

SWORDS OF ALMURIC

Campaign Setting

By RL Vieira

Inspired by the novel *Almuric* by Robert E Howard

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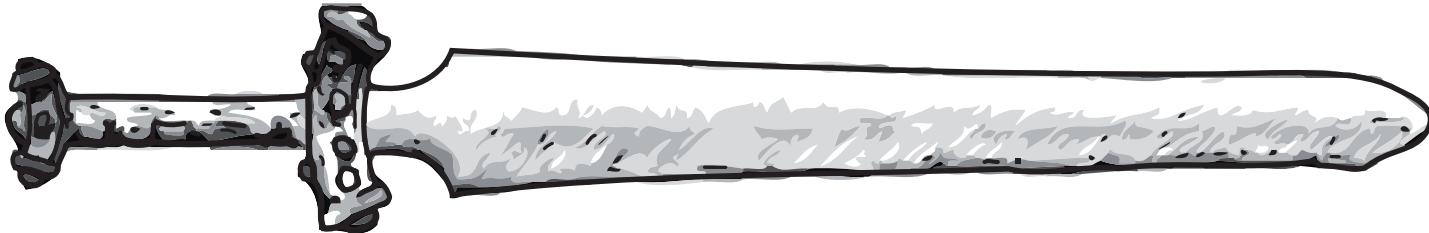
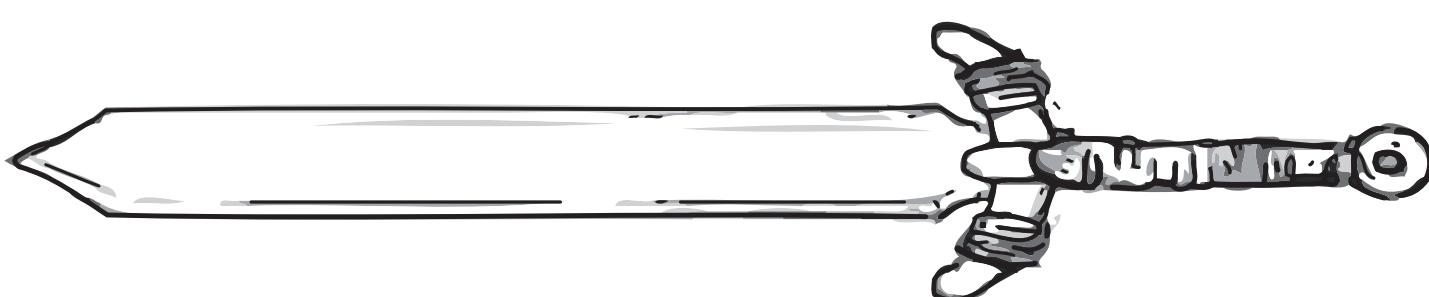


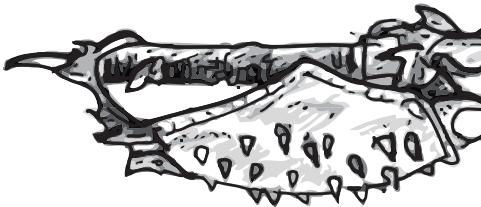
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PREFACE



The following campaign setting is based on the novel *Almuric*. *Almuric* was an incomplete manuscript, left behind by Robert E. Howard after his tragic death and later published by his editor. It is unknown how much was written by Howard and how much finished by some unacknowledged author prior to publication. It is the only Planetary Romance Howard ever produced and shares some similarities with Edgar Rice Burroughs' John Carter of Mars series.

Swords of Almuric is meant to be used as a role playing aid for those who still indulge in tabletop role playing and who are fans of Howard, Planetary Romance or just looking for a new setting with a science fantasy bent. The work is divided into four parts.

The first section, "Almuric Gazetteer", is a description of the world of Almuric and its denizens. This section largely reproduces what can be found in the novel and for those familiar with the novel can be used for reference or as a refresher. As a reference, it in no way compares to the vibrant, supple language employed by Howard and I wholeheartedly recommend anyone planning on running a campaign in Almuric to read the novel at least once.

The second section, "Almuric Expansion", explores some possibilities for filling in and building upon what is outlined in the novel. Given the fact that the novel was incomplete and then finished by an uncredited author, the setting practically invites further extension and creation.

The third section, "Playing in Almuric", includes some translations of the world of Almuric into game stats and rule options. I have provided some guidelines for transla-

ting this setting using the Classic D&D rule set.

A note about stats : in my own style of play, the story is paramount and I create stats on the fly. In this game aid, where stats are provided, they are meant as guidelines. The judicious GM may see fit to adapt these to the particular circumstances of the story they are creating, the details of the player characters or even the timing and pacing of any particular gaming session.

The fourth section, "Almuric Adventures", outlines a list of possible adventures and adventure hooks that can be run in Almuric. The Bestiary includes Classic D&D game statistics for Almuric-specific creatures. Armor class is followed by the corresponding Ascending Armor Class value in brackets.





CHAPTER 1

GETTING TO ALMURIC



At the beginning of the twentieth century an astrophysicist known only as Hildebrand discovers an exoplanet in an alternate universe as well as means for transporting living organic matter to this planet. The planet he names Almuric. Hildebrand learns important facts about this planet, for instance that it would support Terran life. The 'Great Secret' on whose principles his mechanical device operates is not revealed, but the trip to Almuric is instantaneous. Because Hildebrand's machine only transports living matter, any person using this device will appear on Almuric completely naked and will be unable to carry with them any non-living tools, implements or weapons. Transport via Hildebrand's device will also affect some psychological change in the brain of the user – upon arrival on Almuric, they will find themselves able to speak the local language(s) without difficulty.

Possible Entries

If you are beginning a new campaign and the players are unfamiliar with Almuric an appropriate opening setting might be 1920's Earth. Possible motivations driving the players to seek sanctuary on another planet :

- † The player is fleeing the police/organized crime for a crime they did or did not commit and breaks into Hildebrand's lab
- † The player is a scientist/adventurer/ explorer that has somehow heard of Hildebrand's Great Secret
- † The player is a student/coworker/ employee of Hildebrand's lab and accidentally transports himself to Almuric
- † The player is rich but suffers from ennui and pays Professor Hildebrand to remove

them from this world as a colorful alternative to suicide.

- † Hildebrand has decided to put together a scientific expedition to learn more about the planet he discovered.

Bringing characters from other game settings

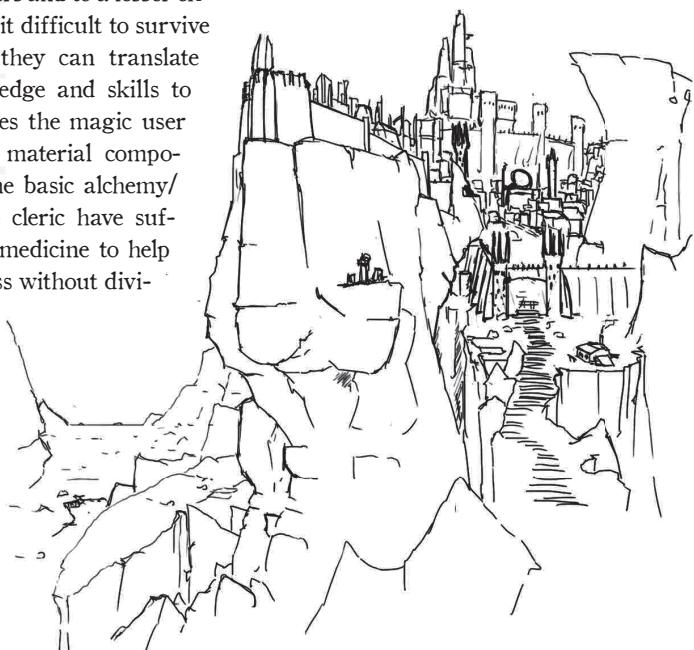
The Gamemaster may choose to bring characters from existing campaigns into Almuric. Most fantasy or even science fiction-type characters should fit relatively well in Almuric. Note no material objects can pass through the portal between worlds.

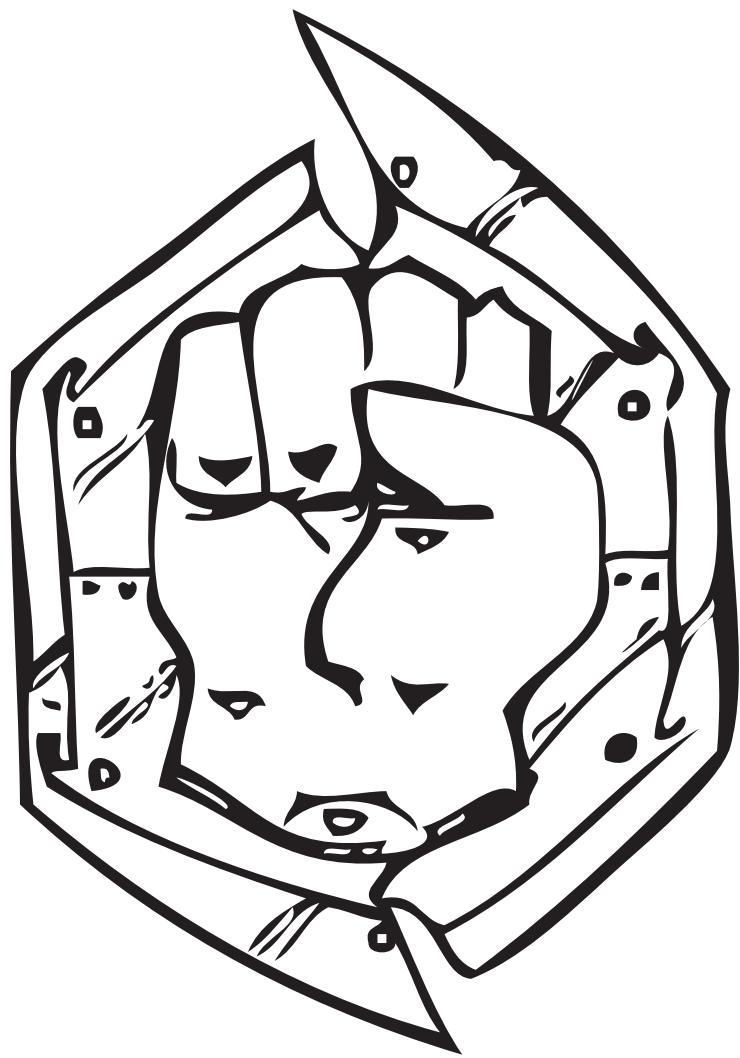
Gamemasters must decide how to deal with magic use in Almuric. This is a science fantasy setting: it is unlikely that magic users and clerics will be able to cast spells in quite the same way. Gamemasters can consider several options for dealing with magic:

- † **No Magic:** Magic users and to a lesser extent clerics, may find it difficult to survive on Almuric, unless they can translate some of their knowledge and skills to this new setting. Does the magic user know enough about material components to practice some basic alchemy/chemistry? Does the cleric have sufficient knowledge of medicine to help treat wounds or illness without divine assistance? Keep in mind that medicinal plants that the character is familiar with may not exist on Almuric and in some cases even the laws of physics seem to vary from what we experience on Earth.

† **Limited Magic Use:** Allow no higher than first level spells to casters. Allow the caster only one spell. Make it a natural ability instead of a spell. For example a magic user finds that he can shoot bolts of energy from his eyes or hands but becomes exhausted after firing a dozen bolts and must rest. Or a cleric finds he or she has a special affinity to the land and is able to regenerate wounds daily at the same level as cure light wounds but only for him or herself.

† **Alien Artifacts:** The players may find instruments, tools or weapons left over from a long dead alien species that can only be operated by characters of the magic user or clerical class. Although these can help balance power for spellcasters relative to fighters or thieves, the Gamemaster will want to use these sparingly and consider a limited number of charges or lengthy recharge period to prevent abuse.





CHAPTER 2

RACES OF AEMURIC



Guras

Guras are barbaric beasts of war, caught midway in evolution between ape and man, who, despite access to firearms, have not quite shaken off the savagery from which they arose. They live to fight, whether it be brawls with those of their own tribe, hunting the savage predators of the plains or in unremitting warfare on the Guras of other cities. Quick to anger, Guras are often times violent but also quick to appease. They are xenophobic, likely to shoot first and ask questions later, and have an inveterate hatred for the Yaga who prey on them.

In appearance, male Guras look like something midway between a human and a massive ape. The men are large, dark and muscular with large frames and thick bones. Hair, ranging from blue-black to rusty brown in color, covers most of their body. Their heads, set on a squat neck and powerful shoulders, are topped by a tangle of coarse bushy hair and small close-set ears. They have powerful jaws adorned with short bristly beards and bristling or upcurved mustaches. Their wide mouths, framed with thin lips, are filled with tusk-like teeth. Their noses are rudimentary with wide nostrils; eyes are small, gray or dark in color beneath thick receding brows. Their hands end in talon-like nails.

Typical clothing for men is simple : a loincloth, high-strapped sandals, a weapon girdle, and occasionally the skin of some predator they've killed thrown over their shoulders. Gura men do not wear jewelry.

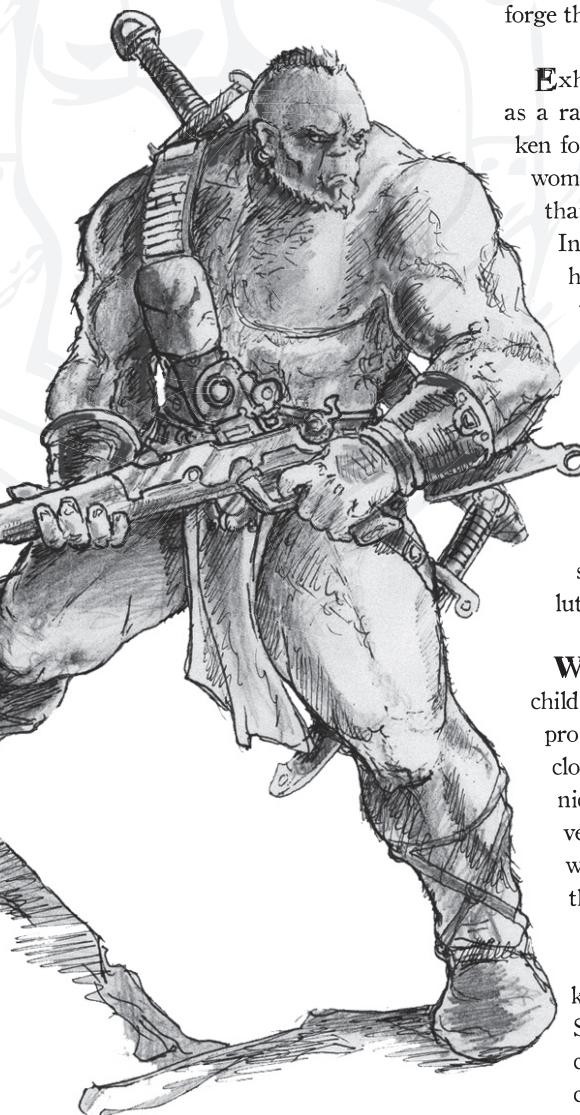
In culture they are likened to something between battle-loving Vikings and rugged frontiersmen. They value personal freedom, but at the same time, share a fierce loyalty to their tribe. Though they have a sense of humor it is not the sophisticated banter of the drawing room, but more the broad humor of the taproom.

The men of the Guras are skilled in warfare, the hunting of animals and the forging of weapons, which they learn as children. The weapons of the Guras are of such high quality, they last generations, giving the Gura scant opportunity to practice the art. When in need of additional weaponry, Guras are as likely to steal them in raids as forge their own.

Exhibiting extreme sexual dimorphism as a race, the female Gura may be mistaken for another species entirely. The Gura woman is small, pale and hairless other than intense black hair on her head. In contrast to the men's brutish bull-headedness, Gura women are quick-witted and sensitive, affectionate, playful and docile.

Though all Gura men know the ballads of their tribe and poetry glorifying battle, the Gura woman is more musically inclined, skilled at singing and playing a small, stringed instrument resembling a lute.

Women's work includes child bearing, child rearing and cloth manufacture, the product of which resembles silk. Typical clothing for women includes a light tunic and soft sandals. The tunic is sleeveless, low-cut at the breast, tied at the waist, and extends to the just above the knee.



With the exception of weapon making, the Guras are largely stuck at a Stone Age level of existence. The social unit is the tribe and each tribe occupies a walled city ruled by a king.

The word of their king is law though for decisions of heavy import a king may seek the council of his chief warriors.

The cities of the Guras, distant from one another, squat on the open plains like great rough behemoths. These massive fortresses, built in the distant past, are constructed of huge rough-cut blocks of greenish stone and primarily with defense from other Gura tribes in mind.

Though neither the walls nor buildings are especially tall, they make up for it in ponderous girth, dwarfing the inhabitants. At night they are lit by torches that burn with a peculiar white flame. Each city consists of four to five thousand fighting men along with their women and children.

Though fresh meat acquired from hunting is the main source of food for the Guras, they also practice a limited form of agriculture, interestingly enough, only within the city walls. This also seems to be a practice meant to allow the city to withstand siege. The Gura use no coins or currency -- what trade there is, is by barter.

In addition to fruit and seasonings, Guras also cultivate crops used for cloth, wine and ale. The latter is hardly surprising seeing as drunken brawling seems to be a major form of entertainment among the men.

Guras are nomadic by nature, but resorted to city building to protect their women. Guras are monogamous. The women are 'guarded' from both danger as well as hard work. All authority lies with the men. The Gura woman has no say in the government of the city and tribe, and her mate's authority over her is absolute, with the exception that she has the right to appeal to the council and chief in cases of 'oppression'. A Gura female's scope is narrow; few women ever set foot outside the city in which they are born, unless they are carried off in a raid. Nevertheless, mistreatment of women is rare. "Moderate corporal correction for women is not unknown among the Guras, but excessive and wanton brutality was repugnant to any warrior of average decency."

Joining the Tribe

If players wish to join a particular tribe, the king may present some difficult challenge for the player to overcome and prove his or her worth, e.g., overcoming their best fighter in single combat, bringing them the

food within their walls and that each city contains at least one spring of water, they are almost impossible to lay siege to (though one can only imagine what living in a city of short tempered hunters forced to become vegans for several weeks might be like).



heads of five warriors from an enemy city, hunting and killing a sabre-tooth leopard single-handedly with nothing but a spear.

Upon acceptance into the tribe, the initiate is given a new name. After inscribing the symbol of the city with a sword above the initiate's head, all men of the tribe file past repeating the initiate's name. Each chief of the tribe also speaks his own name, which is then repeated by the initiate.

Hunting and Warfare

Hunting seems to occupy a good part of a male Gura's life : hunting parties regularly leave the cities with hunters being gone for weeks or months at a time. Of the four to five thousand male warriors in a city, a minimum contingent of one thousand fighting men is actually present in the city at any given time. These defenders remain behind to repel possible attack, though Guras are more likely to battle on the open plain than to besiege a hostile city. This is because Gura cities with their massive fortifications are difficult to storm. Given the fact they produce

On the march for war, Guras move swiftly and quietly, living off the land and thus eliminating the need for supply trains. Each Gura bears his own armament, canteen, and ammunition pouch.

Gura weapons include swords, daggers, spears, and a simple firearm resembling a carbine : a single-shot, breech-loading weapon of limited range. The combustible material is not gunpowder, but a substance unique to Almuric. It has explosive qualities and is evidently ignited by percussion. The ammunition is waterproof and the bullet is made of a heavy, malleable metal. Carbines are saved primarily for war with bows and arrows employed for hunting. The steel of Gura weapons is of higher quality than that of Earth steel in its hardness, tensile strength and ability to hold an edge.

Gura Language

We know very little of the language of the Guras. As stated above, the transportation process to Almuric causes a change in

the brain of the traveler that enables them to understand the native language of Almuric upon arrival.

The Gura written language consists of simple hieroglyphics inked on papyrus. Appropriate to a warrior culture, the ink is blood red, distilled from a particular blossom, and writing is done with a dagger like pen. Few beyond the chiefs can read or write. Guras do not create literature, painting, sculpture or any of what may be considered the 'finer' arts. They have no written history, though they purport to know that some feuds with their neighbors have lasted 50,000 years. Events in antiquity are hazy and mixed with legend. Their poetry is limited to those glorifying battle. Songs are not written down, though every man knows the popular ballads of his clan.

Names encountered in Cairn's narrative

Male names

- † **Ghor the Bear**
- † **Logar Bonecrusher**
- † **Akra**
- † **Thab the Swift**
- † **Zal the Thrower**
- † **Gutchluk Tigerwrath**
- † **Ironhand**
- † **Khush**
- † **Khossuth Skullsplitter**
- † **Bragi**
- † **Than Swordswinger**
- † **Skel the Hawk**

Female names :

- † **Altha**
- † **Theta**

Cities

- † **City of Koth**, of the Kothan tribe, ruled by Khossuth Skull-splitter
- † **Thugra** with Logar as chief
- † **Tanga**
- † **Khor**, ruled by Bragi

Gura Religion

Though Guras have no creation myth, they acknowledge the god Thak as the creator and preserver. Gura's practice no organized religion – there is no regular ritual of worship, there are no temples, no altars or priests. "Thak is the Hairy One, the god in the form of man. He bellows in the

tempest, and thunders in the hills with the voice of the lion". Though Thak loves bravery and hates weakness, he does not intervene in the affairs of Gura to either punish or reward. He is present at a man's birth, blowing courage and strength into the infant, and welcomes a warrior upon his death when he ascends to Thak's abode, resembling something between Asgard and the Happy Hunting grounds, "a land of celestial plains, river and mountains, swarming with game, and inhabited by the spirits of departed warriors, who hunt, fight and revel forever as they did in life".

Gura Legends

Guras speak of Gorka, beings analogous to dwarfish metalworkers of Germanic myth and believe that some of their ancestral weapons were forged by such beings.

Yagas

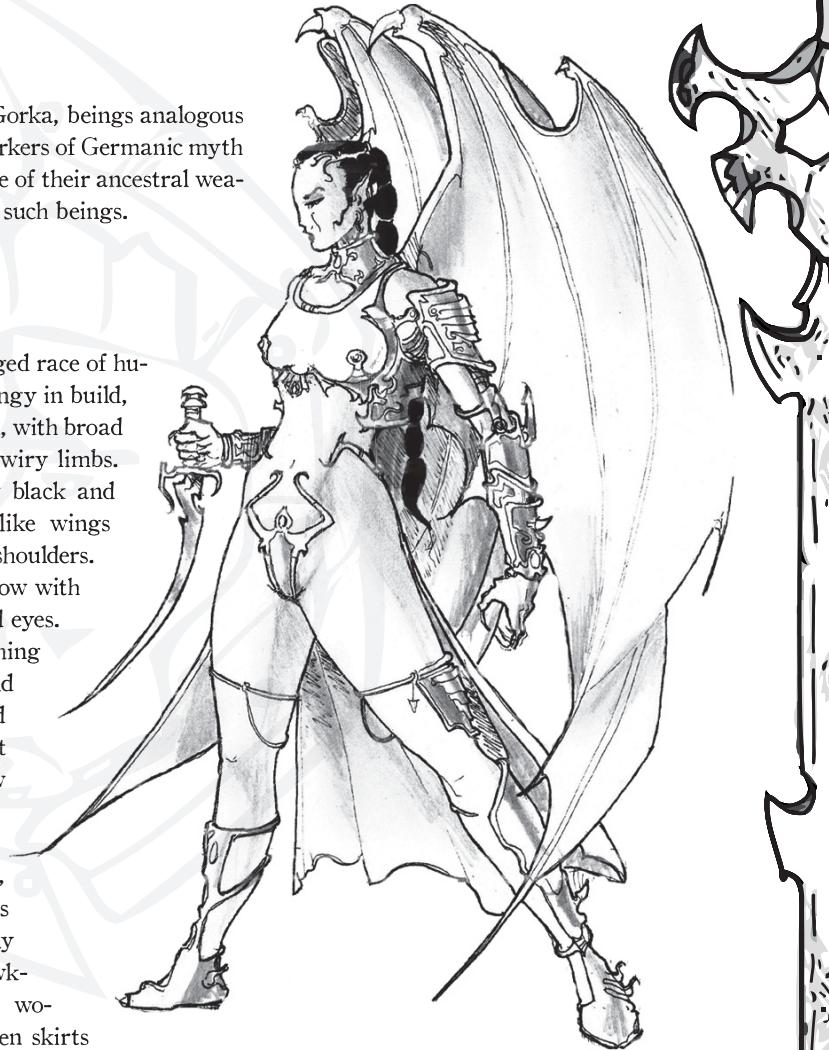
Yagas are a winged race of humanoids, tall and rangy in build, sinewy and powerful, with broad shoulders and lean, wiry limbs. Their skin is glossy black and great leathery bat-like wings grow from their shoulders. Their faces are narrow with dark, slightly slanted eyes. The men wear nothing but loincloths and are generally armed either with short curved blades or bow and arrow.

Like their men, women of the Yagas are lithe, with ebony skin and faintly hawk-like features. Yaga women wear short silken skirts held up with jewel-crusted girdles, and filmy sashes bound about their breasts. Their dusky features are straight and clear-cut; their hair is straight. Cairn said of them "But for the almost intangible cruelty of their faces, they were beautiful."

Physically, the winged women are superior to their mates in agility, endurance, courage and even in strength. The Yaga women of Yugga have their wings carefully

removed at birth. Only the infants destined to become queens of Yugga are spared. We are told this is done in order to keep the male sex dominant.

The Yagas periodically raid other settlements of humans and carry off their people for food and to use as slaves. Yagas eat only at intervals, gorging themselves to capacity every few days. In addition to eating other sentient beings, the Yagas (or perhaps more accurately their slaves) also produce fruit,



nuts, a delicious and refreshing green wine, and a strong and heady golden wine.

Yaga Cities

The Yaga of the novel live in the Black City of Yugga, built on a large rock monolith named Yuthla, five hundred feet high, which sits athwart the river Yogh. There is no road leading to the city and the cliffs are unsca-

table. The land of the Yagas is called Yagg and from the summit of the rock Yuthla one may see the Girdle far to the south. To the north of Yagg lies a desert and beyond the desert is the Purple River which can only be crossed by the Bridge of Rocks, a jumble of gigantic boulders that lie across the rapidly rushing river. At this crossing, the Yagas man a watch tower where a small contingent of warriors guard against invaders.

The city Yugga is carved from the living rock of Yuthla, an array of battlements, pinnacles, minarets and roof gardens, but built like one huge palace, each part connected with the rest. Its space is greater vertically than horizontally : castles and towers soar high into the air, and several tiers of chambers and corridors are sunk into the rock itself. The walls of corridors and rooms carved from the living rock of Yuthla are of highly polished, unornamented, black stone. As befits a winged race, ceilings are high and vaulted. Typical room furnishings might include : velvet couches, golden vessels, ebony tables, fur-covered benches, fountains for bathing, furs and cushions

Yugga's population consists of 20,000 warriors plus a greater number of women. Beyond that, each Yaga owns a number of slaves. Losses in war are slight, and plagues and diseases unknown. A flock of Yaga children is produced only at wide intervals, some three centuries apart. Yaga life spans are nine hundred years.

Yaga Ethos

The Yagas share a superior intellect as well as a keen aesthetic sense. Cairn's

contrasts the Gura's decency, honesty, courage, and " general manliness " with the Yaga's arrogance and cruelty. The " Guras were quick to wrath, savage and brutal in their anger; but there was a studied cruelty about the Yagas which made the others seem like mere rough children. The Yagas were merciless in their calmest moments; roused to anger, their excesses were horrible to behold ".

Lifestyles of the decadent and infamous

The lords and ladies of Yugga do not lower themselves to manual labor, but pass their lives in hedonistic pleasures. " Their knowledge and adeptness at debauchery would have shamed the most voluptuous libertine in later Rome ". Their orgies are interrupted only by raids on the outer world in order to procure additional slaves. In contrast to the Gura's conservatism, the Yaga do not attempt to conceal the slaking of their desires with one another nor the tortures they practice on their slaves. The women, evidently, are even more vicious than the men, versed in every art of torture, mental and physical.

The Yagas seemingly have no religion or belief in an afterlife but rather deem themselves equal to gods. In the words of their queen Yasmeena : " Death is oblivion. We Yagas worship only our own bodies. And to our bodies we make

rich sacrifices with the bodies of the foolish little people ".

Yaga Raids

Yagas send regular raids to settlements of the Guras. Such a raid might consist of ten thousand warriors. Swooping down through the air, they slash with their curved swords, soaring out of reach again before the victim can retaliate. Three or four Yagas will attack a single Gura, ensuring that the butchery is certain and swift. When attacking a Gura city, the Yagas also employ both fire and arrows. The Yaga seem immune to the smoke from the fires they start and perched on the high points of the city, their archers fire down into the crowds massed in the streets.

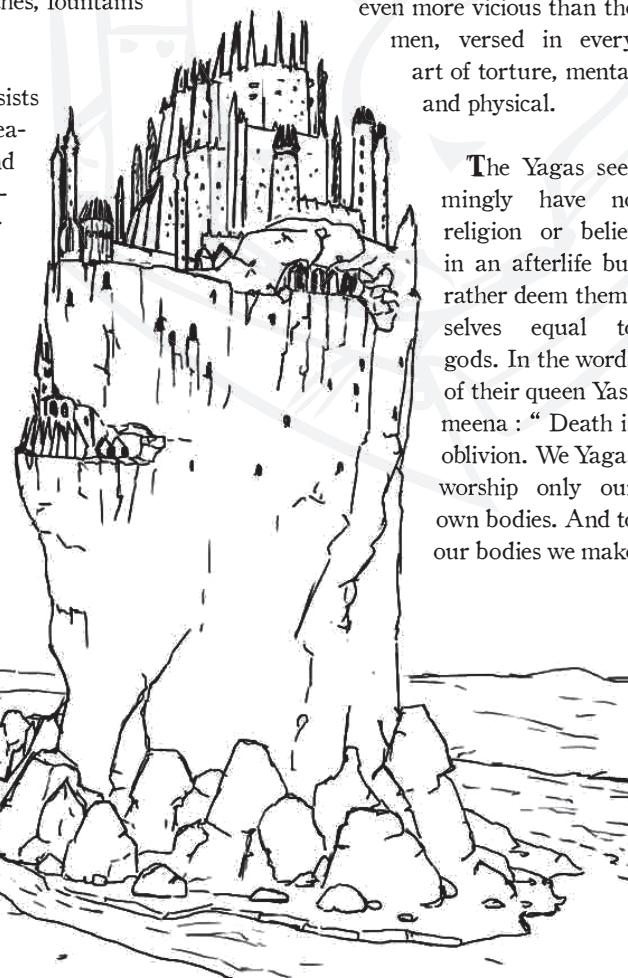
Once they have gathered sufficient slaves, the Yagas fly home in a wedge-shaped formation, like that of wild geese, at an altitude of about a thousand feet. They can fly for hours at top speed carrying weights almost equal to their own. Flying in a wedge, their unburdened leaders cleave the air before them.

Yugga is ruled by a queen Yasmeena. At the time of Cairn, Yasmeena had reigned over Yugga for four hundred years. Three winged princesses of royal blood had challenged her right to rule, and she had slain each, fighting with naked hands in the regal octagonal chamber. So long as she could continue to defend her crown against younger claimants, she would rule.

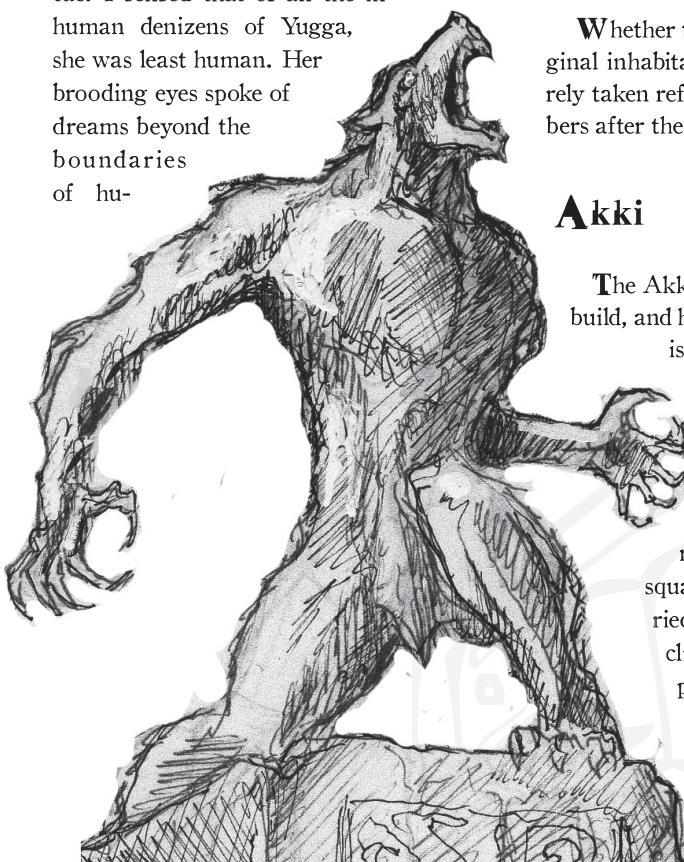
Pomp and Circumstance : The Regal Octagonal Chamber

" A great bronze portal at which stood a score of winged warriors on guard leads to a vast chamber, octagonal in shape, the walls hung with dusky tapestries. It was carpeted with some sort of rich furlike stuff, and the air was heavy with perfumes and incense.

" Toward the back of the chamber, broad steps of beaten gold led up to a fur-covered dais, on which lounged a young black woman. She alone, of all the Yaga women, was winged. She was dressed like the rest, wearing no ornaments except her gem-



crusted girdle, from which jutted a jeweled dagger-hilt. Her beauty was marvelous and disquieting, like the beauty of a soulless statue. I sensed that of all the inhuman denizens of Yugga, she was least human. Her brooding eyes spoke of dreams beyond the boundaries of hu-



man consciousness. Her face was the face of a goddess, knowing neither fear nor mercy. Ranged about her couch in attitudes of humility and servitude were twenty naked girls, white, yellow and copper-skinned".

Yaga Names

The Yaga language is similar to that of the Guras. We only have two examples of named Yagas :

Female name : Yasmeena

Male name : Gotrah

Dogheads

The marble ruins that Yasmeena speaks of are peopled by a race that the Guras call 'Dogheads'. The pack that Cairn encounters below the ruins of the marble city is stunted and misshapen, apish, with sharp fangs and claws. Their bodies are covered in sparse dirty white fur. Their heads are canine, with small close-set ears, but their eyes

are those of serpents—with a steady lidless stare. They can run on all fours or upright like a man.

Whether they are descendants of the original inhabitants of these cities or have merely taken refuge in the subterranean chambers after the civilization's fall is unknown.

Akki

The Akkas or Akki are short, squat of build, and have coarse features. Their skin is of a peculiar blue color.

Akka Settlements

The Akki living at the base of Yuthla beside the river Yogh, live in stone huts, squat, flat-roofed, and one-storied. The town at the foot of the cliff is called Akka. A black temple is built against the cliff wall. This town is surrounded by a strong stone wall built at the water's edge and at each end abutting the cliff behind the town.

The Akkas never came into the upper city, except when there was work to be done that was too strenuous for the women slaves. Then they would ascend and descend by means of great silken ladders let down from the rock.

History of the Akki

The Akki of Yagg have been subject to the Yagas as far back as tradition extends. They serve as work-animals, laboring in the irrigated fields of fruits and edible plants. Before the fall of Yuthla, the Akki worshipped the Queen of Yugga as a goddess.

Akka Temple

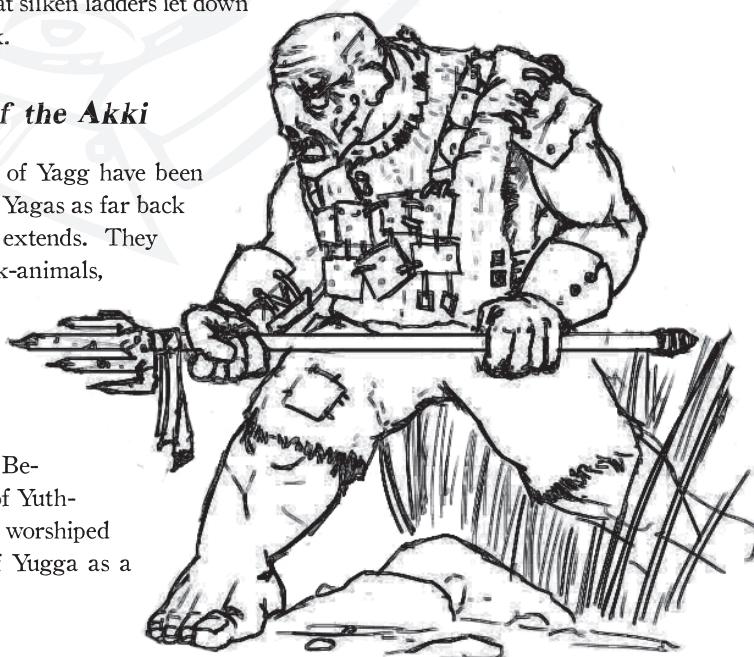
The ceiling is lost in deep shadow; the walls are black, dully gleaming, and undraped. The shrine is empty except for an altar, a block of ebon stone with darkly stained channels cut into its sides. On the altar is set a great somber jewel, blazing with a lurid flame. The whole atmosphere of the shrine is one of mystery and brooding horror.

Akki Weapons

Weapons of the Akki include spears, crude blades, but no missile weapons (banned by the Yagas for their own protection).

Other Races

In the City of Yugga, Cairn sees female slaves with both yellow and copper/red skin. These women presumably come from south of the Girdle but nothing is revealed of their people or culture in the novel. Yasmeena also mentions having seen other 'hairless men' and this may refer to one of the aforementioned races.

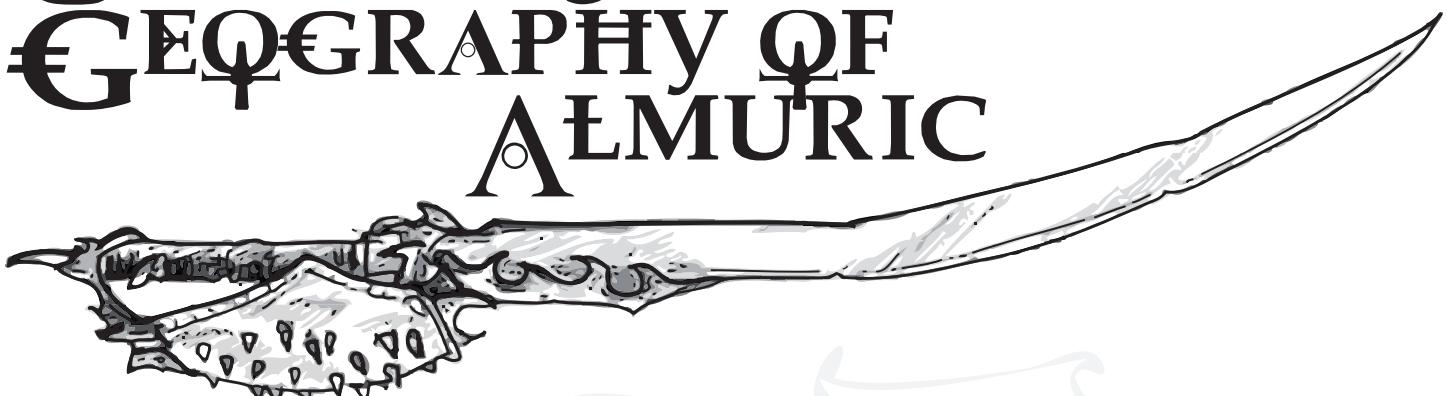




CHAPTER 3

GEOGRAPHY OF

ALMURIC



Almuric seems similar to Earth in many aspects with a breathable atmosphere and potable water (though with an unusual tang) and a geography, flora and fauna that would seem to resemble our own.

Almuric has but a single moon. The world itself is girded at the equator by a gigantic wall of bluish rock separating the northern and southern hemispheres, called, appropriately enough 'the Girdle'. Cairn originally was transported to the northern hemisphere in an area of temperate plains.

There are no large bodies of water in the northern hemisphere. There are rivers, a few scattered lakes, but no seas or oceans. Larger rivers run southward to plunge into chasms in the Girdle.

There are great plains, grass covered rolling savannah with an occasional mass of broken boulders thrusting up through the skin of earth and grass. Ruins of marble, with massive leaning pillars, crumbling edifices overgrown with lichen, dot the plains. There are occasional stretches of dark, thick forests of trees that tower to a vast height. There are long ranges of barren hills and a few mountains. One such stretch of hills is described as made up of bare cliffs of reddish stone, loose boulders, steep slopes, and sparse vegetation including stunted trees and thorny bushes.

Far to the north is a land of ice and snow and tales tell of "weird cries shuddering by night from the ice crags and shadows falling across the snow."

Little is known of the land to the south of the Girdle as the gigantic wall of rock is

an effective barrier to any travel between the two hemispheres.

History of Almuric

What little we know of the history of Almuric are clues left in the landscape or else hints gleaned from Yasmeena's conversations with Esau Cairn. Yasmeena tells us that in ancient history men passed from star to star and that even now there are beings that traverse the cosmos (though the nature of those beings is not elaborated on, it would seem they are not men). According to Yaga belief, the Yaga have ruled Almuric since the beginning of time and thus were its first sentient race. We also know that a mysterious race built a civilization that rose to prominence and fell into decay before the Guras even gained sentience. Who they were or how they disappeared is unknown. All that remains of their civilization are the white marble ruins found littered across the plains.

Weather on Almuric

The weather on Almuric can be bizarrely different from that of Earth. For example, in Cairn's description of a storm, he sees no clouds, but only a darkening of the sky followed by gale force winds. The sky turns from blue to bronze to black as total and absolute darkness covers the land like a tapestry. The wind wails and moans blowing in gusts from all directions.

The end of the storm is perhaps stranger even than its arrival. The darkness 'shreds' into long streamers. The sun reappears, the sky returns to blue color, but the earth

is striped in alternating bands of light and darkness. Gradually these bands become thinner, split and at last evaporate.

Flora and Fauna of Almuric

Because of the language patterning that occurs with transport to Almuric, when Cairn uses common earth words to describe plants or animals it is unclear how closely they hew to their Terran counterparts. With that caution in mind, although descriptions of plant life are scarce, the flora of Almuric seems similar to Earth with grasses, trees, and bushes. We know of a type of thorny bush, common to the barren hills, which carry nuts of a peculiar shape and color with a rich meaty kernel, and of fruit of the grassland growing on green stalks. Beyond that there are some domesticated crops that are cultivated for fruit or nuts, fiber for clothing or papyrus and a flower that is used to make ink.

Animal life on Almuric most resembles Earth's own Pleistocene era, with many counterparts of Terran species, though most of much greater size. The list of 'earthlike' fauna includes :

- † Giant saber-toothed leopards larger than tigers,
- † Hyenas with curved catlike claws that allow them to climb trees,
- † Monstrous cave bears,
- † Baboons,
- † Gigantic boars,
- † Gaily colored birds,
- † Deer-like creatures,
- † Lions,
- † Wolves,

- † Vultures/Buzzards,
- † Hawks,
- † Panthers,
- † Adders/Snakes,
- † Toads,
- † Cats/Wildcats,
- † Dogs,
- † Tigers,
- † Oxen.

Again, in some cases we only have the names of the above creatures and no description so it is unknown how they might differ from their Terran equivalents. More exotic fauna include :

- † Giant carnivorous moose-like creatures with alligator-like tusks,
- † Potbellied pigs on abnormally long hind legs that bound 30 or 40 feet at a time, like kangaroos,
- † Thunderbird : giant carnivorous birds of the grasslands. They reach ten feet in height and somewhat resemble an ostrich except for the beak, which is curved, three feet in length, pointed and wickedly sharp. It can slice a man in half with its scimitar-like beak or tear a man apart with its taloned feet,
- † Unicorn large as a bison with a sword-like ivory horn,
- † An intelligent spider bigger than an ox with eight hairy branching legs, two eyes, and venom dripping from black mandibles,
- † The Blind Ones : None in living memory has seen one of these creatures as they dwell in the absolute darkness of the Almuric storm. They are colossal in size, the ground shaking with their approach.

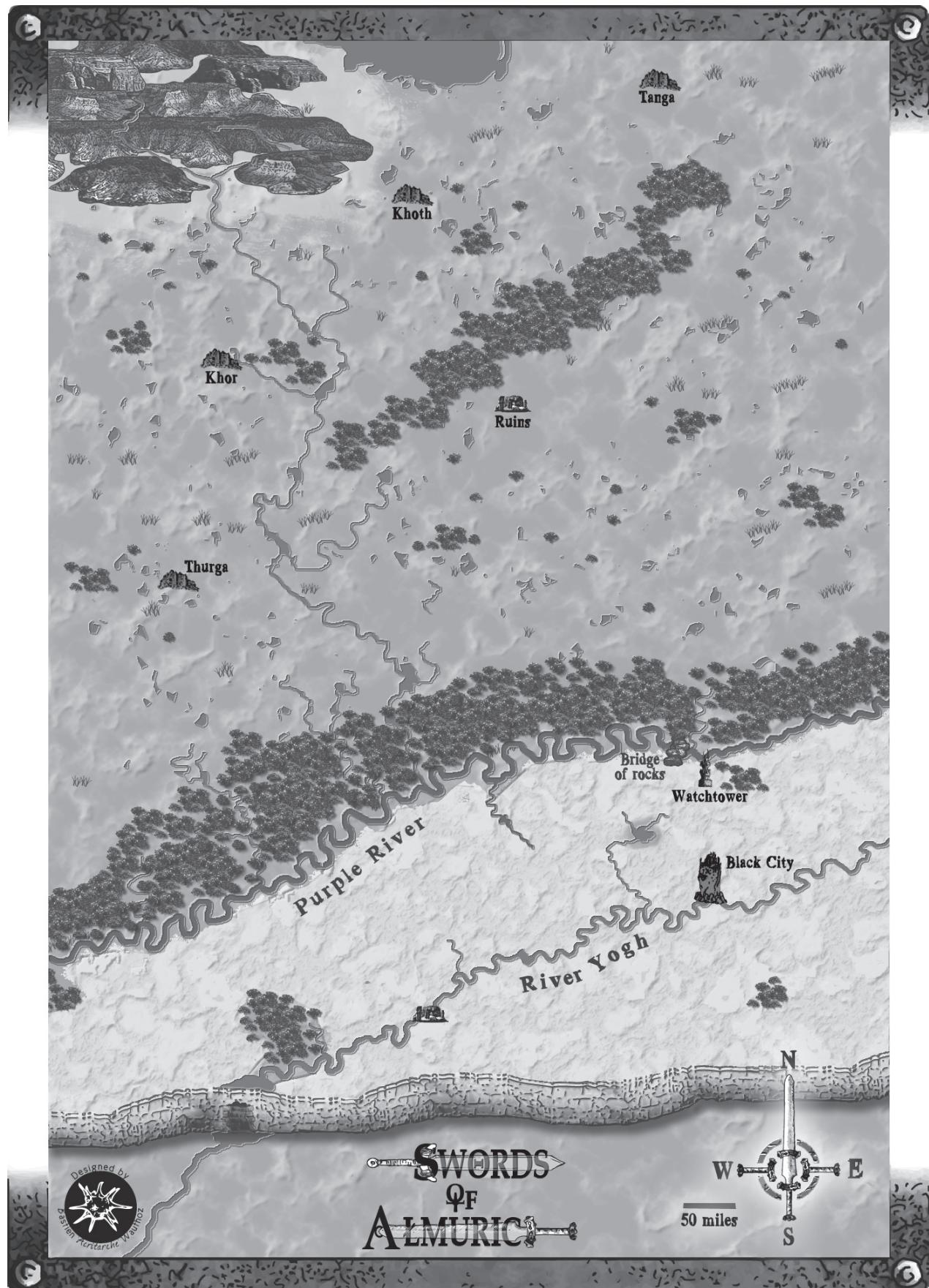
Even more ephemeral than the mysterious Blind Ones, some creatures have only been glimpsed dimly, or heard moving through the darkness or are only known by rumor, including :

- † Great bats whose laughter drive men mad,
- † Gaunt shapes shambling hideously through the dusk of hills,
- † A gigantic silent nocturnal creature, infinitely longer than it is broad,

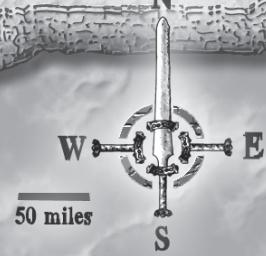


- † Earth shaking colossals stalking through the night,
- † Things that haunt midnight forests, crawling, squamous things that are never seen, but which track men down in the dank depths,
- † Fires flitting like flaming bats through the shadowy skies.

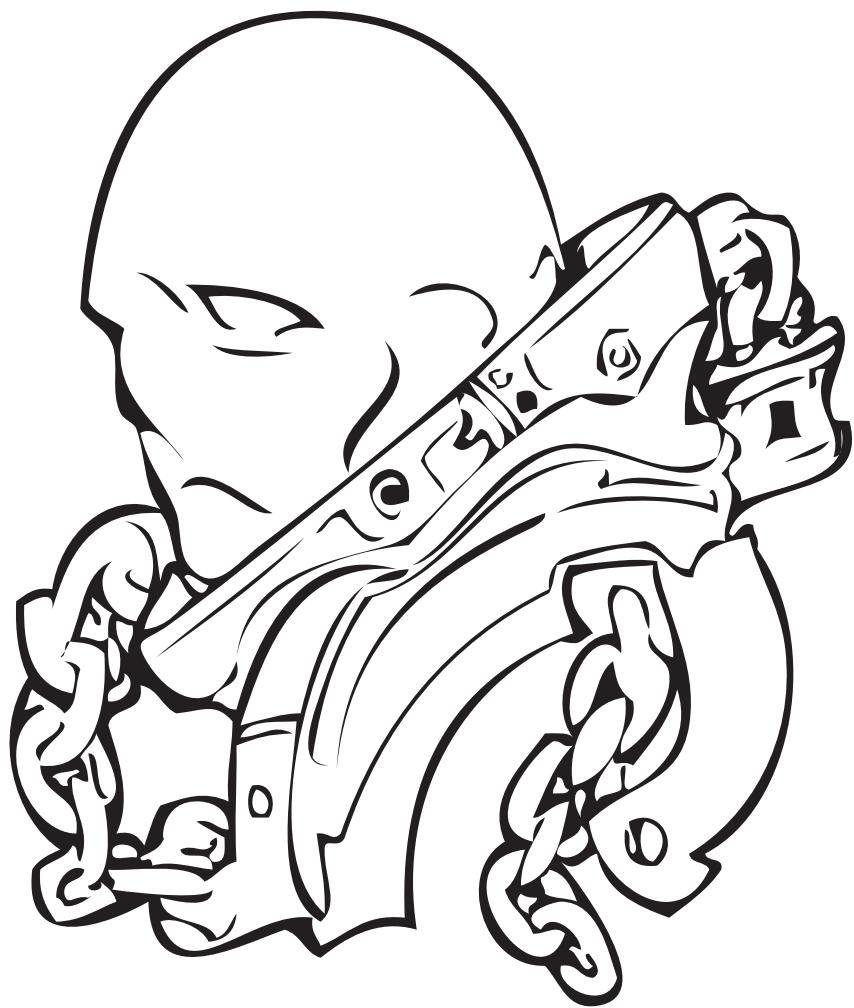
One other creature, perhaps unique even on Almuric, sleeps beneath the Dome of the Moon in the City of Yugga on the rock Yuthla. Yasmeena releases the creature from its eons of sleep when she sees that Yugga is lost to the Gura : a giant slug with a fringe of electrified tentacles on its body.



SWORDS OF ALMURIC



GEOGRAPHY OF ALMURIC



CHAPTER 4

ALMURIC EXPANSION



Everything that appears in the preceding pages derives from the source material in REH's sole novel set on Almuric. What appears in the succeeding pages is more speculative and can serve as an example of what can still be developed in the many blank spaces left for us by the master.

There are several main areas that are mentioned in passing but not detailed including :

- † The Southern Hemisphere,
- † The Red and Yellow Races,
- † The Arctic,
- † The Northern Forests,
- † The Mysterious Disappearance of the Race of the Marble Ruins,
- † The race that travels between the stars,
- † "The cold blue flame that dances forever above Xathar".

The Girdle

Why would REH erect such a formidable barrier between the Gura and the

Yellow and Red races unless he intended them to follow separate paths of evolution without interference or commingling ?

Is it a natural feature or perhaps built by one of the ancient races of Almuric, perhaps the spacefaring race that Yasmeena alluded to ?

Crossing the Girdle would be an adventure in itself. Can it be scaled by even the most skilled and determined mountaineers ? What of the water rushing into chasms at its base ? Does the water passage lead to certain death or some weird subterranean world ?

And what of the geography south of the Girdle ? Is it similar to the Northern Hemisphere other than its flora, fauna and civilizations ? Is it covered by oceans with a myriad of floating islands ? Or perhaps a giant desert extends from the Girdle with civilizations built at the confluences of great aqueducts that bring fresh water from the poles.

Civilization and its discontents

REH's theory of history has civilizations rise from savagery and barbarism, but as a civilization rises it gradually loses vitality until at the end of its cycle it sinks into decadence and degeneracy. We can assume that these same historical factors are at play on Almuric. In the Gura, we see the honest (if not always noble) savage. In the Yagas, we see a civilization steeped in debauchery and decadence.

The Dahrath Nation Option

The yellow race of Almuric leads a semi-nomadic existence on the great plains and deserts of the southern hemisphere.

Trained as warriors since childhood, they ride half-domesticated sanddragons on raids against the red men of Almuric as well as against other tribes of the Dahrath people. Warriors are trained in lance, scimitar and short bow, all of which they capably wield from the back of their mounts.

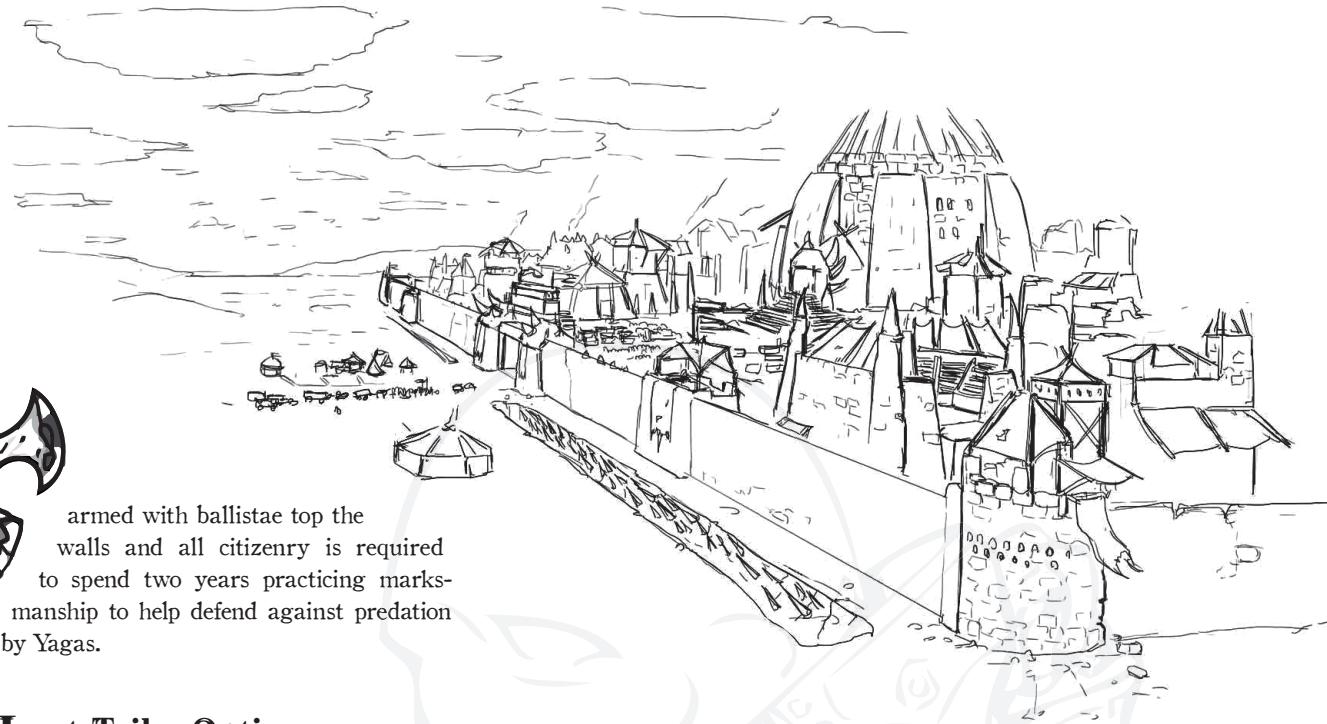
UNDERWORLD OPTION

Beneath parts of the Girdle are great subterranean chambers that have been carved out from eons of river flow. Here in the phosphorescent lit darkness exists a weird ecosystem with lakes of slime, meadows of mold and jungles of giant fungi. The undisputed masters of this realm is a kingdom of myconids, led by a giant yellow brain fungus who communicates with his subjects and guides them through a widespread network of fibers that reaches out to even remote corners of the kingdom. The realm is one of a contorted forest of giant mushrooms, crisscrossed by trails made by the myconids as they gather food and building materials. In the middle of their underground kingdom is their capital, wanly rising from the center of a black lake.

The Salanthal Empire Option

South of the world encompassing Girdle, the race of red men has established a far reaching empire. The current dynasty is ruled by the 9th Salanthal Emperor, who has ruled for the last 227 years.

The walled cities and towns of the Empire are connected by raised roads that cross, plains, deserts and swamps. Watchtowers



armed with ballistae top the walls and all citizenry is required to spend two years practicing marksmanship to help defend against predation by Yagas.

Lost Tribe Option

And what of the mysterious race of the marble ruins? What is the explanation for their disappearance? Could any still exist on Almuric?

The Thal

Beneath the ghostly marble ruins lives all that remains of a once proud and accomplished race that built its cities across the

Northern plains of Almuric. Observing the 'dogheads' one would hardly find it credible that they once possessed intellects that could build a city much less a civilization. Yet there is one last scion of the Thal who still remember their proud and ancient past.

Deep in the reaches of the Northern Forest they live, no longer proud masters of the North but free from the taint that afflicts their brethren who crawl beneath the ruins

where once their ancestors walked proudly and raised great marble monuments to the skies.

The Other Yaga Option

What of the Yaga? Do other Yaga aeries exist on Almuric? And if so, do they follow the same cultural laws as those of Yugga?

The Yaga colony of Yogg

Far to the south beyond the Great Southern Desert, a series of closely clustered buttes named the Yathil Monadnocks rise from the sea of sand. Here in homes carved from the ochre sandstone and linked by bridges swaying hundreds of feet above the desert floor is the city of Yogg.

The Yaga of Yogg are also ruled by a Queen and a rigid cast system. But in contrast to the Yaga of Yugga, those of Yogg do not clip the wings of their females at birth. Given their superior strength and agility, the females of Yogg make up the Warrior Caste of Yogg. The males serve the menial needs of the colony except a few excellent specimens selected at birth as the Queen's consorts.







CHAPTER 5

PLAYING IN

ALMURIC



The campaign setting described above could be used with almost any role-playing game setting or system. In the following pages I will outline some alternatives for playing in Almuric.

Time and Place

The Gamemaster will want to decide when in relation to the events of the book to set the campaign (and whether the events of the novel occur at all). Some options include :

Before Cairn

The setting will be much as Cairn found it when he arrived, i.e. Yugga will not have been destroyed.

During Cairn

The Gamemaster may wish to weave the events of the story into his game. This could even involve playing native races (see below).

After Cairn

The Gamemaster may wish to set his campaign in the world following the destruction of Yugga. This will of course require answering of other questions such as 'where in the world is Esau Cairn now?' And what happened to the Yaga who fled fallen Yugga? What might explorers find were they to plumb the depths of ruined Yugga?

Away from Cairn

The Gamemaster may want to set his action far from the scene of the novel, on the other side of the globe or even in the southern

ALMURIC EVOLUTION OPTION : THE CITY OF RATHKATAL

To the headwaters of the Purple River came the refugees of the Apocalypse at Yuthla. The Akki built themselves a new home, far outside the shadow of their former masters.

The Gura, absent their ancient Yaga enemies, returned to fighting one another. The combined force of Koth and Khor, welded into an alliance by their joint overthrow of the Yaga, soon subjugated the other Gura cities on the plain. In the meantime the Akka city flourished and grew strong.

But their peace and prosperity would not go unchallenged. The long fingers of the Koth-Khorian Empire soon reached their remote corner of the world, driven by a hunger for ever more slaves and tribute.

Refusing to submit to the yoke of another master the Akki turn away the Gura envoys and gird themselves for battle as the might of the Koth Khorian Empire begins its long march on the Akki settlement. The skies filled with smoke and the earth trembled at their passing. The Akka prepared to die, as free men and women, rather than suffer another single day of servitude.

The Gura shock troops fell on the hastily erected defenses of the Akka and in those initial days blood, both Akka and Gura, flowed down the battlements like rain. The onslaught continued. With none left living to spell the fighters, Akka fell where they died and those left living left the wall neither by day nor by night for there was none to take their post at the wall, but wave upon wave of Gura broke on the battlements beneath them like some furious sea. Wives took the place of their husbands, sons took the place of their mothers and the war raged on, an unending paean of slaughter. Beside the river Yogh they found his body, the hilt of his own poniard jutting from his breast. The jewel and the slave he had been carrying were nowhere in sight.

Until that day dawned, grey with smoke and silent but for the cry of carrion birds. No roar of battlers, no ranks of soldiers greeted the bloodshot eyes of the defenders. The Gura had quit the field of battle, recalled to the Capital-- for in the absence of the army, the Empire was rending itself with rebellion and civil war.

The Akka Defenders never forgot this divine deliverance and in later years where the battle had been hottest, they raised a temple to their Gods and they named their city Rathkatal, "Flesh Endures". The Akka culture changed almost overnight - no longer could they hide from the world, for the world had come to

hemisphere. For characters that begin in the Southern Hemisphere they may not end up exploring the Northern Hemisphere until much later in the campaign.

Ancient Almuric

Few clues are given to what Almuric may have been in the ancient past and a Game-master that would like more leeway in building out a world whole cloth might set his campaign in Almuric of the ancient past, while the 'Mysterious Race' still lived or perhaps even before their rise.

The Distant Future

Gamemaster's familiar with Almuric may choose to speculate on how Almuric will develop and create their own vision of Almuric beginning with the building blocks that REH has provided. Will the Gura remain in a state of barbarism or will they evolve into an Empire? What will become of them now that the might of their ancestral enemies is broken? Are the Yaga finished or will they return stronger than ever, completing a turn on the wheel of history? What will become of the Akki now that their masters are no more? Will the dogheads rise up from their bestial condition to become significant players on the Almuric stage?

Game System Adaptations

Survival of the Fittest Character Generation Option

For those who like to use Method IV (AD&D 1st Edition), the following is a character selection option with an Almuric flavor.

them. And from that day the Akka turned outward, exploring the world around them, creating trade networks with the savage tribes of the forest and with the broken nations of the plains. And as these trade routes extended, the wealth of the world poured into the Rathkatal.

Decades and centuries passed and even Gura came to reside in this greatest of the Northern cities. At first exiles and refugees, hired as caravan guards and later a permanent population of Gura became the cities guards and prized as mercenaries in her armies.

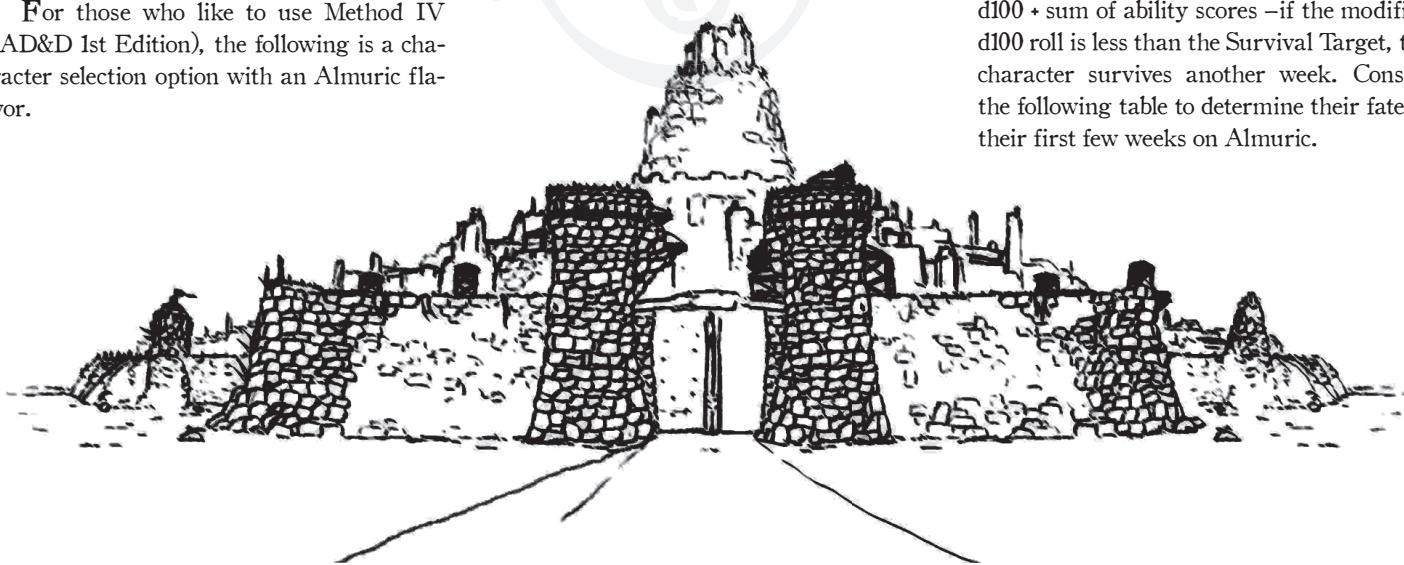
Until one year even the winged men returned, these with no thought of domination but only seeking knowledge. They raised great towers in the center of the city, paying for these works with strange gems from beyond the Girdle.

And years later, the city and nation has settled into its castes. Greatest in number, the Akki control the great Merchant Houses, but also work the farms and pole the rivers, build the nation from stone and wood and serve as priests and priestesses, monks and nuns in the many temples of Rathkatal. The Gura serve as the military class, their homes built beside, on or even sometimes in the great stone walls of Rathkatal. The Yaga pursue their arcane studies in their lofty towers, while those Yaga of lesser talent serve as scribes or even messengers to the great Merchant Houses. And there is even a resident population of dogheads who have sufficient mental stability to live in close proximity to the other races. The lowest drudge work is for them, the sorting of refuse looking for something of value, the disposal of the dead, and many are thieves among them and it is even rumored some serve as assassins to the powerful Houses.

be found on the internets). Add up all 6 scores for a cumulative score for each character before proceeding to the next step.

The Gauntlet

For each character then roll 2d6 on the Survival table to determine the hazard that the character has encountered and then a $d100 + \text{sum of ability scores}$ – if the modified $d100$ roll is less than the Survival Target, the character survives another week. Consult the following table to determine their fate in their first few weeks on Almuric.



SURVIVAL TABLE

2d6	Dangerous Event	Survival Target
2	Storm	130
3	Ruined City	120
4	Unicorn	110
5	Thunderbird	100
6	Thirst, if survive roll again	80
7	Exposure to the elements, , if survive roll again	50
8	Starvation, , if survive roll again	80
9	Baboon	100
10	Saber Tooth Leopard	110
11	Gura	120
12	Yaga	130

For each successful survival roll, the player may add one point to the ability of their choosing for that character.

Players may choose to allow their stable of characters to run the gauntlet as many times as they wish so long as they have more than one character left.

The Gamemaster may want to narrate short stories for each of the characters that meets its demise e.g., "Jane Jones, after landing on an alien savannah completely naked wanders into the eerie marble ruins she sees on a nearby hilltop. As a gibbous moon rises casting inky shadows across the broken cityscape she falls into a fitful sleep ; she is never seen or heard from again".

Character Tailoring

Of the surviving characters, the player should choose one and then develop a backstory for them, perhaps using one of the hooks suggested under the Almuric Hooks section.

Almuric Races as Characters

For players unfamiliar with Almuric, the most appropriate choice for a player character is a human from Earth exploring Almuric for the first time. Should the player lose their character to one of the many dangers in Almuric, the Gamemaster may allow the player to choose an Almuric race as their

next character. For those players who wish to play one of the races of Almuric, here are some suggestions for character attributes.

D&D racial modifications

Roll one character with 3d6 in order and then make the following adjustments:

Guras – males take one point from each of the other abilities and add it to STR. If this puts the score above 19, additional points should be applied to CON. Females roll as normal humans without adjustment.

Yagas – females take one point from each of the other abilities and add 2 to STR and 2 to DEX. Males roll as normal human.

Akki – take one point from each of the other abilities and add them to CON. Points over 19 should be applied to WIS

Racial Role Playing Tips

Yaga

Most Yaga will be insufferably arrogant, treating other races as servants at best and as a potential food source at worst. It would be a challenge to include a Yaga in a mixed race group. The Yaga would be unlikely to see the need for cooperation unless other members had some needed talent or knowledge that the Yaga itself did not possess. Even then the Yaga would likely only cooperate in so far as its own best interests were served.

CULT OF THRAXIS

One of the legendary folk heroes of the Akki was Thraxis who dared defy the Yaga and set out for the Ancient Homeland. According to legend, three times he set out on his journey. Each time he was recaptured and returned by the Yaga beaten nearly to death. Yet each time he recovered and set out again. On the third try he did not return. Some say he was finally killed by the Yaga for his troubles, others that he perished in the desert, drown in the river or was devoured by wild beasts. But a small group of Akki believes that Thraxis, after many trials and tribulations, finally reached the Ancient Homeland.

In the decades since his departure, a small cult has grown up around this belief. It is said that prior to his final journey, after his second flogging, that Thraxis crossed death's threshold and from the Land of the Dead stole some long forgotten wisdom that allowed him to finally escape. It is also told that before he left on his final journey he whispered this secret into the ear of an infant and then told his friends and neighbors that though he was leaving he would one day return for them. Followers of the cult believe that only after the Akki have proven themselves worthy will Thraxis return to show them the way to the Ancient Homeland.

Beside the river Yogh they found his body, the hilt of his own poniard jutting from his breast. The jewel and the slave he had been carrying were nowhere in sight.

Akki

In the novel Almuric, the Akki worldview is underrepresented. Though viewed unfavorably by Cairn, Gamemasters may want to present a more balanced representation if Akki are to be used as a player race.

For example: Though slaves of the Yaga, the Akki yet pride themselves on their toughness, endurance and ability to survive harsh conditions. Taken from their original homeland far to the northeast centuries ago, no living Akki remembers it, though the tale of the place has passed down orally among them. In the retelling it is a paradise where the earth readily gives up its bounty for little toil and the Akki live free of servitude.

Almuric secondary skills

Backgrounds for an Almuric based game will vary greatly according to race and origin.

Humans

Coming from 1920's Earth, the choice of backgrounds is wide, although some are certainly more appropriate to heroic adventuring than others.

The following is a sampling of possible backgrounds, most of the legal ones taken from a 1920's list of occupation codes. I have divided them into six categories:

- † Those backgrounds that will provide the player with some skills for survival,
- † Those backgrounds which may assist when attempting physical feats,
- † Those backgrounds which provide some skills to prepare them for the exigencies of combat,
- † Those backgrounds which might provide the skills needed to navigate alien cultures,
- † Those backgrounds that may provide skills in problem solving,
- † Those backgrounds which provide no discernable skills of value on finding oneself stranded on an alien planet; if the player chooses this background the arc of the character is likely to be one of moving from helplessness and incompetence and

through sheer luck and determination becoming increasingly competent, surviving and even thriving in this new world.

Backgrounds that support **general survival skills**:

Farmer, Ranch Hand, Gardener, Cranberry Bog Laborer, Lumberjack, Apiatric, Cooper, Nurse, Veterinarian, Healer, Midwife, Hunter, Trapper and Guide, Dentist, Physician and Surgeon, Botanist, Zoologist, Naturalist.

Backgrounds that require **physical strength, endurance or toughness**: Miner, Teamster, Fireman, Stonecutter, Longsho-remen, Sportsmen, Lifesaver.

Professions, which will provide some **transferable skills to combat situations**:

Guards, Watchman, Detective, Marshal, Constable, Truant Officer, Police-

CARBINE RANGE MODIFIER

Point blank (10 ft)	+1
Close (20 ft)	0
Medium (100 ft)	-2
Long (200 ft)	-4
Distant (300 ft)	-4
Extreme (600 ft)	-8

man, Military (soldier, sailor, marine), Gunsmith, Slaughter House Laborer, Meat Cutter, Butcher, Hired Muscle, Body Guard, Bouncer.

Backgrounds that support **social skills**, which may be of use in navigating alien cultures:

Pawnbroker, Insurance Agent, Newsboy, Actor, Showman, Huckster, Peddler, Prostitute, Dealer in Curios, Antiques and Novelties, Lawyer, Clergyman, Fortune Teller,



Hypnotist, Spiritualist, Librarian, Bartender, Saloon Keeper, Bathhouse Attendant, Artist, Sculptor, Musician, Anthropologist, Psychologist, Sociologist, Archaeologist.

Professions that may provide analytical skills for problem solving and understanding the physical sciences on an alien world :

Scientist, Physicist, Chemist, College Professor, Engineer.

Backgrounds that are unlikely to provide any skills of immediate value, at least not without some applied creativity on the part of GM and player : Playboy/Debutante, Butler, Chambermaid, Coachman and Footman, Doorkeeper, Plumber, Electrician, Mason, Machinist, Woodcarver, Jeweler, Blacksmith, Carpenter, Furnace Man, Millwright, Gas Works Laborer, Locksmith, Bell Hanger, Mechanic, Steam Fitter, Locomotive Engineer (steam railroad), Assembly Line Worker, Rags Dealer, Junk Dealer, Barber, Bootblack, Garbage Man, Scavenger, Lighthouse Keeper, Ice Seller, Cemetery Keeper, Banker, Bundle and Cash Boy or Girl, Baker, Paper Hanger, Piano and Organ Tuner, Boatman, Canalman and Lockkeeper, Sailor and Deckhand, Chauffeur, Drayman, Hostler and Stable Hand, Stage Hand and Circus Helper, Carriage and Hack Driver, Messenger, Mail Carrier, Telegraph Operator, Telephone Operator, Street Cleaner, Umbrella Mender and Scissors Grinder.

Though background choice should be left to individual players, the method of entry into Almuric may influence that decision. An accidental or unplanned trip to Almuric will more likely garner a correspondingly random selection of backgrounds. If, on the other hand, Hildebrand was assembling a team of hand-picked explorers, backgrounds would more likely center on those with skills that might be applied to the venture at hand.

Please also note that the list above is most appropriate for players originating in the US or Europe. Players originating in other parts of the world might have different and possibly more useful skills and abilities. What if, for instance, the player originated from the New Guinea Highlands, the Brazilian Rain Forest, the Australian Outback, Central Africa, or the Malay Peninsula ?

For native Almuric races background choices are likely to be more limited. Male Gura would have skills as warriors, hunters and in weapon making. Female Gura might have additional skills in farming, serving and music.

Yagas in addition to skills as archers and raiders might also practice more intellectual occupations such as scribe or alchemist. Given a Yaga city's internal politics, we might also add noble (for females only) and assassin as choices for Yaga.

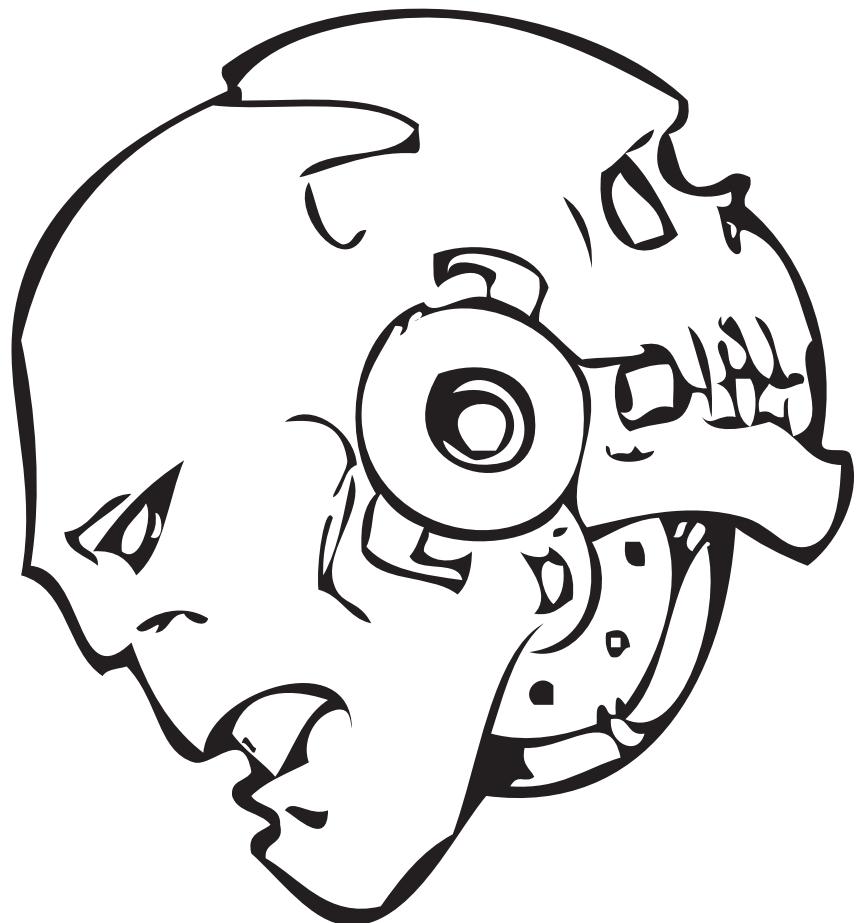
Likely choices for Akki include guard, farmer or priest. The priest background would offer no mystical powers, but would gird the character with useful social skills. Wisdom and Charisma would be the most useful traits for a priest.

Almuric Armory

In addition to swords, daggers and bows, Almuric also includes carbines, something not often encountered in a typical fantasy setting. For D&D, this will be similar to an arquebus, a ranged weapon dealing 2d6 damage with a successful hit. Due to its poor accuracy, the distance penalties of the Carbine Range Modifier table apply.

Note that in the Northern Hemisphere only the Gura's seem to have developed firearms and they generally only use them for war, not hunting. Although there may be cultural reasons for this, it is more likely that ammunition is difficult to manufacture and/or requires minerals that are difficult to come by, are of limited supply, or both.





CHAPTER 6

ADVENTURES IN

ALMURIC



In addition to exploring the lands and peoples uncovered in the books, there are many places, peoples and legends mentioned only in passing that could provide rich fodder for further adventures and explorations.

Almuric Saga

What follows is the outline for an extended campaign in Almuric.

- † Prelude—Getting to Almuric
- † Survival – Adapting to Almuric
- † Exploration – Discovering Almuric
- † Adoption – Assimilating Almuric
- † Journey – Transcending Almuric

Prelude

Possible hooks for reaching Almuric are detailed at the beginning of this guide. Game masters may choose to play out these scenes or have characters merely write them up as part of their background.

Survival

Characters first arriving on Almuric will be hard pressed to find food, water and some shelter that will allow them some protection from elements and predators.

Exploration

The random encounter tables will allow the characters some options for sandbox

play as they learn their new world and may provide hooks for further adventures in the world.

Adoption

Acceptance into the society of one of the sentient races on Almuric will not be easy and may involve a series of adventures in themselves.

Guras

Guras are naturally xenophobic and are likely to shoot first, ask questions later. Male humans are likely to be seen as some sort of abomination given their 'effeminate' (i.e. hairless) appearance. Unless the characters are extremely persuasive, capture will most likely lead to death. Females will likely be considered runaways from other Gura strongholds and taken in as workers and potential mates. Acceptance and respect among Guras can only be achieved through feats of strength or daring in either

battle or

the hunt.

Akki

Before the fall of Yugga the Akki of Akka are likely

to report any potential threats to their Yaga masters. Players may also be presumed to be escaped slaves to be returned to the Yagas. As possible Yaga property, players are not likely to be mistreated, though nor are they likely to be released other than into Yaga hands.

Should the characters come across a group of Akki that either fled the destruction of Yugga or else are an independent town free of Yaga influence, they will at first be viewed with suspicion, but may eventually work their way into the community assuming they are able to 'pull their own weight'.

Yaga

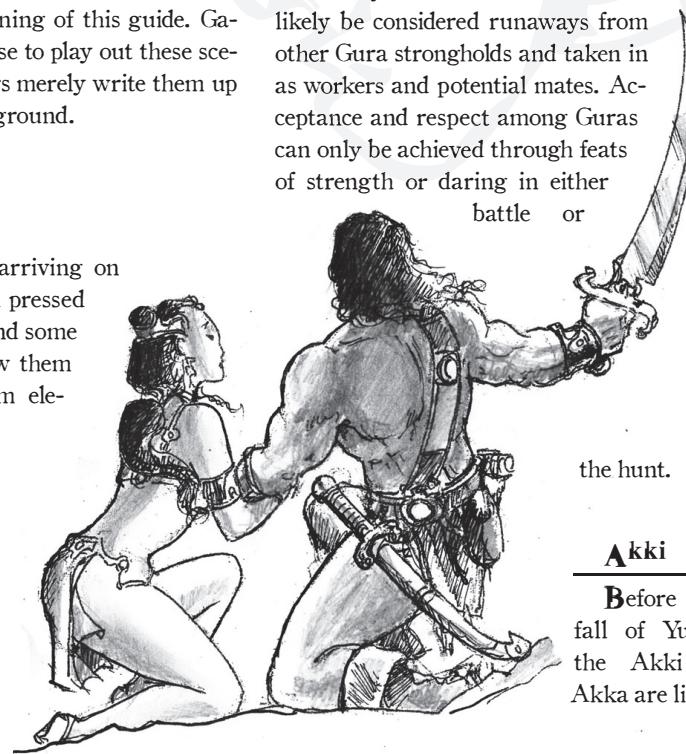
It would be unusual for the Yaga to accept any human as an equal. At best they may be seen as a valued servant or unusual pet – at worst, a meal. If the character has any special skills or knowledge, this may raise their perceived value in the eyes of the Yaga.

Journey

The following are a series of hooks for adventures that could be strung into a long term campaign for Almuric.

Tongue of Thak

Legends say that the greatest of the Gor-ka battlesmiths forged a peerless blade named the Tongue of Thak, which was given to Galroth Gutripper, first and greatest of the ancient Gura chiefs. Galroth used the blade to destroy his enemies and build the first Gura city, Khorath. Upon Galroth's death, each of his sons fought to take his father's



place. Khorath was destroyed in the upheaval and the blade disappeared. According to legend, each of his sons travelled out onto the plains carrying with them a stone from the original Khorath and placing it as the first foundation stone to found their own city-strongholds. On this much the legends agree. As to the fate of the Tongue of Thak there is no consensus. Some say it was buried with Galroth in a hill tomb raised by his liegemen. Some say one or other of his son's bore the blade away and hid it in the foundations of their new city. Others say the Gorka craftsmen reappeared at Galroth's side on the battlefield, taking back the blade until one who could match Galroth in courage and strength of arms should again appear among the Gura.

Kidnapped

Soon after the fall of Yugga, in an act of vengeance Yasmeena and a small band of her warriors descended on the city of Koth and made off with a handful of captives, including Altha. Where they have gone is unknown. Ironhand has convinced the Gura to send out hunting parties in search of these Yaga to eliminate them as a threat and if

possible to rescue the captives. You are one of these hunting parties.

The Way Home

After the destruction of Yugga, many Akki returned to Akka. Some however have decided to strike out in search of their ancient homeland. Guards, guides, pathfinders and trailblazers would be highly sought to assist in such a venture.

Xathar

After the destruction of Yugga, the few surviving Yaga ere dispersed to the four winds. Hunted by the Gura, some search for a new base to reestablish their waning empire. Others, lacking the drive to salvage these scraps of their decadent society, wander off into the wilderness to die. A very few see the destruction as a judgment on the Yaga and their ways. They search for answers, material or metaphysical, to how a group of ignorant savages could destroy a highly advanced culture. Some look for the ancient sources of Yaga power, either trying to find what cultural keys have been lost that could be used to resurrect Yaga greatness, or else seeking ancient artifacts

that could once again bring the Yaga to predominance. One such source of power is the legendary city of Xathar, rumored to be far to the north.

The Ruins of Yugga

It is rumored that even with the destruction of Yugga that there are still many subterranean passageways and chambers carved from the living rock Yuthla not yet explored. Some say hideous beings haunt these rooms and corridors. Others tell of hoards of jewels, weapons and even more exotic treasures and works of art. [Megadungeon anyone?]

A Lurid Flame Emanating from a Somber Jewel

On the ebon altar of the temple of the Akki lay a somber jewel from which emanated a lurid flame. With the fall of Yugga, the jewel disappeared. Some say it is yet buried in the rubble; others that it was stolen by the Gura. Some say the Akki priesthood took it away to build a new shrine in a far away land. Others that surviving Yaga spirited it away during their retreat. Finally it is rumored some denizen of subterranean Yuthla crept out at night to claim it and carry it back to their lair. Any of these rumors may be true. The following is one example of how to build a story around the artifact.

SAGA OPTION : THE DARK JEWEL

During the fall of Yugga, one of the Gura of Khor, Khulch Strongarm, was one of the last to escape via the secret shaft leading to the Akki temple. Behind him, the roof of the gallery came crashing down, crushing scores of his brothers and fleeing slaves. In his own arms, he bore a red-skinned slave who he was carrying to safety. When they reached the temple, few paused in its eerie interior, fearing that the entire mountain above them might shiver into a thousand shards at any moment. Khulch's eye, however, was caught by a vivid light flickering in a dark recess of the temple. Putting the girl down for a moment, he reached out to take the flickering jewel in his hand. As his gaze was drawn into the depths of the jewel, he saw visions of things long past and of glories yet to come. Though his first instinct was to cast away from him the sorcerous gem, at the last moment he shoved it into his belt. Taking up his burden again, he made his way out of the ruined city. The armies were occupied rescuing warriors and slaves, from the river of Yogh. Passing between the ranks of his brethren as one sleep-walking, Khulch turned his face northwards and before any Gura could notice had marched out of sight. But there were eyes that were watching, that had followed from the ruined town of the Akki : a band of Akki priests marked Khulch's progress and once the invading armies had departed crept from the ruins in pursuit. Two days march beside the river Yogh they found his body, the hilt of his own poniard jutting from his breast. The jewel and the slave he had been carrying were nowhere in sight.

Up the River Yogh

One or more of the above hooks might lead our adventurers to the lands Northeast of Yuthla (or Southwest – see West of Yuthla below).

The White Shrine

Several days travel north of Yuthla, travelers will come upon an ancient building made of white stone and shaped like a stupa. Inside they will see a being seated upon a platform. Its skin is orange colored and it wears a yellow robe. Its features are more or less human except that it has an extra pair of eyes on its forehead. It will answer one and only one question that the travelers ask, although, if they are polite and respectful, it will let them know in advance that it can only answer one question. Though it only answers one question, its answer will be verbose and likely to additionally address ex-

pected follow up questions. After answering the single question, the being will float up toward the sky hole at the temple peak and dissolve into smoke. Should the players seek to detain or attack the being, they will find that he falls apart into colored streamers of fragile paper.

TONGUE OF THAK SAGA

If asked about the Tongue of Thak, the sage will answer : At the end of the river Yogh, beneath the City of the Eaters of the Dead, there may be found the Tongue of Thak.

KIDNAPPED/DARK JEWEL SAGA

If asked about the location of Yasmeena, Altha or the Dark Jewel : Travel North-Northeast for seven weeks. You will find them in Xathar, the City of Lost Time.

Akki Settlement

A few weeks Northeast of Yuthla, travelers will find an Akki settlement : cultivated fields surrounding a palisade town. Unless the adventurers have an Akki with them, they will be greeted with open hostility. Parties that include a Yaga will be attacked on sight.

If the party is spotted at a distance, the Akki will retreat inside the palisade and menace the party with their spears from the top of the palisade wall, shouting angrily that they want no more truck with 'foreigners'.

If anyone in the party has sufficient appeal to talk them down (a difficult task that may take hours), they may learn that this settlement's recent experience with outsiders goes a long way toward explaining their attitude.

The Akki believe that the forest to the north of them is inhabited by evil spirits—they never enter the forest willingly and only take what forest products they need (e.g. wood) from its edge and when gathered in large groups for protection. Mothers warn children not to stray too near the woods lest they be taken by the 'beasts of the wood'.

If asked about Thraxis, the Akki will show the characters to a simple unmarked grave in the midst of the fields and claim that it is the last resting place of Thraxis. Though the grave is not marked, pilgrims have placed simple tokens of adoration around the gravesite – small man-shaped figures a handbreadth high woven from wild grasses and allowed to dry.

KIDNAPPED/DARK JEWEL SAGA

A few weeks ago, a small group of Yaga descended on their fields in broad daylight and made off with several Akki villagers. Additionally, a few days ago, a red-skinned woman came through the town. She looked ragged and hungry so they offered her food and shelter. Sometime during the night, she killed one of the villagers and fled the city into the Northern Forests.

Unbeknownst to the characters, the Akki priests of Yuthla that were following the Dark Jewel are currently in the Akki settlement recuperating. During confrontation between the characters and the Akki, the priests will slip out the back exit of the palisade and into the Northern Forest.

If the characters talk their way into the settlement, the disappearance of the priests may be blamed on them, once it is discovered. The Akki of this settlement will know nothing about the priests' true mission, having been told they were merely refugees from the fall of Yugga.

Northern Forests

Not long after they enter the Northern Forests, the characters will be watched and followed by the Thal. Characters with good instincts will feel that they are being watched at times, though the Thal will stay hidden from sight. Several days of travel into the Northern Forests, the characters will be approached by the Thal. They will be invited to stay at the village, where they will be introduced to the Thal's life philosophy, which is to live lives of rustic simplicity, in harmony with nature and the woods around them. Of course, it's not all tree hugging and lotus smoking. There is a brutal side to giving up civilization which the player's may be witness to. For instance, they observe a Thal hunt, where the Thal run down their prey and rend them with their jaws or come across the Pit of Bones where the 'unfit' are taken to die. Though players will be treated well while in the village, they will be watched carefully. Any sign of ill intention on their part will be dealt with quickly and severely. After hosting them for one night, the Thal will insist on providing them a guide to show them to the edge of the forest. Their primary motivation is to see that the outsiders leave their forests and do not disturb their way of life.

DARK JEWEL SAGA

If asked about the woman carrying the Dark Jewel, they will say they smelled her pass through their forest closely followed by a small group of Akki men, but that she carried an evil smell so they did not interfere with her passage. The Thal will know nothing about Yasmeena or Altha.



The weather will continue to become colder the farther north the characters travel. As they leave the northern forests, they will come to a land of frozen tundra. Here they may encounter many small Akki villages primarily near lakes. The Akki here survive primarily by fishing and gathering in the summer and ice fishing in the winter.

The largest lake is almost equivalent to an inland sea, and its unplumbed depths harbor some unusual denizens.

KIDNAPPED/DARK JEWEL SAGA

The Akki will know nothing of the Dark Jewel or of Altha or Yasmeena, but they do know that there is an ancient city far to the north, which it is said was raised by beings who could navigate the sea of stars.

Giant eels are aggressive predators in these waters. Twice the length of a man, their fanged heads are about the size of a horse's head and filled with long curved teeth. Eel hunting by the Akki is no easy matter as the eels are only attracted by living flesh.

A party of harpooners will stand in water chest deep and a harpooner must make their killing blow as the eel rushes in to attack. The hunters stand in a circle so that if multiple eels come they will not be blindsided. If they are lucky, the number of eels will not outnumber the number of hunters. The greatest hunter always stands at the point facing the deepest part of the lake and the least experienced hunter faces the shore. It is considered a rite of passage to kill one's first eel. Village headmen will have an eel skull hanging over their doorway.

In addition to all manner and size of fish and mussels in the lake, another formidable source of food for the Akki includes a dog-sized crustacean. Akki will often use pieces of its bright red carapace as adornment.

For every Akki village the players visit, they have a 1 in 6 chance of

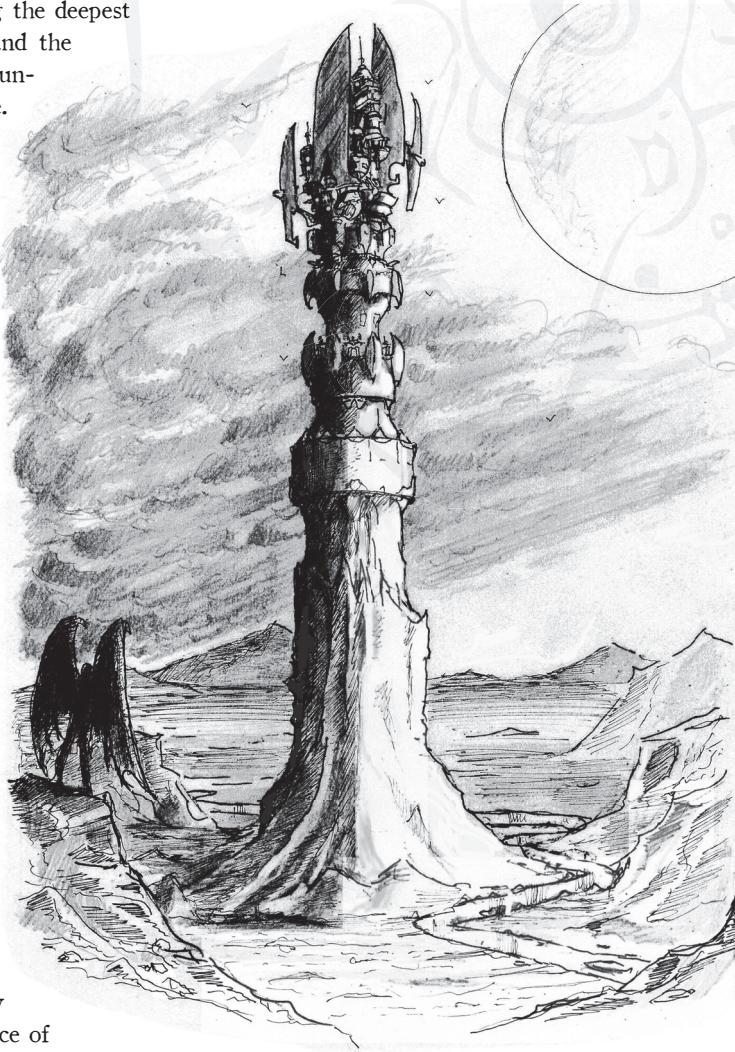
hearing about an old hermit that lives on a small island in a nearby lake. The chance increases to a 2 in 6 chance if the players are asking questions that the villagers don't know the answers to (although an equally likely response might be to direct them to the next village for answers). Should the PCs investigate this hermit, they may discover that this ancient Akki claims to be the original Thraxis of which the legends tell.

The Polar Wastes

Travel through the polar wastes is treacherous and fraught with peril. Crevasses open in the ice without warning. Storms prevent movement for days at a time. Then there are the weird cries and inexplicable shadows falling on ice.

Xathar

As they near Almucic's Arctic Circle, the travelers will come at last to the ancient city



of Xathar. Above its rooftops undulates a nimbus of continual aurora as its crown.

As they approach the city, the players will see that its architecture is completely unlike that of other Yaga cities. Now deserted and locked in ice, it was at one time a thriving metropolis. There are no signs of warfare or disaster – it was as if the city were simply abandoned. Characters wandering the city may even find signs that life continued up until the moment of its desertion: a digging tool beside a half dug hole with a

DARK JEWEL SAGA

Yasmeena and the Bearer of the Dark Jewel have both been drawn here, seeking sources of ancient power.

The Bearer of the Dark Jewel is a former slave of Yuthla, a girl by the name of Aeris. Having been rescued from the fall of Yuthla but only to find herself in the rough hands of a new captor, Aeris was persuaded by the Dark Jewel to slay Khulch while he slept. She then fled northward with the Jewel always sensing pursuit at her heels and several times coming close to being captured. She is now under the spell of the Jewel and will not be free of its influence until it is either returned to its shrine in Xathar or it is destroyed. While in the Akki settlement, one of her guards fell under the Jewel's spell and tried to take the Jewel from her. She used the power of the Jewel to kill him and then fled the village. Since that time, she avoids communities when possible. If she is rescued by the players they will learn she is actually a princess of the Salanhar Empire, the red race south of the Girdle (being a princess is not so rare as it might seem, the Emperor has hundreds of concubines and almost a thousand children).

bare root sapling beside it, the ground now hard as stone; a carving in a workshop, half finished, the tools lying about it carelessly; a meal half eaten, now frozen and kept from putrefaction. All has been preserved. Perhaps most strangely of all are the gardens, almost tropical in appearance, that seem to have frozen overnight. Equally unnerving will be the fact that the proportions of the

THE DARK JEWEL

The Dark Jewel is semi-intelligent and can influence the minds of sentients it comes in close contact with. The early inhabitants of Yuthla were able to control it somewhat and used it to keep their Akki slaves docile and instill in them a sense of reverence for their Yaga masters. With the fall of Yuthla, the Jewel has reasserted its primary objective and seeks to reunite with its fellows in the Temple of Lights in Xathar. Unfortunately, Yasmeena and her companions have taken up posts near the temple, expecting Aeris to eventually be drawn to that place and hoping to take the Jewel back. The Jewel has detected them and now they play a cat and mouse game through the ancient city of Xathar. To further complicate matters, the Akki priesthood has arrived on the scene hoping to recover the jewel and create a new Akki theocracy. The Akki priests have seen the Yaga but have not yet been discovered by them. They are undecided how to deal with them. Some think they should join forces with the Yaga. Others believe the Yagas to be polar demons merely taking the shape of their former masters to beguile them. Finally, most have begun to enjoy their freedom from the Yaga yoke and are not eager to again fall under Yaga dominion.

city seem strangely wrong for human inhabitants...the shape of doorways and corridors, of furnishings.

West of Yuthla

City of the Dead

Following the river Yogh as it moves to the south and the west, it eventually meanders through a shallow valley the sides of which are pockmarked with yawning caverns. This is the Necropolis of the former Yaga City.

It won't be long after a traveler enters the valley before they begin to attract the attention of its hoary denizens. Every turn, roll 1d6 to determine how many gaunt shamblers issue from the tombs and hillsides drawn by the intruder's presence.

The Ancient Capital

If travelers continue downriver past the necropolis, they will pass through the ruins of Yogsoteth. Once the sprawling capital of the Yaga it is now extinct and deserted. Ruined towers yet point their jagged shafts at the sky, fallen sky bridges block roads and poke scattered teeth through the river surface, walls lean at drunken angles, moss and vines grow over everything and water splashes over ruined monuments where once were fountains. Should the traveler seek out the ancient treasure house, they will find one vault, that most heavily protected from plunder, still extant. Should they find manner to open the vault, they will dis-

cover a pile of moldering books. One set of volumes is the yearly census. The other is a list of scientific, cultural, and artistic accomplishments achieved by the Yaga, detailed by decade. One thing readers might notice if they look through these tomes:

† The list of scientific discoveries becomes greater every decade, reaches a climax and then begins to decline. Artistic accomplishments become increasingly self-referential toward the end of the annals,

† Population similarly grew to a peak and then steadily declined thereafter,

† Yuthla was merely one Imperial palace (and not the largest or most magnificent) of what was once a gigantic empire.

Beneath the Girdle

As it reaches the Girdle, the river Yogh broadens into a wide lake which laps against the wall of rock. Should the adventurers

cross the lake, they will see at its far end a crevasse in the sheer wall of the Girdle. If they approach it for a closer look, they will soon find their craft drawn inexorably toward it, for this is the only egress for the river. Plunging into an underground cave, the water level soon exceeds the height of the cavern and the adventures and their craft will be drawn beneath the water where they will be dragged for several long, breathless, moments. At last they will be jettisoned into a huge cavern and drop down a high waterfall into a deep, black pool. Dragging themselves from the cold, dark water (roll a d20 under constitution) they will find themselves in an eerie twilight world, on the edge of a mushroom forest, lit by phosphorescent fungi.

The Myconid Kingdom

As they cross the fungi forest, the ruler of this domain will become aware of their presence, his nervous system extending through the mold and fungus so that he is vaguely aware of movement anywhere in his territory. The Yellow Brain Fungus will send 1d6 myconids from the surrounding area to capture the characters and bring them to the myconid city. It will take 1d6 hours for the myconids to arrive. If the first group is defeated in combat, the Brain Fungus will double the number of myconids in each successive wave until the characters are finally captured. Note, the time to assemble each group of myconid will also be doubled. The myconid are incapable of spoken language. They receive commands through certain messenger fungi located throughout the forest and connected to the Yellow Brain Fungus' network. They will seek to disarm the characters and bring them alive to the city.

SAGE OF THE XANTHIC ROBES

While in the city, the ochre-skinned being that characters met in the White Shrine may reappear from time to time to assist the characters. His appearance will be even more tenuous than at the shrine: as if he were a mirage, he will appear semitransparent without material form. If asked about his identity he will tell the player characters that it was his race that built Xathar, that raised the Girdle and that flew between the Stars. Though what he says is true, it hides as much as it reveals. He was actually one of a number of slave races brought to Almuric by the Xorr, an advanced civilization which spread across many worlds and under whose mastery Xathar was built. He and his kind were left behind when the Xorr departed this world.

THE MYSTERY OF XATHAR

Of those who remain behind, none knows to whence the inhabitants of Xathar have gone. They had conquered the stars and were beginning to explore travel to alternate universes. Perhaps the disappearance of the Xorr from Xathar was the result of an experiment gone awry. Perhaps the shadows that flit across the snowy wastes are the only remnant of their physical presence left behind by that wrench in reality which threw them into a parallel universe. Who knows but that after eons of travel across infinite planes of existence one Xorr did not come to earth there to be discovered by one Professor Hildebrand...

The entire cavern is approximately 20 miles in diameter and roughly 60 in circumference. From the black pool, it would take one day to arrive at the city in the center of the cavern. The only way out of the cavern is through a series of caverns opposite the waterfall. It would take two days to cross through the center or three days if characters keep to the edge of the cavern (assuming they can evade the myconid).

The Myconid Capital

The city seems carved from a yellow-white form of limestone, which at a distance makes it look like nothing so much as a set of yellowing teeth thrust up from the center of a black lake. As they enter the city the characters will first notice that where river Yogh spills into the lake a series of nets have been setup. Here myconids with poles fish out carcasses and debris and load them into carts which are pulled across the causeway linking the city to the forest. These are dumped into large vats near the city center where baby myconid grow.

Characters will also notice, at various points around the city the corpses of Gura or Akki, in some stage of decay, and covered with a fine mold. A tendril descends from a stalk above to the base of their skulls. As the characters approach,

the corpse, a form of yellow musk zombie, will begin swinging wildly with whatever weapon he or she has, evidently able to sense movement, though no longer able to see, their stare completely blank.



This will be a foreshadowing of the fate in store for the characters as they are taken

to another part of the city and tossed into shallow vats containing a plant similar to the one they saw animating the zombie. After throwing the characters in, the myconids will drop the players' weapons on the street nearby and then move off to other duties.

As the characters land in the vats, tendrils will reach up to grasp their arms, legs and torsos. Only after the character is completely immobilized will the final stalk descend to insert itself into the base of the brain. Once inserted, character's intelligence will be drained at the rate of one point per minute until it reaches -1. Note, intelligence can be regained at a rate of one point per day, but only if the stem is detached before the character reaches 0.

Escape

Characters can try to free themselves from the tendrils with a series of successful strength checks. Characters will require at least three checks one for each portion of their body that is trapped. Characters can try multiple times for a body part, but the tendrils use a paralyzing poison that will start to take effect the longer the character remains in its grip. For every failed check, subtract one from their roll. If one of the party frees herself she can assist others to free themselves, adding her own rolls to theirs or can use an edged weapon from the nearby pile to cut the characters loose.

The city is paved in chalky stone —so long as the players wander through the city the Brain will not be able to detect them as its sensory organs only extend through living fungus. Myconids going about their duties will ignore the characters. The only hazard is the yellow musk zombies which become more frequent the closer one approaches the center of the city.

Should the characters discover the brain at the center of the city and destroy it, it will take several weeks to grow a new one, giving them sufficient time to escape.

Beneath the central edifice at the center of the city, a series of tunnels lead to a large shaft a hundred feet across, yawning like the mouth of death. Along the inside edge of the shaft a stairway spirals into the depths of the earth. If the players descend the stairs it will take days for them to reach the bottom of the shaft. There is no phosphorescent fungus

here, so the trip will be made in darkness if they have no light or if it burns out. At the bottom is a slime stained altar and several tunnels leading away from the central shaft. Soon after the players enter the bottom of the shaft, gigantic blind white worms will issue from the tunnels. Stuck in the altar is a sword, the Tongue of Thak.

Should the players escape the City of the Myconid without killing the Brain, it will detect them as soon as they reenter the forest, and although the new party assembled

against them will be twice the size as the last one, it will also take twice as long to assemble as the previous attempt.

If the characters reach the far side of the cavern they will see a series of caverns leading upward. After climbing for what seems like days, the characters will come out at last into the blinding light. They will find themselves on a narrow ledge a hundred feet above the desert floor on the southern side of the Girdle.





CHAPTER 7

ALMURIC EXPLORATION



The following tables should assist a Gamemaster in running exploratory adventures. There are two types of tables, one for daily encounters and one for weekly. Choose which type to roll on depending on the pacing of the story. For hunting expeditions or for characters just learning about the world

DAILY PLAINS (1d6)

1	Flock of birds (1-3)/ Almuric hawk (4)/ Almuric vultures (roll again to see what has drawn them) (5-6)
2	Leaping pig (1-3)/ Almuric deer (4-6)
3	Saber tooth leopard (1-3)/ Almuric lion (4-6)
4	Green fruit (1-4)/ Small river (5)/Jumble of boulders(6)
5	Thunderbird
6	Roll on weekly (or GM's choice)

WEEKLY PLAINS (1d6)

1	Roll on daily
2	Almuric Storm (1-3)/Almuric bat (4)/Flying flame (5-6)
3	Gura hunting party (1-2)/ Gura war party (3)/ Yaga raiding party (4-5)/ Akki refugees (6)
4	Gura Stronghold (1-2)/ Ruins (3-4)/Akki Village (5) /Yaga City (6)
5	Forest (1-2)/River (3-4)/Hills (5)/Lake (6)
6	GM's choice

daily encounters might be most appropriate. For those characters familiar with the world or taking long cross country journeys, the Gamemaster can switch to weekly encounters to speed up the pace of play.

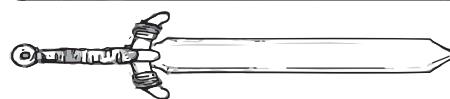
Changes in terrain type have been included for those GMs that would like to generate terrain on the fly once characters

DAILY HILLS/BADLANDS (1d6)

1	Saber tooth leopard
2	Nut bush (1-4), Grove of trees (5), Stream (6)
3	Giant boar (1-2) / Cave bear (3-4) / Carnivorous moose (5-6)
4	Almuric baboon
5	Almuric hyena
6	Roll on weekly (or GM's choice)

WEEKLY HILLS/BADLANDS (1d6)

1	Roll on daily table
2	Shambler (1-4)/ Giant serpent (5-6)
3	Giant boar (1-2) / Cave bear (3-4) / Carnivorous moose (5-6)
4	Almuric Storm (1)/Almuric bat (2-4)/Flying flame (5-6)
5	Plains (1-2), River (3-4), Cave (5), Ruins (6)
6	GM's Choice



wander outside of a previously mapped area. If rolled in a mapped area, it will be a terrain change too small to have made it to the map, e.g. a meadow, a small copse of trees, a small brook, a pond.

Roll once on the relevant terrain and time table to see what is encountered and for living creatures on the activity table as well to see what it is doing.

DAILY FOREST (1d6)

1	Almuric deer
2	Giant boar
3	Almuric lion (1-2) Almuric panther (3-4) Cave bear (5-6)
4	Almuric hyena (1-4) / Almuric wolves (5-6)
5	Almuric unicorn (1-4)/Scaly hunter, nocturnal (5-6)
6	Roll on weekly (or GM's choice)

WEEKLY FOREST (1d6)

1	Roll on daily table
2	Almuric panther (1-2) / Almuric unicorn (3-4)/Scaly hunter, nocturnal (5-6)
3	Gura hunting party (1-2)/ Gura war party (3)/ Yaga raiding party (4-5)/ Akki refugees (6)
4	Almuric Storm (1)/Almuric bat (2-3)/Flying flame (4-6)
5	Plains (1-3), River (4-5), Ruins (6)
6	GM's choice

Polar Wastes (2d6)

2	GM's Choice
3	A monument thrusts up out of the ice (a crumbling arch, a broken obelisk, a rune covered sphere, a twisted spire, a wind-scarred block, a shattered ring).
4	Missed shadows are seen dancing across the ice and snow – their source cannot be located.
5	A weird cry is heard in the distance (roll randomly to determine direction).
6	Rocky ravine or valley. 50% chance to include a stand of hardy trees at the bottom. A ravine will offer relative shelter from the wind, and bare stone on which to start a fire.
7	Hills or snow hummocks. Resting in the leeward side will provide some shelter from the wind. Climbing to the top will offer some view of the landscape (though there may not be much to see besides more ice and snow).
8	Something is spotted in the distance (roll again to see what it is – if it is mobile it will arrive in 1-6 turns).
9	Frigid Wind. Characters must take shelter or make a constitution check once per hour or take damage (1 HP damage). Wind will last 1d6 hours. Players must rest one hour in relative warmth to recover 1 HP.
10	Blinding ice crystals. Unless the characters have protective eye gear they are stopped in their tracks for 1-6 hours.
11	A crevasse opens in the ice beneath the travelers' feet –make an agility check to keep from being swallowed up by the ice.
12	A violent Almunic storm arises. Rather than the blackness of the temperate storm, the polar storm will be filled with a violet suffused haze. Through that the characters might observe giant hydras (the jellyfish) floating through the storm.

Activity (2d6)

2	Dying
3	Fighting
4	Sleeping
5	Resting
6	Being hunted
7	Hunting
8	Eating
9	Walking
10	Running
11	Washing
12	Doing something odd







CHAPTER 8

ALMURIC

BESTIARY



Animal life on Almuric most resembles Earth's own Pleistocene era, with many counterparts of Terran species though most of much greater size. The list of 'earthlike' fauna includes those found in the *Almuric Variant* table

In the novel we only have the names of some of the above creatures and no description so it is unknown how they might differ from their Terran equiva-



lents. The following tables are an example of a tool that GM's can use to modify earthlike creatures, while creating a unique flavor for their own Almuric campaign. I would suggest that the GM make these determinations in advance of beginning adventuring and add notes to the *Almuric Variant* table.



ALMURIC VARIANT

Baboons	Giant, saber-toothed (larger than tigers)
Bears	Monstrous size, cave dwelling
Birds	Gaily colored
Boars	Gigantic, bristling hair almost impervious to sword cuts
Deer	
Dogs	
Hawks	
Hyenas	Curved catlike claws that allow them to climb trees
Leopards	Giant, saber-toothed (larger than tigers)
Lions	
Oxen	
Panthers	
Snakes	
Tigers	
Toads	
Vultures	
Wildcats	
Wolves	

ALMURIC TRANSMOGRIFICATION (2d6)

2	Creature has increased intelligence
3	Creature has an additional mode of attack (e.g. constricting, trapping, electrical, missile, poison)
4	Creature has an additional mode of locomotion (e.g. leaping, swimming, flying, burrowing)
5	Change skin (roll on Skin Table)
6	Change coloration (roll on Coloration Table)
7	Modify size (roll on Size Table)
8	Add horns (roll 1d6 for how many horns, roll 1d3 for length (short, med, long), roll 1d3 for type (straight, curved, antlers))
9	Add an additional pair of limbs
10	Creature is carnivorous (if Terran equivalent is normally carnivorous the Almuric creature will be unusually aggressive)
11	Hybrid : 1d3 – head, torso, hindquarters, of another animal (try to avoid mythological equivalents)
12	Roll twice on this table



SWORDS OF ALMURIC

SIZE (2d6)

2	Tiny
3	Very small
4	Small
5	Medium
6	Large
7	Increase size by one class from Terran equivalent (S becomes M, M becomes L, etc)
8	Huge
9	Massive
10	Enormous
11	Monstrous
12	Gigantic

COLORATION (2d6)

2	Indigo
3	Blue
4	Green
5	Yellow
6	Orange
7	Red
8	Roll 1d6+1 twice on this table and blend the two colors
9	Spotted (Roll 1d6+1 twice on this table for background and spot color, roll 1d3 to decide if spots are small, medium or large)
10	Striped (Roll 1d6+1 twice on this table for background and stripe colors, roll 1d3 to decide if stripes are thin, medium or thick, roll 1d3 to decide if stripes are horizontal, vertical or curved)
11	Asymmetric pattern (for example starbursts, whorls, blotches)
12	Strange coloration (for example shifts colors, glows, can blend in with its background)

SKIN (2d6)

2	Transparent
3	Slimy
4	Down
5	Feathers
6	Scales
7	Furred
8	Hairless
9	Armored
10	Shell / Carapace
11	Knobbed
12	Spines

Stats for Almuric specific creatures

Akki Defender

AKKI DEFENDER

MV	12
HD	1+1
AC	10 (10)
Attacks	1
DMG	by weapon

Almuric Bat

Bats whose laughter drives men mad.

Roll Hard action against Mental to resist madness. For madness effect, roll 1d6 on the following table.

ALMURIC BAT

MV	18
HD	1
AC	7 (13)
Attacks	special
DMG	special

The Blind Ones

No man has ever seen these creatures as they hunt in the absolute darkness of the Al-

MADNESS EFFECT (1d6)

1	Player goes berserk and begins attacking everyone around them. Effect lasts 1d6 hours.
2	Player becomes a simpering idiot, drooling and laughing to himself. Effect lasts 1d6 months.
3	Player is filled with irrational fear and flees the scene dropping anything he's holding and running until he drops from exhaustion. Player will continue to experience bouts of paranoia for 1d6 weeks.
4	Player suffers from hallucinations – sees people and beings that are not there. Hallucinations come every 3d6 hours and last for 2d6 days.
5	Player feels insects are burrowing into his skin and will use whatever implement is available to dig them out. Delusion will last 2d6 rounds.
6	Player feels darkness is closing in on him and loses all interest in life. Will not respond stimuli but will merely stare listlessly. Will stop eating and drinking, but may continue to walk aimlessly. Effect will last 3d6 days.

muric storm. We can assume they have long limbs, some sort of feelers and very large teeth.

Blind Ones may attempt to eat living creatures it encounters in a storm. Though they will only bite with their huge jaws, if

THE BLIND ONES

MV	14
HD	30
AC	6 (14)
Attacks	1
DMG	3d12

they accidentally step on a player damage will be 3d6 points.

Flying Flame

Fires flitting like flaming bats through shadowy skies. Flames are unlikely to attack unless first attacked. Captured flames will die in captivity within 1-3 days.

FLYING FLAME	
MV	18
HD	1
AC	8 (12)
Attacks	1
DMG	1d8

Gura Warrior

GURA WARRIOR	
MV	12
HD	2
AC	10 (10)
Attacks	1
DMG	by weapon

Leaping Pigs

Potbellied pigs on abnormally long hind legs that bound 30 or 40 feet at a time, like a kangaroo.

LEAPING PIGS	
MV	30
HD	1
AC	8 (12)
Attacks	trample
DMG	2d12

In most cases these porcine mammals will leap away from possible predators, but if



cornered or panicked a herd may leap charge over any obstacles in their way.

Carnivorous Moose

Giant carnivorous moose-like creatures with alligator-like tusks.

CARNIVOROUS MOOSE	
MV	24
HD	8
AC	8 (12)
Attacks	1
DMG	1d8+1



Almuric Python

Gigantic serpent, size of a freight train. In most cases players are likely to see nothing but traces of their passage—a trail of flattened grass and earth wide as a two lane highway.

ALMURIC PYTHON	
MV	30
HD	20
AC	3 (17)
Attacks	1
DMG	3d6

Scaly Hunter

Crawling nocturnal forest predator. It will only attack at night and will flee illumination. It will track prey for days, attacking each night in succession. If struck it will flee, preferring to return at a later time for a surprise attack.

SCALY HUNTER	
MV	14
HD	3
AC	2 (18)
Attacks	2 claws and bite
DMG	1d4, 1d4, 1d6

Shambler

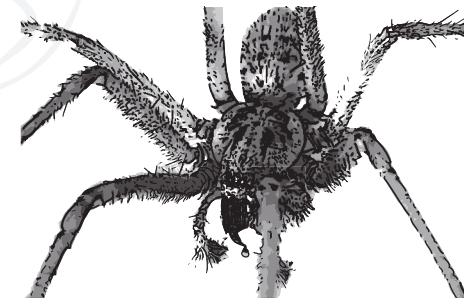
Gaunt shapes shambling hideously through hills at dusk.

SHAMBLER	
MV	8
HD	2
AC	8 (12)
Attacks	1
DMG	1d6

Almuric Spider

Spider bigger than an ox with eight hairy branching legs, two eyes, and venom dripping from black mandibles.

ALMURIC SPIDER	
MV	16
HD	5
AC	9 (11)
Attacks	1
DMG	1d4+2d6 for poison



Thunderbird

Giant carnivorous birds of the grasslands. They reach ten feet in height and somewhat resemble an ostrich except for the beak, which is a huge curving weapon, three feet in length, pointed and edged like a sci-

mitar. A stroke of that beak can slash a man asunder, and the great taloned feet of the monster can tear a human limb from limb.

THUNDERBIRD	
MV	15
HD	4
AC	8 (12)
Attacks	2
DMG	1d8, 1d8+1



Yaga Raider

THUNDERBIRD	
MV	36
HD	1
AC	10 (10)
Attacks	1
DMG	by weapon



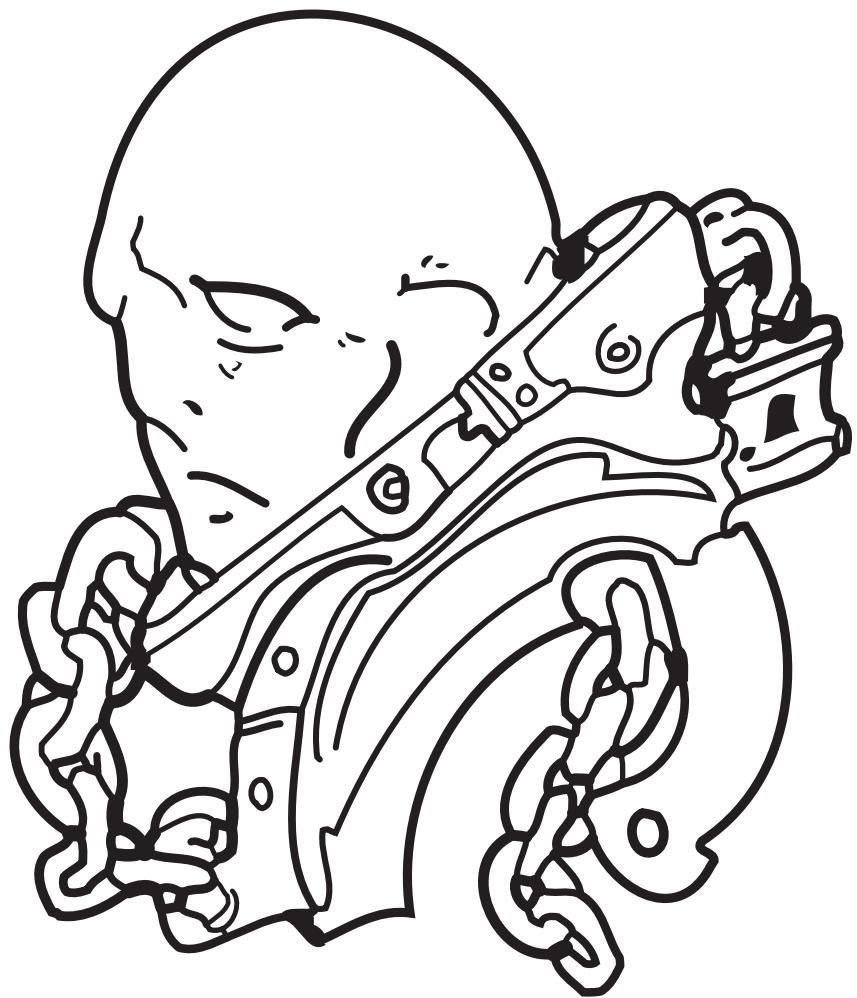
Almuric Unicorn

A large bison sized creature with a sword-like ivory horn growing from its forehead.

ALMURIC UNICORN	
MV	24
HD	6
AC	8 (12)
Attacks	1
DMG	1d10







CHAPTER 9

ALMURIC LUMINARIES



Sample Player Characters or NPC's for Almuric.

Emigres

Emerson Payne Vanderbilt III

Born to wealth, Emerson Vanderbilt lived the life of a dissolute playboy, until, that is, he tired of the endless parlors and smoking rooms and, of the all too familiar seductions that ended in all too sordid affairs. Converting what liquid wealth he had on hand to gold bullion, he drove his Bugatti to the highest point in the city, a note in his breast pocket and a revolver tucked into his waistband. When he arrived at the summit his attention was drawn to strange lights coming from the observatory. Finding the doors unlocked he strolled into Hildebrand's laboratory and, engulfed by a strange aura found himself instantly whisked to Almuric.

He found himself on open grasslands, completely naked. Although his intention had not changed, without his revolver he had no immediate method for self-annihilation, so he sat down in the grass and awaited his fate. Toward evening the predators began to catch his scent and soon his ears were assaulted with an otherworldly baying as the pack closed in on his location. And for the first time he could remember Emerson Payne Vanderbilt III felt fear.

Unreasoning panic gripping his mind, he stumbled to his feet and began to run. The bedlam of his caterwauling pursuers rose to a fever pitch as they engaged the chase. Unused to physical exertion, his lungs soon burned with agonizing need for air, his heart felt like it would burst from his chest,

the scrawny muscles of his thighs and calves trembled near exhaustion. Just as the pack was about to rend him to shreds with their slavering jaws, Emerson stumbled over a cliff edge in the near darkness and plunged into a roaring river.

Dragged downstream by the raging torrent, after some time he was, at last, able to drag himself onto shoals where he collapsed. Exhausting his reserves of physical and nervous energy, he slept more soundly that first night on Almuric than ever he had on featherbed on Earth. When he awoke his first feeling was of regret that he had not been killed—there was no inch of his flesh that had not been battered and bruised, no muscle that did not ache from their unaccustomed activity. His mind and senses, on the other hand, seemed clearer and sharper than they had been in years. So it was with some surprise that he found himself in a crude hut.

He had been fished out of the river by an old Akki female, a runaway slave who had survived for decades on her own. At first it was she that kept him from perishing, feeding him, sheltering him, teaching him which leaves could be used to mask your scent from predators and which roots were safe to eat, how to fish with a spear. Most of these lessons were hard ones, as much to his ego as to his body, soft from years of leisure.

But the lessons were to end all too soon. Due to his own carelessness they were caught in the open plains one evening and set upon by a pack of hyenas. She killed one with a spear thrust but was borne down by a second locked in mortal struggle. Emerson was able to kill or wound enough of the pack to retrieve her mangled body. He carried

her back to her simple hut where she expired from her wounds.

The weeks and months on Almuric had browned and toughened his soft skin, had filled out the muscles on his lanky frame. In his day-to-day struggle for existence all thoughts of self-annihilation had been purged. Taking the crude tools and weapons he had made, he set the hut ablaze and then set out to explore this brutal, vital world.

EMERSON P. VANDERBILT III			
2nd Level Fighter			
STR	14	INT	14
WIS	9	DEX	14
CON	15	CHA	16
HP	9		
AC	9		

Eleanor Geneva Vanderbilt

The older sister of Emerson Vanderbilt III, Ellie is funding and leading the first exploratory team to Almuric. The members of this team have been told that its primary purpose is as a scientific expedition. Ellie has another motive however and that is to find her brother who disappeared almost two years prior. It has taken time, resources and some leaps of faith to piece together the disappearance of her brother, convince Professor Hildebrand and then put together a team of specialists to join her on this quest. Though many won't speak of it, each of her team members also have hidden motives for joining what may very well be a one-way trip.



SWORDS OF ALMURIC

ELEANOR G. VANDERBILT

3rd Level Fighter

STR	14	INT	16
WIS	13	DEX	15
CON	14	CHA	13
HP	13		
AC	8		

Unlike her brother, Ellie has not whiled away her time in desultory pursuits. In addition to being university educated, she has studied fencing, is a crack shot with a rifle, a strong swimmer and skilled equestrienne. Of athletic build, she wears her hair in a short bob.

Courtney Rigby Mauser

Mauser was recruited for the first exploratory team organized by Eleanor Vanderbilt. Raised on a farm in Rhodesia, Mauser has worked for the Uganda Railway shooting man-eating lions, as a prospector in the diamond fields of Namibia, fought in the Boer War as a mercenary, and has worked leading big game safaris in Zululand. Pragmatic, unyielding, domineering, chauvinistic, Mauser will not hesitate to make cold-blooded decisions to ensure the ultimate success of the expedition and his own survival (not in that order). Mauser is short but broad shouldered, compactly muscled. He sports a handlebar mustache. Unknown to his team members, Mauser is wanted for murder in the Northwest Territories, an indictment he does not intend to stand trial for.

COURTNEY R. MAUSER

4th Level Fighter

STR	15	INT	11
WIS	7	DEX	12
CON	16	CHA	8
HP	17		
AC	9		

Alfred Fosburg

British naturalist, participant of several important scientific expeditions (including serving as a crewman aboard the Albatross, joining Mjoberg's Kimberly expedition as

well as taking part in the Siboga expedition) to such far flung lands as Patagonia, Easter Island, Antarctica, Australia, New Guinea and the Malay Archipelago. In each of those expeditions he has seen other men become famous, while his own name remains in relative obscurity. The secret Almuric expedition is the opportunity of a lifetime to discover and study whole new species. Though slight of build, Fosburg is accustomed to living and working in primitive conditions. With curly brown hair, his skin is browned by the sun and winds of his southern voyages. Mild-mannered with an intense curiosity he is willing to make sacrifices for science but is steered by a gentlemanly code of conduct.

Alfred Fosburg

1st Level Cleric

STR	12	INT	16
WIS	10	DEX	13
CON	17	CHA	10
HP	8		
AC	10		

Arjan Singh

Arjan served in the Sikh Regiment of the Indian Army before being recruited for the Almuric exploratory team. Tall, well built, handsome, Arjan is skilled in firearms and knife fighting. A veteran of many battles against bandits and unruly tribes of the North West Frontier, Arjan also served in Afghanistan and Iraq during the Great War. He is skilled in wilderness survival as well as military tactics. He is disciplined, polite, loyal to his friends, implacable to enemies. Arjan does not shave or cut his hair. Though he has been briefed on the risks and perils of this expedition, he is the only member of the party that hasn't been informed that a method to return to Earth has not yet been discovered.

Arjan Singh

6th Level Thief

STR	16	INT	15
WIS	11	DEX	14
CON	14	CHA	15
HP	18		
AC	9		

Edison Armstrong

Physicist and inventor, Ed is a hulking figure who claims to be a direct descendant of Archimedes. A colleague and friend of Hildebrand's, his purpose on the mission is to find or create a portal on Almuric by which the team can return to Earth. Ed is also an amateur weightlifter and member of the Association of Bar Bell Men (ABB). A calm figure, it is hard to read what is going on behind his steady gaze, but his mind is never at rest. Ed is also vegetarian and theosophist. Unknown to any but Hildebrand, he has been diagnosed with a terminal illness.

EDISON ARMSTRONG

2nd Level Cleric

STR	18	INT	17
WIS	10	DEX	8
CON	13	CHA	11
HP	9		
AC	10		

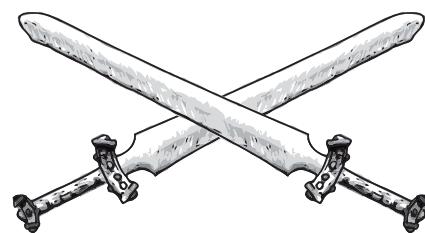
Joseph Beckett

Prior to becoming a surgeon, Joe served as a combat medic in the Great War. He is familiar with the use of small arms and is also an experienced mountaineer, having climbed among the Andes and Himalayas. Unknown to the others on his team, during the war Joseph served as a spy for the Central Powers. He is member of the Thule Society and one of his goals is to bring alien technology back to earth to serve the group's plans for world domination.

JOSEPH BECKETT

2nd Level Magic User

STR	13	INT	15
WIS	13	DEX	13
CON	14	CHA	13
HP	9		
AC	9		



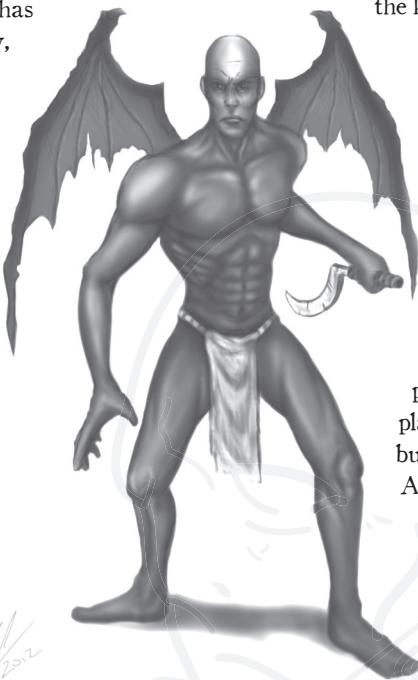
Natives

Akritarcon

Race : Yaga

Appearance and bearing : A shattered form that has not mended properly, he walks with a pronounced limp. Unable to fly, his other limbs have compensated making him thicker set than most Yagas. His gaze is hypnotic like a bird of prey, and despite his deformities he carries himself with a bearing as royal as that of a tiger.

The son of a queen, Akritarcon was unusual among his people for his intense curiosity. While his siblings spent their days in palace intrigues, Akritarcon would explore ruins left by the Mysterious Ones or the catacombs beneath Yuthla where no other Yaga had gone for centuries. The foolishness of such excursions was confirmed, at least in the minds of his fellows, the day a slave found Akritarcon's broken and mangled body in one of the inhabited sublevels to which he had crawled some unknown distance. For weeks he lay on the verge of death



Though he lived, his maimed body mended but imperfectly. He became incapable of flight and that coupled with his untoward interest in antiquities made him a social pariah among his peers. Despite his impairment, Akritarcon became, if anything, even more single minded in his pursuit of the knowledge of the Ancients.

Before the fall of Yuthla he had begun to suspect the depths to which his race had fallen when compared with his forefathers and how far they had strayed into degeneracy. One of the survivors, he now seeks some source of power that will restore his people, not to their former place as parasites and tyrants, but to the original glory of his Ancestors.

Movement : Though incapable of sustained flight, Akritarcon can still glide for short distances and is capable of a leaping glide of up to 20 yards. Under conditions of extreme emotional duress he may fly unburdened but the pain is so excruciating that he loses 1 HP for every round of flight

Khort Lionarm

Race : Gura

One of the few survivors of the Fall of Thugra, Khort is a grizzled veteran who lost his wife and daughter in the massacre. His own body carries the marks of that battle, long burn scars across his limbs and torso where he was struck by flaming timbers as the great hall collapsed. Finding no trace of his family he wandered out into the plains and has not returned to Thugra. Occasionally, after the sun drops below the edge of the horizon or just before a storm, he thinks he can make out the figures of his family in the far distance, though he has yet to find any trace of their passing.

Khort has a habit of humming 'The Ballad of Gultchuk' under his breath whenever he is preparing food.

KHORT LIONARM

8th Level Fighter

STR	18	INT	7
WIS	6	DEX	12
CON	16	CHA	5
HP	48		
AC	8		

Adawiyah

Race : Yaga

A survivor of the fall of Yugga, only after the army of invading Guras had left the plain did hunger force her from the ruins and dare the climb down silken cords from that blasted aerie. It was with incredulity however that she found, upon entering the Akki camp, not greeted as a goddess by these formerly obedient and docile servants, but driven off with spears and flung stones and offal. Where many others died, though, Adawiyah survived. In the following months she eked out a meager existence scrounging through the camp's refuse pile after dark for anything edible. At first she lived as a scavenger, eating fruits and vegetables from the Akki fields, poaching from their traps and nets, stealing tools and implements, even stealing fire to cook with.

As most of her race, Adawiyah is tall, dark and slim, though her recent privations had cut away any spare flesh from her frame and darkened her eyes with a wary and hungry look. She is dressed in crudely knit animal skins, her own silks having worn away long ago and even the rough clothing stolen from the Akki trash heaps finally giving up the ghost. She carries a spear and dagger with her at all times and in her camp also has a machete, a hoe and a hatchet stolen from the Akki village. She has taken to braiding

ADAWIYAH

2nd Level Thief

STR	13	INT	13
WIS	8	DEX	17
CON	15	CHA	14
HP	7		
AC	7		

AKRITARCON			
3rd Level Thief			
STR	16	INT	15
WIS	9	DEX	6
CON	14	CHA	14
HP	13		
AC	9		

but despite all expectations, the spark of life would not be snuffed out. It is unknown what nameless horror befell him but since that time, Akritarcon became even more withdrawn and at times an intense light would shine in his eyes.

her hair to keep it out of the way. Never destined for queenship, she has two scars on her back where her wings were clipped at birth.

Majke Ontak

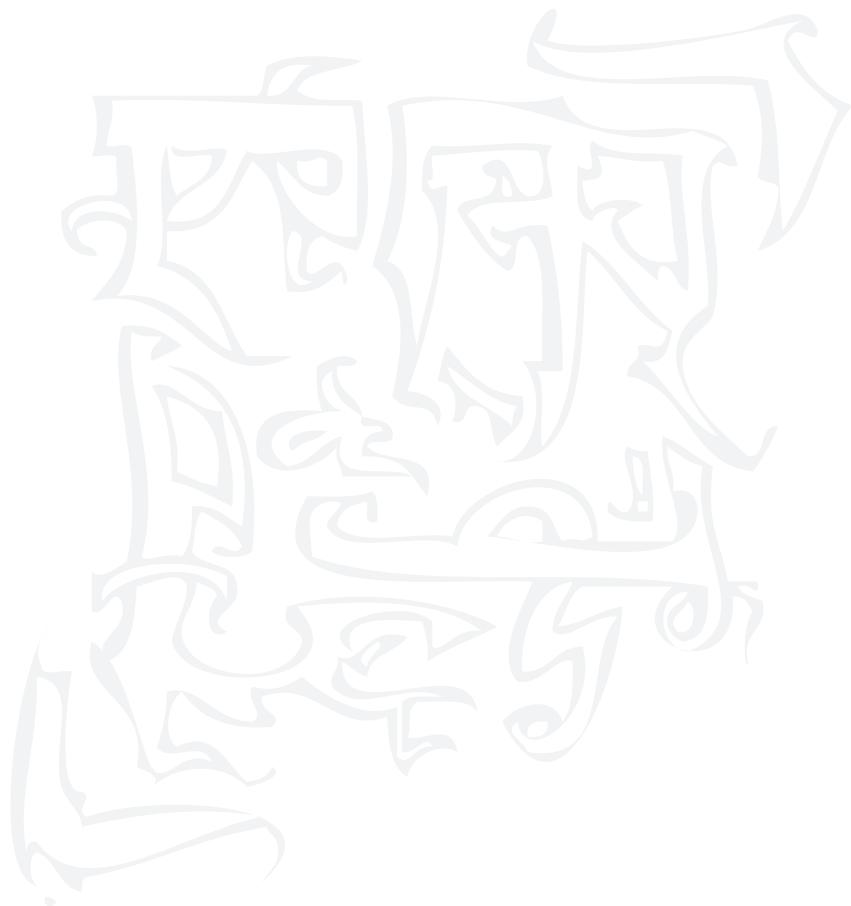
Race : Akki

Matriarch of the village of Ontak. Soon after the fall of Yugga the refugees of Akka were divided as to what they should do and where they should go. Some wished to seek the Ancient Homeland, others believed they should setup a temporary camp and resettle their fields assuming the invading Gura's would not stay forever, some chose to strike out to find a new home and new lives for themselves. Often decisions were split along clan lines. Majke led her clan across the desert and then along the banks of the Purple River until they found a sheltered valley where they could settle and form a new home. She is a tough, but fair leader and it has often been nothing but her iron will that has held the clan together through the hardships they have endured in their Passage. During the Invasion of Akka she was one of the first to take weapon in hand to repel the invaders and it is with that same fierce determination that she has met the other challenges they have faced whether from the elements or beasts or man.

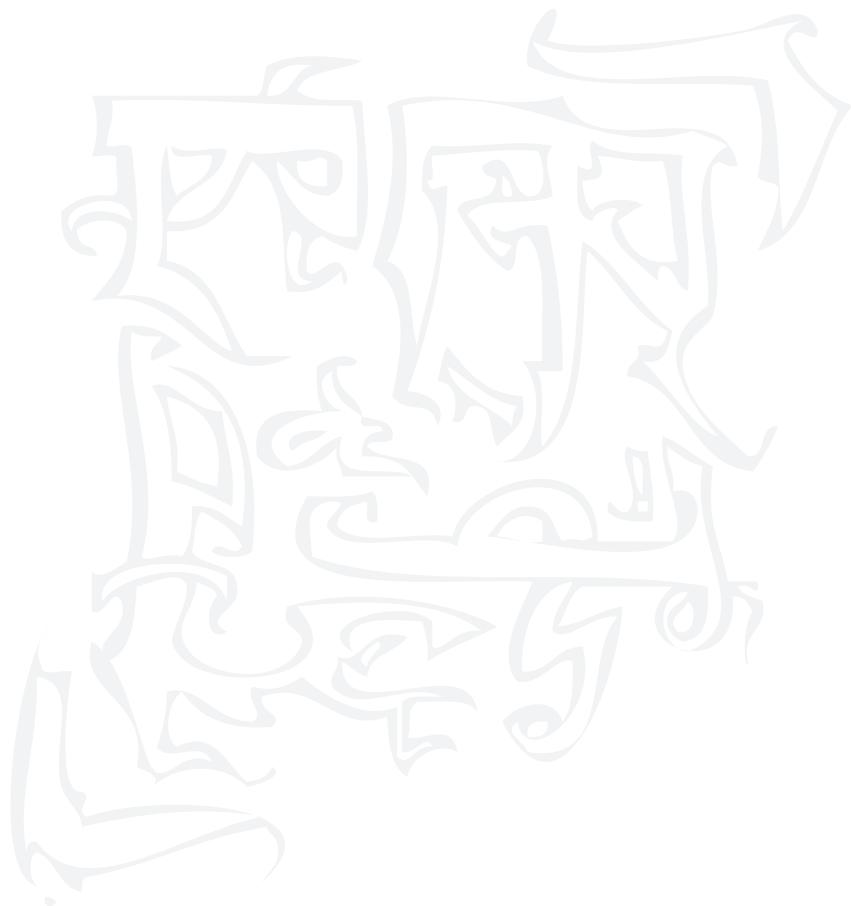
MAJKE ONTAK			
3rd Level Fighter			
STR	14	INT	14
WIS	17	DEX	10
CON	17	CHA	6
HP	14		
AC	8		



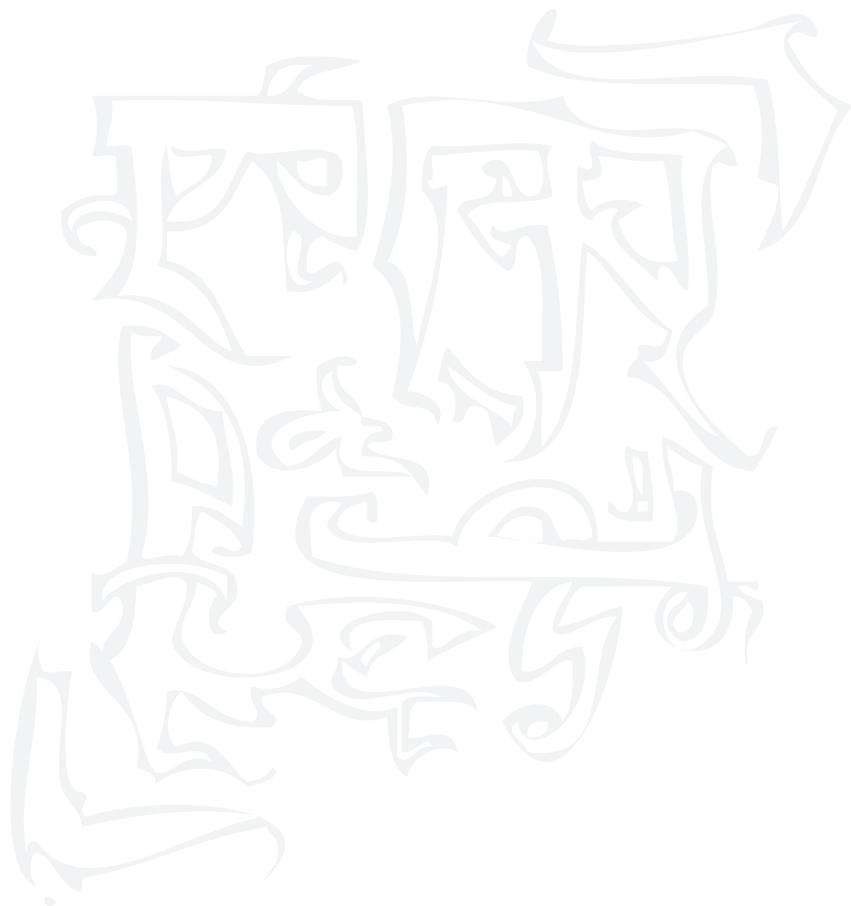
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