of acne. His manners are atrocious and his odor is not to be believed. Boko is a very good beggar. People pay vast amounts for him to move away from them.

Although Boko has been told all of his life (usually from a distance) that he one of the blessed of Ysrai, he still cannot accept his lot in life. His was a very painful adolescence. He had all the wants and needs of a young man, but not even the young leper girls would have anything to do with him. He grew up to be a bitter man, and hates everyone and everything.

Boko's soul cried out for some kind of release, and Tel heard his cry. She promised him the body of a god, and to make him irresistible to women, if he would come to her worship. He jumped on this chance with both misshapened feet, and it pleased Tel to comsummate her deal with him by possessing the body of a young noblewoman and let him have a taste of his reward in her company. Tel plans to use the beggars' belief in Ysrai against them. Because they believe Ysrai will make them whole when he is made whole himself, she will transform Boko and have him proclaim himself changed by Ysrai. He will promise similar redemption if the beggars will now devote themselves to Ysrai's "beloved mate Tel" and make her whole as well. Both Boko and Tel know the beggars will fall for this deception easily.

Though Boko does not know it, Myre does know of his relationship with the Shadow Riders, though even the beggar King is unaware of Boko's new patron. Because Boko is Ysraiget the very thought he might betray Ysrai is blasphemy, so Myre uses Boko as a conduit for information heading to and from the Riders. The Riders do, after all, pay well and promptly for the information the beggars give them.

Boko is eager to help the Riders destroy the Steel Man, and desperately wants that information. He suspects Myre knows where the Steel Man lairs, but is too fearful of Talissa to badger the beggar King for the Steel Man's hiding place. Boko does not suspect, even though he has spent time in the Riders' camp, that Tel will use him for her purposes, then discard him much as she has done with anyone else she has ever touched.

Mikel Dorbo *Human, Ht. 5' 8", Wt. 165 #, Age: 33. Weapon Prowess: Good with a stiletto, but prefers to use his wits to talk his way out of trouble.*

Mikel is a handsome chap with a ready smile and is a friend to all he meets. He has dark, curly hair and beard with sparkling brown eyes. He is intelligent and charming; welcome in some of the most exclusive homes in the city.

Still, there is a darker side to Mikel: he is a sociopath. He cares for nothing or no one and acts friendly only because the gullibility of others amuses him enormously. He works as the Riders' agent and sells their captives to Sutaka. He also arranges for the bloodstone — however it has been reset — to be presented to the "right" people.

Mikel is a total mercenary. He'll sell anything or anyone, if the price is right and if the likely outcome of his betrayal will be amusing. He values money only in that it allows him to travel through social strata at will, and he enjoys twisting and crushing people covertly, while consoling them and offering hope that goes nowhere. He uses people, squeezes them of whatever they have to offer, then discards them with the same ease he spits out the seeds of fruit.

Tach nar Tel realizes what sort of man Mikel is, and finds him too uncomfortably like Tel and the man he once was himself. When Mikel can be of no further use to the Riders, or to Tel, Tach has promised himself he will give Mikel a "gift" all his own, though whether it be a blessing or curse, even the Slave of Tel cannot answer.

SCENARIO SUGGESTIONS

Scenario 1: A wealthy merchant who has lost several caravans to the Shadow Riders and he hires the characters to figure out who is leaking information to the Riders. When several traps fail, the characters head out without informing their patron and they follow the Riders' leader back to town after a raid. Imagine their surprise when they discover the man who hired them is, in fact, the Riders' leader! He's been possessed by Tel, and getting him back will be a tough job.

Scenario 2: One of the adventurers is taken by a Rider and is chosen as a mount. He manages, during a raid, to leave a clue for his comrades to learn where he is. If they can get to him before a month is up, they can save him. If not, he'll be a Shadow Rider forever!

Many characters quest after immortality, and the Shadow Riders have that gift. How many others, though, will be eager to join Tel's dark service for that reward? And how many more will be given no choice in the matter?

CITYBOOK™ III

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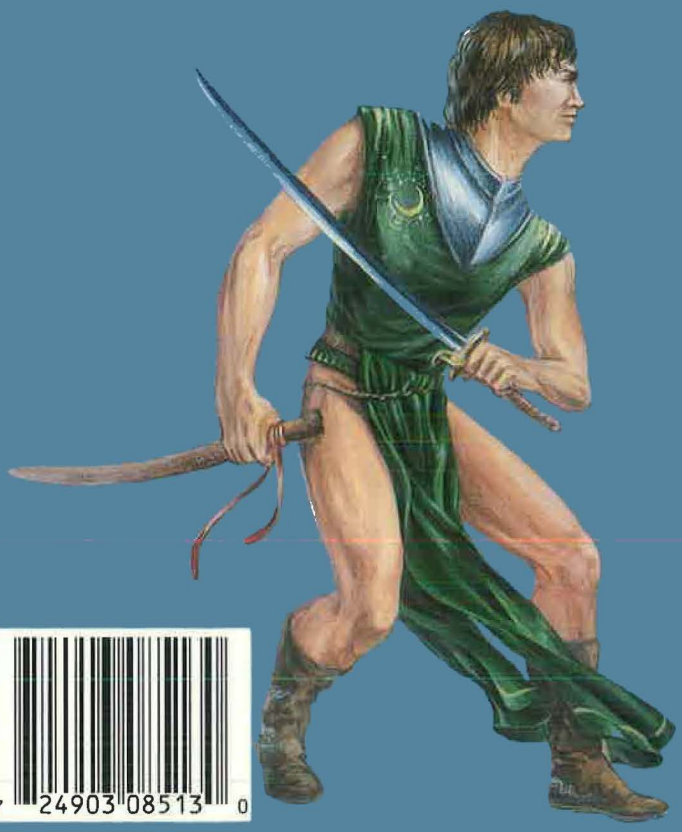

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The Shadow Riders

Produced by Flying Buffalo Inc. ISBN 0-940244-72-1 #8513