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ADVENTURE
ANTHOLOGY



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PRIMEVAL
THULE

ADVENTURE ANTHOLOGY

Welcome to the lost land of Thule! This savage age is home to mighty beasts such as the saber-tooth and woolly mammoth, bloody-handed barbarian reavers and sub-human beastmen, and elder horrors lurking among haunted valleys or forbidding mountains. Only the strongest and most determined heroes dare to meet the challenges of Thule, but fame and fortune await those ready to face death in a thousand gruesome forms and carve their names into the annals of this doomed age.

This anthology brings together three savage adventures created for the PRIMEVAL THULE 5e Kickstarter campaign. In this book you will find:

- *Red Chains*, by Steve Winter
- *Watchers of Meng*, by Robert Schwalb
- *Secret of the Moon-Door*, by Richard Baker
- Plus 4 new monsters to support these Thulean adventures

The *Adventure Anthology* provides the Gamemaster with an excellent cross-section of Thulean experiences, ranging from a desperate quest in a city of slavers to a cursed treasure in a jungle temple to a foul wizard consorting with extraterrene monsters. Adventure in a savage age awaits you!





ADVENTURE ANTHOLOGY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Red Chains	4
The Watchers of Meng	18
Watcher of Meng	28
Degenerate	28
Secret of the Moon-Door	30
The Tcho-Tcho	45

Based on the PRIMEVAL THULE Campaign Setting by Richard Baker, David Noonan, and Steve Schubert

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the PRIMEVAL THULE *Adventure Anthology*! This book collects *Red Chains* and *Watchers of Meng*, the two stretch goal adventures created for the PRIMEVAL THULE 5e Kickstarter (July 2015), and adds *Secret of the Moon-Door*, a bonus adventure we added as our little way of saying thank you to our excellent backers. After all, two adventures isn't much of a collection; three is a much better number.

The adventures presented in this book illustrate some of the iconic themes and storylines from this savage and intense campaign setting. At its heart, PRIMEVAL THULE is an homage to the pulp fantasy and pulp horror stories of authors such as Robert E. Howard, H.P. Lovecraft, and Clark Ashton Smith. In these pages you'll encounter the cruel Slavers of Marg, a jungle ruin home to subhuman degenerates and a cursed gem, and the unholy alliance of a Black Circle wizard and the terrible extraterrestrial monsters known as moon-beasts. You'll travel from the streets of wicked cities to the depths of the jungle and from ruined temples to alien worlds. These are the types of stories that graced the pages of magazines generations ago—and they can still inspire great RPG adventures.

Red Chains, by veteran designer Steve Winter, presents the player characters with a unique challenge: rescuing one specific captive from the vile institution of slavery. The heroes must travel to the dangerous city of Marg, home of the feared Crimson Slavers, in order to buy back or set free a barbarian prince before a fate worse than death befalls him. Clever parties can get far by negotiating and following up on clues, but ultimately freedom must be won at the point of a sword.

Watchers of Meng, by the inimitable Rob Schwalb, is a classic pulp adventure tale. The heroes find their path leading to a forgotten ruin in the deepest, darkest jungle of Thule, a place overrun by degenerate savages. A rich prize lies hidden in the ruins, a great jewel worth a king's ransom, but it is protected by a fearsome curse the heroes defy at their peril.

Secret of the Moon-Door, by PRIMEVAL THULE creator Richard Baker, begins with a mysterious disappearance and reports of monsters terrorizing an academy in one of Thule's great cities. The heroes soon discover that the missing sage was engaged in researching tales of a legendary riddle in the temple of a forgotten god—and a prize coveted by a wizard of the Black Circle. The characters' pursuit of the kidnapped sage leads them through the Moon-Door to confront their foe in a strange and distant realm.

With the publication of the *Adventure Anthology*, we have now created nine adventures for the PRIMEVAL THULE setting. These include the three from the *Campaign Setting* book, three stretch-goal adventures from our original Kickstarter for the Pathfinder, 4e, and 13th Age editions of the setting (we'll convert those to 5e as soon as possible), and three new stretch-goal adventures created for the 5e version of the setting. In ascending order of character level, these are:

- *Tower of Black Flame* (PTCS; characters of level 1–2)
- *Cavern of Golden Tears* (PTCS; level 2–4)
- *Red Chains* (level 4–6)
- *Night of the Yellow Moon* (level 4–6)
- *Watchers of Meng* (level 5–8)
- *The Scent of Jasmine* (PTCS; level 5–8)
- *Lost Tower of Viondor* (level 7–9)
- *Secret of the Moon-Door* (level 10–12)
- *Seraglio of the Mind* (level 10–12)

If you simply play them in order, you'll have a fun little PRIMEVAL THULE campaign that should keep you busy for about five or six months and level up your characters from 1 to 12 or so . . . but we hope you'll add a few adventures of your own devising to the schedule. We'd encourage you to take a look at the First Temple of Set, the Lost City of Tentakron, or Voor Darayn as interesting sites from the PRIMEVAL THULE *Campaign Setting* ready to be developed into full-on adventures, or perhaps take a look at the campaign arcs described in Chapter 5 of the book for inspiration. You're the best judge of your own players' interests, and you know which corners of the continent—or types of stories—they're interested in exploring.

Adventure awaits you; travel light, go warily, and keep your sword loose in the scabbard. You are about to venture into the savage world of Thule!

RED CHAINS

by Steve Winter



An adventure for characters of levels 4-6

P R I M E V A L

THUULE

RED CHAINS

An adventure for characters of levels 4-6

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The vile practice of slavery casts a shadow over all of Thule. In *Red Chains*, the characters must travel to the city of Marg, home base of the Crimson Slavers who terrorize much of the continent. Their quest is simple: Rescue the son of an important chieftain from the clutches of Marg's slavers. But in their effort to free the young barbarian from his captors, the heroes find the trail leading them into a cruel, twisted realm of human bondage, underground cults, and dark rituals.

Encounter Difficulty: *Red Chains* is intended for 4th- to 6th-level characters, but because it's very light on combat, it can easily be modified for characters of any level. Only one battle in the adventure really matters; any other fight characters get into can be avoided—and probably should be.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The player characters are hired by Evarr Hallborn, a barbarian of noble blood, to rescue his son Leafstan from the Crimson Slavers. Before leaving on this mission, characters have an opportunity to talk to an ex-slaver and learn crucial facts about the slave trade and the city of Marg.

Once in Marg, they discover that the job won't be as easy or as simple as just buying Leafstan back. He's already been bought and sold several times before the characters pick up his trail. Instead of moving "up the chain," however, as similar slaves usually do, Leafstan is moving down along a chain of increasingly grim and disturbing owners into a world of death sport, magical experimentation, and nightmare cults. The trail also leads to followers of Asura who fight against slavery and aid escaping slaves in their flight to freedom. Earning their trust is as crucial to the rescue's success as finding Leafstan and stopping the cultists' horrid plan.

IMPORTANT NPCs

Red Chains is light on combat but heavy on roleplaying and investigation. Characters will spend most of the time speaking with, gaining the trust of, or squeezing information from NPCs involved in the slave trade. Some of them are despicable, some are valuable allies, and a few are both.

Baishum Judocus was a mercenary who joined the Crimson Slavers, but eventually he grew to admire the people they were preying on and repented his wicked ways. He jumped ship during a raid, swam ashore, and tried to teach the barbarians he found how to protect themselves against the raiders. The clans accepted him and gave him a home, and he's lived among them for 20 years.

Bearn Tuham is a seasoned warrior and raider who's seen more than his share of combat against slavers and other enemies of the clan. He lost his right arm

batTLing lizardfolk a decade ago, but he still serves Evarr Hallborn as a lieutenant and adviser.

Evarr Hallborn is the hereditary leader of his clan. He was a great warrior in his prime, and even now few of his clansmen would face him one-on-one. He wears a mantle made from griffin hide that's the hereditary symbol of rulership in the clan. His two eldest sons both died (one in battle, one adventuring) before Evarr was ready to hand over the reins of power. Leafstan is his only surviving heir.

Leafstan Hallborn is the son of Evarr Hallborn and the only surviving heir to the griffin mantle. He's 17, passionate, strong, and impetuous, and he'll become an excellent clan chief if he lives long enough.

Nafryr is an Atlantean slave trader. She bought Leafstan from the slavers who captured him, then sold him to Xauxo of Ren Sharr.

Noble Freeman is an astrologer in Marg who earned his freedom from slavery. He works with the followers of Asura to help slaves escape, and he commands a small army of urchins who can guide characters stealthily almost anywhere in the city.

Sister Uthlita runs a mortuary that disposes of the corpses of slaves, but she's also secretly a follower of Asura who smuggles escaped slaves out of Marg.

Tuhawi Dasaab is an owner of pit-fighting slaves and a follower of Set. He bought Leafstan from Xauxo of Ren Sharr and intends to sacrifice the young man to the serpent god, after torturous alterations are made to Leafstan's body and mind.

Xauxo of Ren Sharr is an owner and trainer of pit fighters. He bought Leafstan from Nafryr, then sold him to Tuhawi Dasaab. Although he's completely amoral, Xauxo will help the characters if their interference will harm his competitor.

Yoodir is a homeless street preacher who rants against the evils of slavery in Marg. He is the ultimate key to finding Leafstan before it's too late.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure begins wherever in Thule your campaign takes place. The Crimson Slavers focus their raids against barbarians (there's less risk of political backlash or organized military resistance that way), so starting in barbarian lands is preferable to starting in a city. Whether characters start among the barbarian tribes or in a city, tailor the information below to reflect their situation.

The player characters are approached by Bearn Tuham, who brings a message from his warlord, Evarr Hallborn, a man of considerable influence and importance among the Ammur tribes (substitute a different barbarian tribe if it works better for your campaign). Hallborn wants to see the PCs immediately to offer them a job. Tuham explains that Evarr Hallborn is a powerful leader in his clan, a good man to have on

your side or in your debt. He needs mercenaries from outside the clan for an important task. Tuham wants the characters to come with him immediately; time is pressing.

EVARR'S LONGHOUSE

The clan chief's longhouse is a "palace" of barbaric splendor. Most of it is one tremendous, timber-columned hall. Tables, benches, and numerous fire pits are arrayed near the center of the hall. Cots and pallets covered with warm furs are pushed near the walls for sleeping. At the end of the hall opposite the single entrance, an impressive, roughly-hewn chair stands beneath the mounted head of a griffin. Seated on that chair is a man wearing a mantle made from the griffin's pelt.

Evarr Hallborn is a tall man and still impressively powerful despite his gray hair and beard. He wastes no time on pleasantries as the characters approach his seat.

A dark mood hangs over the entire hall, but especially on the man wearing the griffin mantle, whose chin rests heavily on a tightly-clenched fist. You're only halfway across the hall when he speaks loudly without raising his head. "My son has been captured by Crimson Slavers and taken to Marg, and I need someone to bring him back—bold mercenaries not of my clan, who won't be recognized as my warriors in that cursed city.

"What you must do is simple: travel to Marg, pick up my son's trail, and buy him back. Don't let anyone know you're working for me, or they'll inflate the price. Just make a quiet business transaction. That's what these jackals understand.

"Once Leafstan is safely home, then our thoughts of deep revenge can take form. For now, just bring him home. Bring him back to me, and your honor and reward will be great." Then he dismisses you with a wave toward Bearn Tuham and sinks again into somber meditation.

Tuham draws the characters aside at that point and gives them the specifics. The characters are offered 3 pounds of gold apiece (150 gp) as pay for the job. (This amount can be adjusted up or down to match the economy in your game.) One-fifth will be paid up front, the rest when Leafstan is brought back. He must be alive, or there will be no further payment! Tuham emphasizes that besides the monetary reward, Evarr Hallborn is a powerful and generous lord to his friends and allies. In addition to their up-front payment, he provides them with 20 Margish krakens (200 gp) to purchase Leafstan's freedom. They're expected to bring back a receipt and return whatever krakens are left over!

Leafstan is 17, blond, bearded (when he was taken), and has a stylized griffin tattoo on his right forearm. He was captured two weeks ago while hunting far

from home. One of his companions eluded the slavers and followed them to their ship, where he heard them saying their hold was full and they were sailing straight to Marg to sell their catch. It took Leafstan's friend eleven days to make his way back to Evarr and report, so the slavers now have a two-week head start. The ship was named *Tarhun's Fury*.

Bearn Tuham also recommends that before the characters depart for Marg, they meet with a man named Baishum Judocus, who lives among the clan even though he's not kin. Judocus is wise in the ways of the Crimson Slavers, and he might have useful advice for the characters.

THE EX-SLAVER

Baishum Judocus is a Kalay human, clearly an outsider among the tall, fair-haired barbarians. He is short, swarthy, and has dark, darting eyes. His lodge is indistinguishable from any other in the village from the outside, but inside, the collection of exotic weapons and other oddities on the walls and shelves makes it obvious the resident has traveled widely across Thule. Bearn Tuham introduces Judocus to the characters as "someone who knows the evil business you're about to delve into." Judocus explains unapologetically that he sailed with the Crimson Slavers "when I was young and didn't know any better."

He hasn't been to Marg for 20 years, so Judocus can't offer much specific advice about the city. He advises characters that they should be able to get information about *Tarhun's Fury* from the harbor master, but Leafstan probably will already be sold by the time characters arrive. They can track legal sales through the Master of Accounts at the central market.

Most importantly, if they run into trouble, they must not place any trust in city bureaucrats or guild officials. Instead, he offers this advice.

"Your first friend in Marg is an astrologer who calls himself Noble Freeman. He was a slave who bought his own freedom. If he's still alive, my name should get you in the door and let you explain your needs.

"If you find yourselves truly in desperate straits, you must seek out the followers of Asura. They specialize in helping escaped slaves and other fugitives reach freedom. They can get you out of Marg even with the whole city hunting you. If you need their help, go to the swamp-side mortuary and ask for 'Clestain'. I can't guarantee that'll still work, but it did 20 years ago.

"Whatever you do, protect that information with your life. Because they undermine slavery, the Asurans are the most wanted criminals in Marg. The Crimson Council would pay handsomely for their heads—or for yours, if they suspected the knowledge of how to find the Asurans was inside."



TRAVELING TO MARG

Unless characters start very near Marg, a ship is the quickest way to reach the city. The barbarians have a small coastal vessel taken in a raid that no one would associate with them. If the characters can handle a boat, they can borrow this one for the mission. If not, members of Hallborn's clan sail the characters to Marg, drop them at the docks like any other passengers, and spend the next few days nervously pretending to be merchants in search of cargo. You can create encounters with pirates or monsters along the way, or jump straight to Marg.

ACT I: CITY OF SLAVERS

When the PCs arrive in Marg, read:

Marg makes its presence known from many miles away. The city stands at the marshy mouth of the Harj River, hemmed in on three sides by the surrounding bayou. A gray haze of smoke hangs over the city throughout the day, giving way to a sullen red glow at night. A pyramid-like fortress towers over one end of the city, and the spires of an elegant palace rise above the opposite end. The harbor lies along the southern bank of the river.

The Harj River crosses the northern edge of the city before flowing into the western end of a long inlet. The river mouth is marshy and pestilential, a breeding ground for mosquitoes and other swarming insects that literally darken the sky at the height of their hatching seasons. Huge, slow-burning pyres are continually stoked throughout the city to create a pall of smoke that drives away the clouds of voracious mosquitoes from the surrounding swamp. Most of the city stands on slightly elevated ground south of the river, with the hungry bayou hemming it in on three sides and the river as its lifeline to the sea.

The smoky pyres burn year-round and create a perpetual haze over the city; residents agree that being choked and blinded by the smoke is preferable to being devoured by the mosquitoes. The pyramid fortress of the powerful Devrith clan and the spires of the Freehold Palace can be seen from most points in the city, making them twin lodestars for those trying to get their bearings.

Law and Order: Despite its well-deserved sinister reputation, Marg is a civilized city with typical laws against assault and murder. Characters who carve a trail of corpses, injured witnesses, and collateral damage through the city are likely to run afoul of Marg's authorities, which could lead to the characters being enslaved themselves as punishment. Most

of Marg's law enforcers are typical guards, but they have tougher agents to call on when adventurers cause trouble.

- Standard patrol (1,600 XP): 1 veteran, 4 guards
- Tough patrol (4,350 XP): 3 veterans, 3 guards
- Riot squad (8,550 XP): 2 veterans, 1 priest, 10 thugs

The characters' first hours or days in Marg will be spent visiting various locales and NPCs to gather information in their effort to locate Leafstan. The most likely encounters are described below, but it's important not to constrain the characters' investigation at this point. Using the background on Marg provided here and in the *PRIMEVAL THULE Campaign Setting* (page 91–92), let the characters go where they want and talk to whoever they meet. If they drift off track, use NPCs to gently steer them back toward locations with useful leads (or transplant the leads to locations the characters do visit).

There are four strong leads the PCs can initially pursue: looking for *Tarhun's Fury*, locating Noble Freeman, heading straight for the slave market, or making contact with the Asurans at the mortuary.

TARHUN'S FURY

Characters who begin their search for Leafstan by looking for the ship that brought him to Marg discover that *Tarhun's Fury* isn't in the harbor when they arrive. They'll need to check with the harbor master or ask around the waterfront for more information.

THE HARBOR MASTER

The harbor master, a friendly but busy Atlantean man named Marcan, confirms that *Tarhun's Fury* offloaded barbarian slaves two weeks ago, took on provisions, and sailed out of the harbor again eight days ago. He helpfully adds that she's crewed largely by mercenaries, so a few members of her crew might not have signed on for this voyage. If any are around, they probably can be found at some dockside hangout, but he has no idea which one.

FINDING THE CREW

Searching riverfront winesinks and taprooms for the crew of *Tarhun's Fury* requires a successful Intelligence/Investigation or Charisma/Persuasion check (DC 15). Each attempt takes one hour and costs 1d6 gp. When the PCs succeed (or when they employ some other method, such as the discreet use of divination magic)



they find a few of the ship's crewmen in a taproom called the Cracked Keel.

The Cracked Keel is a typical waterfront dive populated by out-of-work sailors, down-on-their-luck gamblers, prostitutes, pickpockets, layabouts, and rough-looking mercenaries. When you ask about *Tarhun's Fury*, the barkeep nods at three men slumped at a table in the corner. Only one is conscious at the moment.

The conscious sailor is named Baltyr. He is not antagonistic to a group of dangerous-looking characters who outnumber him, but he won't say anything helpful unless he's paid at least 5 gp or someone makes a successful Charisma/Intimidation check (DC 15) against him.

What Baltyr can tell the characters is that the slavers captured the man they describe (he refers to Leafstan as "the barbarian prince") on their final raiding stop. They knew he was valuable, so they came straight to Marg. Most of their other captives were fit for nothing but labor and were sold at standard rates to brokers at the city's slave market, but "the prince" was sold to a dealer named Nafryr who specializes in slaves with rare qualities.

Creatures (1,000 XP): If the characters throw their weight around in the tavern—if they use Intimidation on Baltyr in front of the other patrons, for example—they gain the enmity of a rough crowd. Baltyr's fellow sailors won't leap into a battle against well-armed adventurers, but they'll trail the characters through town and either ambush them in a dark alleyway, or creep into their sleeping rooms with knives and blackjacks in the dead of night.

- 5 thugs

Development: Unless the characters do something to prevent it, Baltyr leaves the Cracked Keel moments after the party departs, and races through the streets to reach Nafryr first. He informs her that strangers are looking for "the barbarian prince" and collects a small reward from Nafryr for the information. (What Nafryr does with this information is explained under Nafryr in Act II.)

NOBLE FREEMAN

The shop of Noble Freeman is identified by a stylized astrolabe hanging above the door. Finding it requires a successful Charisma/Persuasion check (DC 12) to find someone who knows the location, followed by a successful Wisdom/Survival check (DC 12) to actually find the building in the maze of streets. Each check, successful or not, uses up an hour. If characters want to make individual checks, then they must split up; if they stay together as a group, then one check is made per hour for the group.

Freeman is a Lomari human of forty-five, highly educated, generally outgoing, but wary of armed

CASUAL BRUTALITY

Casual brutality is commonplace in Marg. Quick scenes can be used to convey to characters some of the suffering inflicted by the Crimson Slavers.

- At the docks, characters see freshly-arrived slaves being unloaded from raiding ships: chained, filthy, terrified, starved, being driven toward holding corrals and warehouses under whips and cudgels.
- In the streets, they see slaves being struck by their owners, laboring with heavy burdens, or being publicly lashed or confined in stocks for disobedience.
- Heavy, unpleasant, or dangerous labor, such as unloading ship cargo or mucking out livestock stalls, is done by slaves.
- All but the poorest taverns and inns have one or two slaves to handle menial labor.

While cruelty is the norm, not every slave is beaten or mistreated. Allowing characters to see an occasional exception to that treatment underscores the unnecessary cruelty of most owners.

strangers. He'll answer questions about Marg for free or give an astronomical reading for 2 sp, but nothing else unless characters mention Baishum Judocus. At that, he locks the front door, draws the blinds, turns to the characters and says, "How is my old friend Baishum, and how can I be of service to you?"

The ways Noble Freeman can be of service include:

- He can give reliable directions to anyplace in Marg.
- He knows urchins and beggars who can lead the characters almost anywhere in the city through alleys, sewers, and other hidden paths. A "darkways guide" costs 5 sp each time one is used.
- He knows two safehouses in the city where fugitives can find shelter from any manhunt. One on the south side of town expects a payment of 4 gp per night; one near the river expects a payment of 10 gp per night. The characters are welcome to sleep on the benches and rugs in his shop for free if they'd like, but his shop is not a safehouse. All freed slaves are perpetually suspected of aiding escaped slaves, so his shop is routinely searched when a runaway is being hunted.
- He knows that dropping the name Clestain will make the followers of Asura clam up instead of gaining their trust. The correct code name is "Edegast."
- He's never heard of Leafstan and has no idea where he might be, but Freeman can put people on the young man's trail. If characters go for this option, NPCs track Leafstan's progress to Tuhawi Dasaab, then refuse to go any farther. This information takes 1d3+1 days to collect, and the characters must reimburse the NPCs 1d6 gp per day in fees and bribes.

Almost any other information the GM wants to place in the characters' hands can be delivered through Noble Freeman. The astrologer has many gossipy clients, including close relatives of Kaz Vurin and family members of the Crimson Council (though none of the councilors themselves), so he's privy to all the news and rumors circulating through every level of Marg.

If told that Leafstan might be taken to the catacombs of Qurothaq, Freeman is horrified and urges the characters to arrange a rescue as quickly as possible.

THE SLAVE MARKET

Marg's slave market is not too different from other big, urban markets the characters have been in, except that the goods for sale are human beings.

The slave market is a sprawling collection of colorful tents, open-air stalls, and a few permanent structures where slave buyers and sellers conduct business. Humans in various stages of dress, cleanliness, and health shuffle to and fro inside small corrals, but the fences alone couldn't contain someone who wanted to get out. Most of the slaves are shackled at the wrists, ankles, or neck. Guards armed with cudgels and whips patrol everywhere, and they lash any slave who moves too slowly, bows too shallowly, speaks too often, or stares too long at a free man or woman.

Each seller appears to have a specialty: slaves from the north or from the south, slaves from the mountains or from the coast, slaves for field work or for domestic work, slaves freshly arrived or born into captivity.

The carnival atmosphere of fluttering pennants and friendly hawkers shouting their wares can't overcome the nightmarish background drone of groans, rattling chains, and cracking whips. Drifting walls of smoke from nearby pyres add a hellish accent to the scene.

To the citizens of Marg, this is just business; buying and selling people is how they feed their families. Few of those involved in the trade feel any doubt over whether what they do is ethical or whether the people they subjugate are inferior, and they react angrily to outsiders who raise such questions.

Important Leads: Characters can learn a lot about the slave trade in the market, but they can't learn much about Leafstan. Information that can be gleaned is described below.

The *Master of Accounts*, an obese Nimothan man named Hosk, knows that *Tarhun's Fury* unloaded a cargo of barbarians two weeks ago. Most were bought by the trader Loceth Aloudain to be resold for field work; a discount dealer, Nyall the Short, took the old, weak, and sick.

Loceth Aloudain, a wizened old Atlantean, explains that he already sold most of the shipment, but he still has eight remaining from the lot. He'll let characters

talk to them for 2 gp. The slaves recognize Leafstan from a description and know that he was separated from the group as soon as they arrived in Marg, but none of them know what became of him. Aloudain himself knows that Leafstan was sold to Nafryr because he was at the sale, but he won't mention this knowledge until after the characters pay to question slaves. Then he "suddenly remembers something useful," which he'll share for another 3 gp.

Nyall the Short is a cruel, brusque man who sells slaves that are likely to die soon from disease, injury, or old age, mainly for jobs with a high probability of killing them even quicker. Neither he nor any of his slaves from *Tarhun's Fury* know anything about Leafstan.

Other Leads: Characters asking around at random can attempt Intelligence/Investigation or Charisma/Persuasion checks (DC 20). Each attempt takes one hour. On a success, a character learns from a random NPC that a slave matching Leafstan's description was bought by Nafryr, but she had him killed.

Scores of Guards: The Margish expect trouble here and are ready to quash any slave rising immediately. Characters who start trouble here immediately face a tough patrol (see Law and Order, above). Additional patrols and riot squads arrive every round or two until the troublemakers are overwhelmed—there are literally hundreds of Margish guards in and around the market.

THE SLAVE MORTUARY

This low, grim building stands along the southwest edge of the city, very near the surrounding swamp. Slaves die at an alarming rate, especially fresh arrivals who are weak from a long sea voyage, possibly injured, and despondent over their fate. Their bodies are brought to this mortuary to be carted far out into the swamp, where they'll be devoured by crocodiles, giant leeches, ghouls, and worse things.

Most of the workers at the mortuary are human slaves, but the person in charge is a tall, world-weary Nimothan woman named Uthlita Beelyr. The slaves call her Sister Uthlita, but that's just a tradition as far as anyone knows. Sister Uthlita and certain of her attendants are secretly followers of Asura; they aid escaping slaves by guiding them through the swamp to the secret Harbor of Asura, some miles up the Harj River from Marg.

Sister Uthlita knows nothing about Leafstan. If characters come here looking for the body after asking around the Slave Market or speaking to Nafryr (Act II), Sister Uthlita confirms positively that she's never seen a corpse with a griffon tattoo on the arm, let alone one in the last two weeks. She also points out that mock executions of disobedient slaves aren't unknown.

If told that Leafstan is headed to the catacombs of Qurothaq, Sister Uthlita urges the characters to rescue him as quickly as possible.

“Clestein” or “Edegast”: If characters come to the mortuary and ask for Clestein, Sister Uthlita assumes they’re informants to the Crimson Council; that code word was compromised years ago. She remains polite but tells them nothing. She’s never heard of Baishum Judocus.

If they ask for Edegast instead, she knows they’re friends of Noble Freeman who can be trusted. If characters get into trouble—for example, if they rescue Leafstan and have all the slavehunters in the city on their trail—she can smuggle them out of Marg by hiding them in a cartload of corpses, then guiding them safely through the swamp. Noble Freeman’s “darkways guides” know concealed routes to the mortuary from everywhere in the city except the Devrith Ward and the Freehold Palace.

ACT II: ON THE TRAIL

During their initial investigations, the characters learn from the sailor Baltyr or the slave trader Loceth Aloudain that the barbarian Leafstan was sold to a high-end dealer in “exotics” named Nafryr. The PCs may also believe that Leafstan is dead—but, if they make an effort to verify the tale at the Slave Mortuary, Sister Uthlita informs them that she hasn’t seen his corpse, which ought to point the party back to Nafryr.

Finding Nafryr: Nafryr is a well-known figure in Marg. She is a wealthy “noblewoman” of Atlantean descent who runs her business from her home, a palatial courtyard-house a few blocks from the slave market. Her agents frequent the slave market, looking for quality wares. Anyone at the Slave Market can direct the PCs to Nafryr’s home (and so can Noble Freeman, or most Margish citizens).

What’s Next: Which scene you present next depends on whether the PCs interacted with Baltyr. If the characters threatened Baltyr or used force against him and did not prevent him from leaving the Cracked Keel afterward, Nafryr sends a contingent of guards guided by Baltyr to intercept the party. Run “Nafryr’s Bruisers” next.

Otherwise, go to “Nafryr’s Courtyard” next. (If the PCs defeat Nafryr’s Bruisers and continue on their way, they may actually run through both encounters.)

NAFRYR’S BRUISERS

If Baltyr alerts Nafryr that the characters are coming, she arranges a special ambush for them. She has no reason to expect they’ll be any politer to her than they were to Baltyr, so she sends her guards to intercept the characters before they reach her home, with Baltyr in tow to identify the targets.

Spotting Baltyr: Make a Dexterity/Stealth check for Baltyr (+1) and compare the result to the characters’ passive Perception scores to determine whether they spot him before he points them out to Nafryr’s minions. PCs whose passive Perception score is beaten by Baltyr’s Stealth result are surprised when the attack comes. Everyone else sees the slave warriors maneuvering into position to attack from all sides.

Creatures (2,250 XP): Baltyr hides at the edge of the fight and takes one or two shots with his crossbow if he can do so safely, then disappears into the crowd. Use the street map provided for “The Ambush” in Act III, or sketch a similar one of your own.

- 1 veteran
- 4 thugs
- 1 bandit (Baltyr)

If characters throw around explosive spells or cause collateral damage, a standard patrol shows up moments after the fight to investigate the ruckus. If Baltyr is still alive, he steps from the crowd and vouches that the characters only defended themselves against a surprise attack, which satisfies the patrol. Baltyr then tries to extort 10 gp from the characters in exchange for information about why they were attacked (“We must have been overheard at the Cracked Keel, and Nafryr sent these killers after you”).

Nafryr’s slaves are wearing or carrying nothing that connects them to her. If defeated and questioned, they admit that their mistress sent them to deal with the PCs after Baltyr came and warned Nafryr that the PCs were on their way.

NAFRYR’S COURTYARD

The house of the slave-dealer Nafryr stands in one of Marg’s better neighborhoods. High walls and a sturdy gate protect an inner courtyard with fine furnishings and colorful canopies. Several house-slaves cater to an elegant Atlantean woman who reclines on a divan, dictating to a scribe. Several guards keep watch nearby.

Nafryr’s trade is built on slaves with rare skills or with special qualities that lift them above the run-of-the-mill. She seldom sells in the common market; her “goods” fetch higher prices when offered direct to buyers with specific needs. These special qualities can be anything: youth, gender, beauty, region of origin, or rare talents such as an angelic singing voice, fluency in exotic languages, or knowledge of magic. She is protected at all times by a bodyguard comprised of 1 gladiator and 4 guards, who will gladly die to ensure that her will is carried out.

Nafryr is forthcoming to questions about Leafstan, or at least appears so. She opens the conversation with friendly conversation such as “What brings you to Marg?” or “How was your journey?” and offers the party wine (but see Treachery, below).

“I was invited by the slavers to bid on this “prince” in a private auction, where I bought him for eight Margish krakens. That’s eight times the price of a healthy laborer, but I was sure I could double the investment by training him as a lady’s consort or as a noble’s bodyguard.

“Unfortunately, some of these barbarians are intractable. Such was the case with this one; he strangled his trainer. I had to have his throat cut as a demonstration to my other property of the price of defiance. It was a dreadful loss of cash and a waste of valuable flesh, but it’s better this way in the long run.

“Simply put, you’re too late. His body was dumped in the swamp, and I doubt any trace of it remains. There’s nothing more I can tell you of the creature.”

Leafstan did kill one of Nafryr’s trainers, but she’s lying about having his throat cut. The execution was staged for the other slaves; Leafstan was drugged so he would pass out as a trick knife was dragged across

his throat, spouting fake blood. After his “corpse” was carted away, he was sold for 4 krakens to a man named Xauxo of Ren Sharr, who manages gladiators.

If characters ask whether they detect any signs that Nafryr is lying, let them make Wisdom/Insight checks (DC 14). Those who succeed are certain she’s a skillful liar but can’t pin down any specific lie in her story. Those who succeed by 5 or more suspect that Leafstan is still alive.

The Truth: If characters are rude, arrogant, or accusatory toward Nafryr, she dismisses them without another thought. The slave who ushers them out of Nafryr’s presence whispers to one character, “seek Xauxo of Ren Sharr,” then slips away.

If characters are respectful toward Nafryr, then they’re greeted by one of her guards when they exit her house.

The guard bends down on one knee and bows deeply to you, saying, “My mistress bids me deliver this.” In his right hand, he extends a scroll. Hastily written on it is this message:

“Although you are strangers here, you respect our ways, so we reciprocate in kind. The man you seek may yet live (monetary losses must be minimized). If so, Xauxo of Ren Sharr will know. You understand why I could not tell you this in the presence of my servants.”

The note is unsigned.

Anyone in Marg can give directions to the compound of Xauxo of Ren Sharr.

Treachery: If Nafryr was warned by Baltyr, or if any characters appear valuable (Strength 18 or better, Charisma 15 or higher, unusual race, etc.), Nafryr decides to add the PCs to her stock of slaves. During the conversation, the Atlantean asks the characters if they would like wine. Two slaves step forward, one with a pitcher of wine and one with a tray of goblets. All the goblets are identical. Nafryr takes a goblet from the same tray (last if the characters don’t hesitate, or first if no one else is willing). The slave fills all the goblets from the same pitcher.

Neither the wine nor the goblet rims are poisoned, but the stems of all the goblets are lightly treated with a contact poison. Nafryr is wearing elegant, elbow-length gloves that match her gown, so she never touches the poison and is unaffected. Characters who pick up a goblet with bare hands must make successful Constitution saves (DC 13) or fall unconscious; they wake up 1d6 hours later, or when they take damage. (This is a good time for the GM to roll the saving throws secretly, or to ask the players to roll 1d20 each without telling them why, to keep players guessing about what’s happening.) The character who failed with the lowest saving throw result falls unconscious 60 seconds after picking up the goblet, and everyone else who failed the saving throw drops a round later.



Creatures (4,200 XP): When Nafryr is threatened or when the poison begins to take effect, Nafryr's guards attack to subdue the PCs. If Nafryr is not attacked and nobody is affected by the poison, the guards do not attack (they are uncertain what to do, and let the moment pass).

- 1 gladiator
- 4 guards
- 1 spy (Nafryr, armed with two daggers)

If characters lose this fight, they awaken stripped and chained together in a holding cell beneath Nafryr's estate. How they get out is up to them and the GM. If characters win this fight, Nafryr gives them the information they seek and admits she staged Leafstan's "death."

Treasure (1,000 XP): Nafryr keeps a locked wooden coffer nearby, since she conducts business from her courtyard. If the PCs get a chance to loot the place, they find 160 Margish krakens (1,600 gp) in the coffer, along with 8 small rubies worth 50 gp each.

Development: There are no repercussions for killing her slaves, but Nafryr is another matter. If she is killed, the characters become wanted criminals in Marg. Anytime they move through Marg openly (without one of Noble Freeman's darkways guides), they must make a group Dexterity/Stealth check (DC 10). If at least half the character pass, they avoid contact with soldiers looking for them. If the group check fails, the party runs into a patrol with orders to take them, alive or dead. Roll d6: on 1–4, it's a standard patrol; on 5–6, it's a tough patrol.

XAU XO OF REN SHARR

Slave pit fighting is popular in Marg. Fights to the death aren't common; trained fighters are too valuable to throw away callously. Most bouts are fought until one fighter can't continue. A skilled fighting slave can survive many bouts and gain fame, if not fortune. Slaves who are useless, untrainable, or rebellious can provide a few minutes of entertainment as they die or they learn the value of obedience while being beaten into pulp.

Xauro of Ren Sharr specializes in keeping the pits filled with fighters and victims. He runs a training facility on the east side of the city that houses eight slave gladiators and twenty more fighters in training. Two guards stand watch at his compound gate, and turn away strangers. To get an audience with Xauro, either one character must make a successful Charisma/Persuasion check (DC 15, one attempt only) or the guard at the gate must be paid 2d6 sp. Once inside, characters are escorted to a well-appointed room where Xauro is watching young warriors go through their training routine.

Xauro is a man of contrasts. He buys and sells humans who he regularly consigns to a painful, bloody death for his own profit, and he harbors no illusions or self-deception about the evil that he perpetuates. But he's also an educated, philosophical man with some empathy for the characters' mission. He admits readily to buying Leafstan from Nafryr.

"A slave who overpowers and kills a trainer with his bare hands has the makings of a great pit fighter. This Leafstan of yours was difficult and contentious, but I was certain I'd made a smart purchase.

"But five days ago, I described my new trainee to another owner, who suddenly became very interested. He dropped by to watch the man training, and afterward offered me an astounding sum for the slave. I might have earned more from wagers over the lifetime of this Leafstan, but you never know. Even the best of us have off nights, and all it takes is one unlucky slice to end a fighter's career. Yesterday, I took the money and they took the man.

"I know your next question: who was the buyer? Normally, I wouldn't reveal that, but this man is a nasty competitor and, frankly, he . . . said things, as your man was being taken away. They seemed trivial in the moment, but they weigh on me. I suspect your Leafstan is headed for the Qurothaq catacombs. If my gut is correct, his only hope is for you to get him out of Marg instantly.

"The buyer was Tuhawi Dasaab. Whatever you might think of men like me, he's worse. If you have any friends in this city, or favors to call in, now is the time. Once your friend descends into that pit, it would be better for everyone if he never emerges again. It will be too late for him in every imaginable sense of those words."

If characters ask Xauro about the Qurothaq catacombs, he relates the following.

"The Qurothaq clan specializes in providing slaves with unique qualifications. Sometimes, that means attributes not countenanced by nature—attributes that can be achieved only through the cruelest types of psychic conditioning, or by cutting and rearranging the flesh, or by abhorrent magic, attributes that make a human into the perfect offering to some inhuman entity. Whatever darkness the mind can imagine, the Qurothaqs can tailor from once-human flesh."

Xauro will continue talking to the characters, answer their questions about his business and about Marg, even give them a tour of his gladiator training facility if they'd like one, but he reminds them that time is running out for their friend. He can't offer them any more aid; Dasaab is too powerful for a man like Xauro to cross openly.

ACT III: SMOKE AND SORROW

From the time characters learn that Leafstan is on his way to the Qurothaq catacombs, they have 24 hours to rescue him. After 24 hours, Leafstan disappears into the catacombs and becomes so severely damaged that nothing short of a wish will return him to normalcy and sanity.

Qurothaq Catacombs: No one will talk to the characters about the Qurothaq Catacombs. As soon as the subject is raised, people shake their heads, say “I don’t know anything about that” or “that’s none of my business,” and then either hurry away or slam the door in the characters’ faces. Only Noble Freeman will discuss the place. He explains that many people in Marg don’t even believe it exists; “you’ll wind up in Qurothaq” is something to threaten naughty children with. Most of those who do believe don’t know where it is. He suspects the rough location but has no idea how to get inside, and he’s happy not knowing. He urges the characters to forget about rescuing Leafstan from the catacombs and concentrate on preventing him from getting that far.

Tuhawi Dasaab: Characters can get information about Tuhawi Dasaab in the slave market with a successful Charisma/Persuasion check (DC 10); anywhere else in town, the DC is 15. They can get the information automatically from Noble Freeman or Sister Uthlita. No matter who they talk to, they get the clear impression that people don’t like talking about him. Even in complete privacy, people lower their voices and glance over their shoulders while speaking Dasaab’s name.

Dasaab is an elf of a dissolute, degenerate bloodline. He came to Marg decades ago with fabulous wealth that he used to start a successful stable of pit fighters.

- He only enters fighters into battles to the death, and only for very high stakes.
- His fighters are feared for their savagery.
- It’s rumored that he engages in dark rituals and that his fighters gain some of their inhuman ferocity by making sacrifices to Set.

AVOIDING CERTAIN DEATH

This act may lead characters to two locations that they can’t defeat: the estate of Tuhawi Dasaab and the Qurothaq catacombs. Despite the obvious clues that these locations should be avoided, some players might insist on bulldozing ahead with a plan that can only get their characters enslaved, killed, or worse. If the players need encouragement to reconsider tactics, drop a tough patrol or riot squad in the characters’ path to shoo them away from certain doom. Alternatively, one of Noble Freeman’s urchin guides could appear at an opportune moment with a message calling the characters back to the astrology shop or providing them with a missing clue (from Freeman’s own investigation) to put them on the right path.

- His home and training facility are in a fortified compound adjoining the Devrith ward. Thieves occasionally try to break in; their bodies are nailed to the gates as a warning to others. It’s commonly whispered that the thieves’ guild forbids its members from making further attempts.

DASAAB’S DOOR

When the characters go to Tuhawi Dasaab’s compound, it should be obvious to them that a covert incursion is a daunting prospect.

This fortress-like compound is surrounded by windowless walls twenty feet high. A single reinforced wooden door stands in the outer wall. Above the door, the rotting body of a thief with snakes crawling through its ribcage is nailed to the wall. Passers-by shy away from the building and avoid looking at it, although a crazed beggar shouts and shakes his fist at the place from a short distance away.

If the characters knock at the gate, the corpse lifts its head and begs them to leave for their own sakes, and they realize that the thief is somehow still alive! A madness save is certainly called for here (DC 13 for unwholesome magic).

Add whatever other details are necessary to make players understand that any attempt to break in is certain to cost them their lives (or worse), even if that means the grounds are patrolled by cyclopes while stone golems stand guard.

The Beggar: Only a few dozen paces from Dasaab’s compound stands Yoodir, a crazed follower of Asura. When the characters take note of him, read:

The beggar is a wild-eyed, emaciated man covered with scars. He continually harangues the compound, although people passing by pay him no heed. “I have seen your monstrous handiwork, and eternal punishment shall be your reward!” he shouts. “The judgment of Asura awaits you! I have seen those cast into Qurothaq, and they scream to me for vengeance! Your path is the path of downfall! Your ways are the ways of Set! The tormenter will fall and be trampled beneath the feet of the tormented! I have seen your blood dripping from a prince’s blade!

Yoodir is as unhinged as he appears. If characters don’t approach him, he begins to harangue them directly.

“Only minutes ago, the slaves of Dasaab dragged another to unimaginable doom! Will slayers such as yourselves stand by while brave men are wracked and slaughtered to feed the serpent?”

If characters show any interest in what he has to say, Yoodir grows momentarily calmer and more rational.

"The doomed one? A young barbarian from the northern forests, fighting every step of the way. The hooded ones dragged him forth not ten minutes past. They are taking him to Qurothaq to ruin him, but if you hurry, you can stop them. Deny the Great Serpent its prize! Make IT hunger! Leave IT to starve and howl in darkness! This way, hurry, hurry!" The madman clutches at your arms and tugs at you to follow him, then races a few paces away, doubles back, and races away again, like a dog trying to lead its master.

If characters follow, Yoodir leads them on a frantic chase through narrow streets before stopping suddenly at the point where a dark alley opens up onto one of the city's larger thoroughfares.

THE AMBUSH

This is the characters' best and only chance to rescue Leafstan before he disappears into the hellish catacombs of Qurothaq.

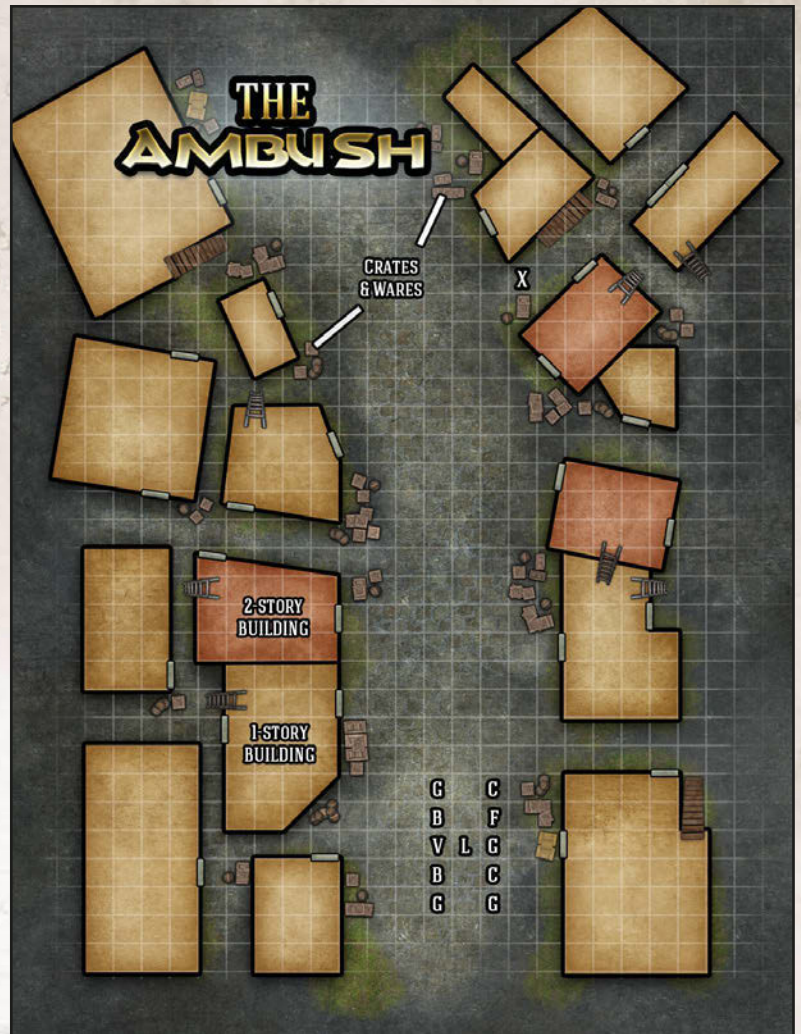
The main street is 30 feet wide, lined with one- and two-story buildings with flat roofs surrounded by low parapets. Narrow alleys separate the buildings and connect to the street at all angles. It's a perfect spot for an ambush.

You see armed warriors and three hooded figures escorting a manacled and bedraggled but defiant-looking Leafstan up the street toward your position. A block behind this procession, an enclosed sedan chair carried by four slaves follows; you can't tell whether the two groups are connected. Normal citizens still in the street are grabbing their wares and scurrying to get out of the way.

Characters have about half a minute before Leafstan and his guards reach their position. That's enough time for characters to move into positions on both sides of the street, to move out in front of or behind Dasaab's men, or to get inside or even atop nearby buildings via outside stairs. They won't be noticed if they move with the crowd. Thirty seconds is not enough time to make detailed plans; push the players to think and act quickly.

The crates and clutter marked on the map consist of typical trade goods, food storage, wares for sale, and other bric-a-brac. These squares count as difficult terrain and provide cover. Ladders are difficult terrain, too, but characters fighting from the rooftops have cover from enemies on the street below.

Creatures (5,500 XP): The escort includes the NPCs listed below. They're moving in two tight columns, as shown on the map. Note that the letters on the map indicate the escort's arrangement but not necessarily its location; the procession is moving up the street, and characters can let it advance as far as they want before attacking. The hooded figures (cultists and the cult fanatic) are representatives of the Qurothaqs; they are indistinguishable from one another.



- 1 Veteran
- 1 cult Fanatic
- 2 Cultists
- 2 Berserkers
- 1 Guard per PC
- Leafstan (ally)

Leafstan quickly recognizes the PCs as rescuers and turns against his captors. He fights as a berserker, using his manacles as a flail until something better becomes available. He can't dash while shackled, but his shackles can be cut with a slashing weapon and a successful Strength check (DC 15).

Tuhawi Dasaab (2,300 XP): Dasaab rides in the sedan chair about 50 yards behind Leafstan's escorts. His four slaves (commoners) set down the chair and retreat as soon as fighting breaks out. The slaver casts *fly* and *mage armor* before joining the battle, and reaches the fight around Leafstan at the beginning of the 7th round. Time his arrival for maximum drama, not necessarily for maximum danger to the characters.

- Tuhawi Dasaab (mage)

If characters stick around to fight Dasaab, they run a high risk of being defeated. If no one thinks to grab Leafstan and dash away into the alleys, Yoodir suggests this (from the safety of the shadows).

Treasure (1,000 XP): Dasaab carries a moneypouch with 60 gp. He also wears a fine gold ring and a copper ring set with emeralds, each worth 250 gp.

THE ESCAPE

With Leafstan in their possession, the characters have four good options: they can head for Noble Freeman's shop, for the Slave Mortuary, or for one of the two safehouses IF they got directions from Freeman. No other course leads to safety. If they flee into the swamp, they'll be overcome by monsters, lizard folk, and ghouls. If they head for the river and steal a boat, they'll be chased by every slave ship at the docks. A generous GM can allow characters a slim chance to fight their way through if they choose one of these options, but if more than a few escape alive, it's only through an excess of pity.

Even if the characters kill Tuhawi Dasaab, plenty of witnesses interpret the battle as another outrage by followers of Asura. Before long, characters see plenty of evidence that the whole city is mobilized against them. To reach one of the safe havens, they must make group Dexterity/Stealth checks (DC 10) to avoid the slavehunter patrols prowling the streets.

- Freeman's shop is closest (3 checks to reach safety).
- Either safehouse requires 4 checks to reach safety.
- The mortuary can be reached after 5 checks.

If a group skill check succeeds (half or more of the characters, including Leafstan, make successful Dexterity/Stealth checks), then the characters see a group of slavehunters but aren't noticed by them. They can avoid that group by sitting tight while it passes or by backtracking and taking a different street, or they

can choose to attack. If the group skill check fails, the characters are spotted and attacked immediately. Other tactics may work, such as an effort to disguise the party as a Margish patrol (a group Charisma/Deception check), taking to the rooftops (a group Strength/Athletics check), or the use of appropriate magic.

The slavehunter groups are only easy or medium encounters, but the characters cannot rest until they reach safety. If they try to rest anytime after the fight against Dasaab's men, they're discovered and attacked by slavehunters before they complete the rest.

For each group of slavehunters, select one of the following randomly (or pick one you like). Include Leafstan when counting characters.

- 1) 2 guards per character (1,250 XP)
- 2) 1 berserker and 3 guards (1,050 XP)
- 3) 2 berserkers (675 XP)
- 4) 1 bandit captain, plus 1 bandit per character (1,150 XP)
- 5) 6 thugs (1,200 XP)
- 6) 1 veteran and 3 thugs (2,000 XP)

FINAL SAFETY

Once characters reach a safe haven, the adventure is essentially over. From a safehouse or from Noble Freeman's shop, they are led by a darkways guide to Sister Uthlita's mortuary. From the mortuary, they are smuggled into the harbor of Asura, a concealed riverside cavern where eventually they can board a boat that will carry them downriver past Marg and along the coast to Danagra or Garadu. From either of those towns, the party can hire a ship to take them back to Leafstan's people.

Evarr Hallborn is elated to see his son alive and safe. If Tuhawi Dasaab was killed, Hallborn might let the matter rest there. If Dasaab still lives, the characters could be enlisted by Hallborn for another expedition into Marg; this time, for revenge!

THE WATCHERS OF MENG

by Robert J. Schwalb



An adventure for characters of levels 5-8



THE WATCHERS OF MENG

An adventure for characters of levels 5-8

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Few dare to brave the dangers posed by the Jungle of Zaal. It is a tangled place crowded with overgrowth, dangerous wildlife, and carnivorous plants. Few that enter are ever seen again and the ones who do survive its many perils emerge with fevers and madness, their unhinged accounts speaking of strange ruins infested with stranger inhabitants, old magic, and terrifying monsters. As deadly as this place can be, it offers up fantastic treasures, bits of strange magic whose purpose and function puzzle the most scholarly of wizards. Gold coins minted with strange visages on the faces and bizarre weapons forged for creatures of inhuman anatomy hint at the weird culture that once ruled here.

Oola, Mistress of the Whip, knows full well how dangerous Zaal can be and under any other circumstance she would avoid it. Racking up gambling debts greater than she can pay, she now has no choice. Her debtors took her lover, Rien, and promised to send her back to her one piece at a time until she makes good on what she owes. After receiving a severed finger as a warning that they were serious, Oola decided to move her supply of slaves to a buyer in Cheir, a city beyond the jungle to the west from Ansumo. With no time to spare if she would make the transaction and return to her home city, she must lead the expedition through the tangled expanse. Whether she and her cargo make it Cheir is up to the player characters.

Encounter difficulty: *The Watchers of Meng* is intended for 5th- to 8th-level characters, but can be modified by adjusting the number of creatures that appear in each encounter. Opportunities exist for the characters to circumvent or flee from some of the more dangerous encounters, such as the potential climactic encounter with the titular Watchers.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The player characters may become involved in the adventure in any way you like, but if you need some suggestions, consider the following adventure hooks.

Eye of Meng: The characters learn a priceless jewel rests inside a pyramid at the center of the jungle. The characters might encounter Oola along the way or they might find her as a prisoner in the Slave Pen once the party arrives.

Hired Swords: The player characters' reputation finds them approached by Oola to escort her and her cargo through the jungles. She can offer the characters each 100 gp up front, another 100 gp when they reach Cheir, and 200 gp more upon returning to Ansumo.

Hunting Oola: The crime lord holding Rien prisoner, a vile man named Kurtubal, believes Oola is

trying to slip town. He hires the characters to track her down in the jungles and bring her back. He'll pay 1,000 gp if the characters bring her back alive or half that much if they bring back her corpse, as he would rather kill her himself.

To use this hook, you'll need to make a few modifications to how the adventure starts. You can start with the characters finding Oola and confronting her, in which case she may try to win the characters to her cause. Or, you can have the characters follow her expedition, catching up with her shortly after her force is attacked and captured by the Meng degenerates just outside the ruins of Meng.

Lost: The characters travel through the jungle for reasons of their own—lured by promises of treasure or pursuing an objective related to a different adventure. The group becomes lost and stumbles into Oola's party after they've been attacked by a band of degenerates. The best chance for both groups to survive is to work together.

OOLA, MISTRESS OF THE WHIP

Orphaned at a young age and raised in Ansumo by herself, Oola (as a **gladiator**) clawed her way out from the gutter to make a name for herself. She owes her success to her willingness to do whatever it takes to survive, whether that means stealing, murdering, or trading in slaves. By twenty, she amassed a small fortune running a brothel, and five years later she had become the most prominent and powerful slaver in town, having won a reputation for bloodthirstiness after castrating her rival and leaving him to bleed out on the streets in front of his home. Always a risk-taker, Oola has a weakness for gambling and though she wins as often as she loses, a string of bad hands and unwise bets landed her in her current troubles.

Oola's wealth is tied up in her slaves and she lacks the coin to cover her debts. The crime lord refused her offer to take the flesh she has for sale, demanding payment, 5,000 gp, in coin or gemstones. While Oola worked to raise the funds, the crime lord took her lover—a former prostitute named Rien—and has been holding her prisoner. Oola may have a hard

MORAL QUALMS

If you think the players will be uncomfortable helping a slaver deliver her slaves, you can replace this concept entirely by just having the players help Oola deliver 5,000 gp of rare gems to Cheir instead. Remove all mention of slaves and instead have the characters, with Oola, come across the ruins. The degenerates' prisoners are instead locals who have fallen into their hands.

heart, but Rien means enough to her that she will go to incredible lengths to free the young woman from the crime lord's clutches.

The Mistress of the Whip, as she's known in Ansumo, is tall, muscled, with fine features marred by a mass of scar tissue on her cheek and neck. She keeps her black hair short and out her bright blue eyes. She has enemies everywhere, so she never goes about without armor or weapons. She's a skilled warrior and she is not above using violence to settle disputes.

Oola keeps the characters at arm's length, speaking to them only to give them orders. She might warm to other women, especially if they reveal they come from difficult backgrounds or have suffered hardships at the hands of men in power, but she mocks anyone who shows weakness or cowardice.

The Expedition: Whether or not the player characters work for Oola, the Mistress of the Whip has the company of 6 **guards** who watch over the 24 slaves (as **commoners** with no weapons) chained together in a line. The guards work for pay. If Oola dies, the guards quit and attempt to escape the jungle. The slaves consist of human men and

women, of which nearly all are young adults that hail from small settlements across the peninsula. Develop these secondary characters as needed.

THE JUNGLE OF ZAAL

West of the Quosa River where it passes through the Quosa Vale, the Jungle of Zaal is a tangle that covers an area of hilly terrain about 100 miles by 50 miles. Thin-trunked trees stand side-by-side, their leaves forming a thick canopy that dims sunlight to shadows on the jungle floor. Narrow paths weave through the trees, sometimes blocked by brambles and overgrowth, others clear, trampled by warthogs and other woodland animals that live here. Monkeys, exotic birds, countless varieties of insects fill the air with a raucous noise.

The jungle has not fully reclaimed the land from the lost civilizations that once thrived here. Statues, bound in vines, stand as they did a thousand years ago. Cracked paver stones, the foundations of old, stone buildings, and the occasional arch carved to depict impossible and strange creatures can be found throughout Zaal. Although the people who raised these monuments are long gone, they hint at an advanced culture of exceptional skill and learning.

EXPLORING ZAAL

Oola's route through the jungle winds for nearly 60 miles before it emerges from the jungle a few miles north of Cheir. Though she drives a fast pace, her party of chained slaves and guards can only manage a maximum of 10 miles each day. If the PCs are with Oola's group, they can speed the journey by making a Wisdom/Survival check each day (DC 15) to cover more ground and find shortcuts that reduces the remaining distance by 5 additional miles. PCs tracking Oola have an easy time of it, as the slaves and guards leave a noticeable trail for those that know where to look.

Once within the jungle, the thick jungle growth limits clear sight to 30 feet. Beyond 30 feet but within 60 feet, characters treat the terrain as lightly obscured. Beyond 60 feet, characters treat the terrain as heavily obscured.

PERILS

While traveling through the jungle, the characters are at risk of encountering some of the more dangerous wildlife. Once every four hours the characters travel, roll a d20. On an 18 or higher, the characters run into something potentially dangerous. Use the Jungle of Zaal Encounters table to determine what the characters encounter.



Jungle of Zaal Encounters

d6 + d8 Encounter

2	1 guardian naga protecting a ruined temple.
3	1 very territorial abominable sloth*.
4	1d3 serpentman Nessk champions* with 1d6 serpentman temple guards*, hunting for slaves and trophies.
5	2d6 giant wasps
6	4d10 baboons
7	The head of an enormous statue broken and lying on its side. Vines cover all of it but its open mouth.
8	1 giant ape. The ape does not attack female members of the party and may fight to protect them from harm.
9	1d6 + 6 giant spiders
10	1d3 giant vipers*
11	3d6 beastman hunters* with 1d4 trained apes. Kurtubal the crime lord (see "Hunting Oola") hired these savages to bring Oola back. The beastmen are hostile and regard the characters as a threat, even if the characters mention they work for Kurtubal as well.
12	1d3 wereboars
13	1 green hag with 1d2 minotaurs. The green hag has a lair, hidden deep in the jungle. She's neutral to the characters. If they can make her friendly, which happens if the characters give her a gift of 200 gp or more, she reveals that she spotted Oola's party and can direct them there.
14	1d4 shambling mounds

*These foes appear in the *PRIMEVAL THULE Campaign Setting*

ENCOUNTERS

In addition to the random encounters, travelers may also encounter any of the following. You can introduce these encounters at any time, in any order. You can also skip one or all of them.

Degenerates (2,400 XP): At some point during the characters' journey through the jungle, a band of Meng degenerates attack. If the characters travel without Oola, the degenerates have already attacked her party and taken her slaves prisoner. This band of 6 degenerates (new monster, see appendix) chased Oola when she and her guards ran and have just captured her. If the characters rescue her, she tells the characters her situation and implores them to help recover her merchandise from the monsters, offering a reward as described under "Hired Swords."

If the characters travel with Oola, a large force of 15 degenerates ambushes them in the forest. Each round on initiative count 1, reduce the number of degenerates and slaves by 1d4. The

degenerates carry off the slaves. In addition, on initiative count 10, roll a d6. On an odd number, one of Oola's guards dies. On an even number, 1d3 degenerates die instead. The degenerates break off the attack once the number of slaves drops to 0. If Oola survives the fight, she urges the characters to help her recover her goods.

Stone Heads: About a mile outside of Meng, the characters spot several enormous stone heads rising from the jungle floor. Each head, 10 feet wide and 15 feet tall, depicts a monstrous visage with large tusks jutting up from its jaw, a single horn extending out from the center of its forehead over a large eye. Characters benefiting from a *detect magic* spell that inspect the heads see they emit a faint aura of transmutation magic. An inanimate head has AC 17 and 27 hp with a damage threshold of 10.

Mad Refugee: At some point after the degenerates attack Oola's party, the characters encounter a slave who escaped the degenerates' clutches. The slave, who is named Gungus, is a middle-aged man with a slave brand burned into his cheek. He sports numerous wounds all over his naked body. He's terrified and makes no sense unless calmed, which can be achieved with a successful Charisma/Persuasion check (DC 15). When he settles down, he can tell the characters what happened to him and his fellow slaves, who owns them, where they were headed, and the fact that the degenerates are sacrificing their prisoners to a shadowy demon that haunts the place and then devour the corpse. The slave tells the characters where the other prisoners are being held, but will not accompany them unless forced or convinced with a successful Charisma/Intimidation check (DC 20). If instructed or guided by the slave, the characters can reach the ruins of Meng in 1d4 hours, during which time they have no chance of facing a random encounter.

THE RUINS OF MENG

Eons ago, interdimensional travelers came to these lands to establish a foothold against their ancient foes, the serpent people, founding a great city. From it, they waged war against their hated enemy, using strange technology and weird magic. While formidable, they ultimately failed and their grand city was reduced to the ruins that still cover the 1-square-mile clearing at the center of the jungle. Although the heights of their civilization lay far in the past, their descendants remain, and hunt



You emerge from the jungle into a clearing, about a mile across, littered with broken buildings, odd statues, and a pyramid standing at the center. All along the edges of the place, you see enormous stone heads, each 10 feet wide and 15 feet tall, depicting monstrous visages. The heads stand about 1,000 feet apart and form a ring along the clearing's perimeter. Between the stone heads, you see several bloody human heads mounted on black wooden poles driven into the ground in clusters, as if to warn off trespassers.

The jungle sounds have grown quiet around you, letting you hear faint sobs and piercing shrieks coming from somewhere in the ruins before you.

The ruins spread across the clearing from the forest edge. Characters are safe as long as they remain in the jungle; the degenerates are preoccupied with feeding on the living. Entering the ruins, however, risks the characters attracted attention from the warped inhabitants. Every 10 minutes or so the characters spend in the vicinity, roll a d6. On an odd number, something finds them. Roll or choose an encounter from the following table.

Ruins of Meng Encounters

d6	Encounter
1	1 degenerate (see appendix) picking through the rubble for rats.
2	1d6 swarms of rats come boiling out from a collapsed building.
3	1d6 degenerates (see appendix) heading to or coming from the jungle.
4	1d4 phase spiders hunting for things to kill.
5	1 opportunistic wyvern swooping down to snatch prey.
6	2d6 degenerates (see appendix) swarming to tear apart the intruders.

Exploring Ruined Buildings: The adventure assumes the ruins surrounding the pyramid serve as lairs for the degenerates, rats, and other things. Most, if not all, contain broken pottery, bones, scraps of rotting flesh, and other detritus. Each location the characters explore has a 10% chance to house 1d6 – 2 degenerates (minimum 0). You can trade out these creatures with others of your choosing.

Characters searching the ruins and getting a success on an Intelligence/Investigation check (DC 15) find 3d6 gp worth of coins in various denominations. Once the characters find six such stashes, they find no more coins in the ruins.

A. WATCHERS

The stone heads standing at the clearing's edge are similar to the stone heads the characters may have encountered en route as described above and they have the same statistics. The heads remain inanimate unless the player characters take the Eye of Meng from within the pyramid (see location C), at which point the magic infusing the heads causes them to animate to become Watchers of Meng (see the end of the adventure for statistics). These statues have been buried in the ground so that only their heads are visible. It takes 1 minute for a Watcher to pull itself free, at which point, it moves toward the creature holding the Eye and attacks it.

B. THE SLAVE PEN

A large wooden pen at the base of the pyramid (see below) holds whomever the degenerates capture long enough for them to sacrifice and eat their prisoners. The ground inside the pen is a stew of mud and effluvia sprinkled with the bones of other prisoners that succumbed to disease or their injuries before they could be killed. If the degenerates attacked and made off with any members of Oola's party, they are here, reduced by as much as half their numbers.

Each time a creature complete a long rest in the pen, it must get a success on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become infected with whatever vile plague you like.

Ropes secure the gate to the pen and can be cut free or untied after about a minute spent working with them.

Creatures (2,400 XP): At any time, 1d6 + 3 degenerates loiter around the pen, taunting the inhabitants. From time to time they reach in and drag out one of the prisoners for a bit of sport, which culminates in the freaks tearing their victim apart and feeding on the remains.

- 1d6 + 3 degenerates

The degenerates are easy to surprise, distracted as they are by their prisoners. Characters can make Dexterity/Stealth rolls to sneak up on them with tactical advantage. However, during combat, roll a d6 each round on initiative count 0. On a 6, another degenerate joins the fight.

Prisoners: Any prisoners freed during the combat flee by the safest means available. At least one should, foolishly, climb up the side of the pyramid

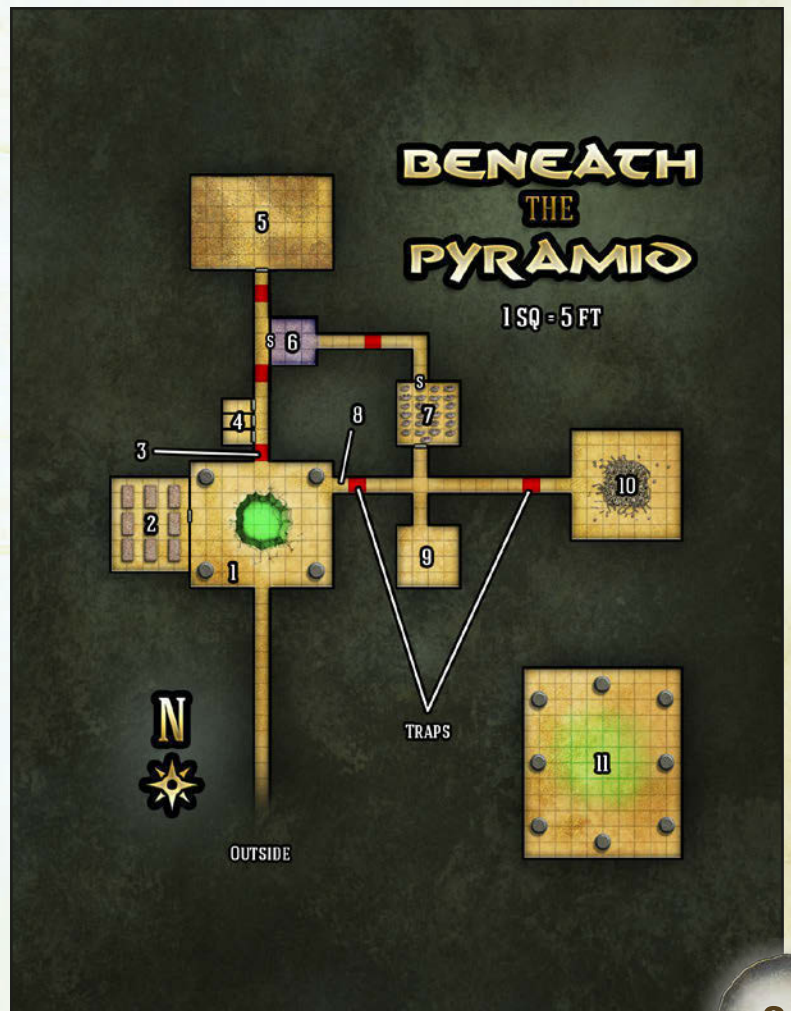
and duck into the opening. If Oola is with the characters, she sees this and decides that she must fetch this slave. After all, she's already lost several slaves so far and she cannot afford to lose any more.

More Foes: Once all the degenerates here are slain, a new batch of 1d6 + 3 arrive 1d20 minutes later to eat the corpses of their fellows and take their place.

Finally, if the characters rescue the prisoners and leave the ruins, a group of 3d6 degenerates pick up their trail and give chase. You can use chase rules if the PCs are inclined to evade pursuit, or you say that the creatures catch up to the party at some point in the jungles, foreshadowing the event by describing sounds of hoots and cries from the pursuers.

C. PYRAMID

An enormous stepped pyramid commands the center of the clearing. The pyramid is 200 feet tall and each side at the base is 250 feet long. Including the base, the pyramid has ten steps. Each step increases the height by 20 feet, but reduces the length on each side by 25 feet until the length drops to 50 feet, at the eighth step. The side length of the ninth step is 25 feet and of the tenth step is 5 feet, which serves as a sacrificial altar.



A 10-foot-wide staircase climbs up the center of three of the pyramid's sides until it reaches the top of the eighth step, where it ends. The rest of the pyramid's exterior is decorated with skulls, macabre scenes of ritual sacrifice, fornication with horrid monsters, and other obscene activities. Blood still collects in the cracks and crevices, hinting at the numbers of sacrifices performed here.

An opening appears about halfway up the southern side of the pyramid. This dark cavity leads to a steep ramp that descends to location 1, which is described below.

The altar crowning the pyramid displays deep gouges in the stone, left by the blades used by the priests before they slid into their present state inside the pyramid. The altar radiates a field of vile energy that makes creatures within 10 feet of it feel queasy. Undead within the area regain 1d6 hit points at the end of each of their turns and make attack rolls with advantage.

UNDER THE PYRAMID

A small complex of rooms and passages spreads out underneath the pyramid and can be accessed only via the ramp described above. Unless described otherwise, locations are dark and the floors are smooth and free of debris. Ceilings in passages are just 5 feet high and climb to 10 feet in rooms. While in a passage, a medium-sized character has tactical disadvantage when attacking with a non-light slashing or bludgeoning weapon. Finally, hieroglyphics cover the walls and ceilings, depicting scenes of colorful humanoids battling serpentpeople, what look to be flying ships, stars, monsters, and more. While the images prove confusing and complex, characters studying them deduce that they tell the story of the pyramids' builders as described under the Ruins of Meng, above.

The following locations correspond to those shown on the Under the Pyramid map.

I. PIT CHAMBER

The shaft descends until it ends in a large square chamber with four wide pillars supporting the ceiling overhead. A deep pit from which soft green light emanates stands at the room's center. A horrific odor of rotting meat wafts up from the hole.

The pit descends 100 feet to room 11. The wall is cracked and features some handholds, requiring a successful Strength/Athletics check (DC 15) to climb without ropes or other climbing equipment.

2. TOMBS OF THE PRIESTS

Nine upright sarcophagi fill this room, standing in three rows of three. Each lid bears the likeness of its occupant, appearing almost human, but weirdly distorted, with too long limbs, malformed heads, or weird additions such as extra eyes, mouths, tentacles, and digits. Dust hangs in curtains throughout and movement through the area causes the room to fill the air with dust.

The dust in the air restricts vision to just 10 feet, even if the PCs have a light source. The sarcophagi have been sealed shut with lead. It takes about 10 minutes of work to chip away enough lead to open the heavy doors, which itself requires a successful Strength/Athletics check (DC 15).

Creatures (4,200 XP): All but three sarcophagi contain the withered remains of long-dead priests, dressed in rotting robes and porcelain masks. The final three each contain one mummy. You can decide which ones contain the mummies. Releasing one causes the other two to awaken and begin pounding on their doors from within. Roll initiative for the other two mummies. One breaks free on its initiative during the second round and the other breaks free on its initiative during the fourth round. The mummies fight until destroyed.

- 3 mummies

Treasure (750 XP): Each mummy wears a golden signet ring worth 200 gp.

3. NORTH PASSAGE

A narrow tunnel extends north until it ends at a stone door bearing a relief carving of a winged, demonic creature, its mouth filled with twisted fangs.

Two traps protect this passage.

Gas Trap (750 XP): The southern trap triggers when a Small or larger creature steps on a pressure plate. A searching character can find the pressure plate with a successful Intelligence/Investigate check (DC 20) or may automatically trigger it by tapping the floor with a pole or similar object. Once found, a character can use thieves' tools to disarm it with a successful DC 20 Intelligence check.

There's a 10% chance for each creature that moves down this passage to step on the plate. Once triggered, hidden nozzles in the walls release plumes of poisonous gas that spread through the passage and out into room 1. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving

throw or take 2d10 poison damage and become poisoned for 1 minute. At the end of each poisoned creature's turns, it must repeat the saving throw, taking 1d6 extra damage on a failure. Three successful saving throws ends the poisoned condition.

Blade Trap (750 XP): The floor beyond 5 feet from the door to room 5 but within 15 feet of it features twenty finger-sized holes bored through the stone. Dust and dirt have filled these holes, making them hard to spot. Searching characters spot the holes with a successful Intelligence/Investigate check (DC 15), while characters might notice the indentations with a successful Wisdom/Perception check (DC 20). Once found, a character can use thieves' tools to disarm it with a successful DC 20 Intelligence check.

The trap triggers when a Small or larger creature moves to within 5 feet of the door, which causes rusty iron blades to shoot up through the holes to impale anyone standing on that 10 foot section. Creatures on the area must make Dexterity saving throws (DC 15). A creature takes 4d10 piercing damage on a failure, or instead moves to the nearest open space to the trapped area on a success.

Secret Door: The secret door on the east wall can be found by searching characters if they look in the exact spot or get a success on an Intelligence/Investigation check (DC 20). The door opens by putting 5 pounds of pressure or more on its surface.

4. VAULTS

The door opens onto a cramped chamber filled with shelves laden with clay pots.

The three doors on the western wall of the north passage each open into a small vault. There are 50 + 2d20 pots in each vault, and each pot has a lid sealed with black wax. Breaking the seals and lifting the lids reveals the pots contain the preserved and still-wet organs taken from the mummified priests in room 1. They produce a horrific stench, so that any breathing creature within 10 feet of an open pot must make a Constitution saving throw (DC 10). A creature becomes poisoned for 1 minute on a failed save, or becomes immune to the odor until it completes a rest on a success. Extend the duration by 1 minute for each failed saving throw.

Treasure (1,000 XP): One pot, the sixth opened, contains a heap of 1d12 gems, each worth 100 gp. A second pot, the ninth opened, contains a key to room 5.

5. FALSE TREASURE VAULT

The relief-carved door to this room is locked. A character can break it down with a successful DC 25 Strength check or picked with thieves' tools with a successful DC 20 Dexterity check.

Nearly every surface of the chamber beyond the relief-carved door is covered in shining gold coins, jewels, fantastical treasures, and more.

All is not as it seems. All told, there appear to be 10,000 gp on the floor, 666 gems worth 10 gp each, and an assortment of 33 disturbing art objects worth 50 gp each to buyers. The art objects include prosthetic limbs, mechanical objects whose function has been largely forgotten, and paintings of bizarre landscapes. All the objects contained in this room are real for as long as they remain here, but if removed from the chamber, they turn to foul-smelling slime. Characters inspecting the objects using magic, such as the *detect magic* spell, discover an aura of transmutation magic.

Treasure (1,500 XP): While most of the treasure behaves in this way, the magic fails to transform 10% of what's carried out from the room. Thus, a character hauling 500 gp from the room would discover 50 gp survived being liberated from the vault. If the PCs liberate the entire treasure room (and clean it), then 1,000 gp, 660 gp of gems, and three art objects can be obtained.

6. CRYPT OF THE MAKER

A large sarcophagus rests on the floor in the center of this chamber. The walls, ceiling, and floor have been painted to look like a starry night. In the center of the east wall is an opening, around which has been painted roiling flames that continue down the tunnel until it turns to the south.

The sarcophagus holds the remains of the Maker, the leader of those visitors who build Meng. The maker is long dead, but inside the sarcophagus, which requires a successful DC 20 Strength check to open, the characters find the Maker's ghastly remains clutching a *cube of force* in its skeletal hands.

Fiery Trap (750 XP): The tunnel extending east from this room bears a magical trap. An invisible glyph has been painted above the opening to the tunnel and can be spotted only by creatures that can see invisible things or that can perceive magical auras—the glyph emits an aura of evocation. The glyph counts as a 5th-level spell effect for the purpose of ending it with magic.

When a creature enters the passage from either end, the passage fills with fire 1 minute later. The flames burst out from either end in a 10-foot-long cone-shaped area. Creatures in the fire must make Dexterity saving throws (DC 15). A creature takes 6d10 damage on a failed save, or just half the damage on a successful one. Once triggered, the trap automatically resets.

7. TOMB GUARDIANS

Twenty-five withered corpses adorned in rotting leather stand side-by-side in this chamber.

The corpses, while inanimate make moving through this room difficult terrain. Characters searching the room may find the secret door on the north wall with a successful Intelligence/Investigation check (DC 25).

Treasure: The corpses have little of value, the armor rotten and weapons corroded beyond use, but the fifth corpse inspected carries +2 *scimitar* in a scabbard slung on its back. The weapon is made from scrimshawed bone, the carvings depicting nude men and women in great suffering.

8. EAST PASSAGE

The paintings decorating the walls and ceiling of the east passage depict human-like faces that look as though pressed against glass.

Two traps protect this corridor as shown on the map.

Amber Trap (750 XP): The trap at the western end of the passage is an invisible symbol inscribed on the floor that can only be spotted by creatures that can see invisible things or that can perceive magical auras—the glyph emits an aura of abjuration. The symbol counts as a 5th-level spell effect for the purpose of ending it with magic.

Each creature that moves across this area has a 20% chance of stepping onto the symbol and triggering the trap. When this happens, purple mist surrounds the triggering creature, who must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. The mist dissipates with no effect on a successful save, or hardens into an amber-colored shell that covers the creature completely on a failure. A creature encased in the amber is petrified. It takes 1 hour of work using mason's tools (or similar tools or items) to end the condition and free the character.

Once triggered, this trap resets the next day.

Polymorph Trap (750 XP): The trap at the passage's eastern end is an invisible symbol inscribed on the floor that can only be spotted by creatures that can see invisible things or that can perceive magical auras—the glyph emits an aura of transmutation. The symbol counts as a 5th-level spell effect for the purpose of ending it with magic.

Each creature that moves across this area has a 20% chance of stepping onto the symbol and triggering the trap. When this happens, the triggering creature must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or transform into a scorpion for 1 hour. The effect otherwise functions as the *polymorph* spell.

Once triggered, this trap resets the next day.

9. FAMILY CRYPT

Racks cover the room's walls from floor to ceiling. Each rack is 5 feet wide and has four shelves on which rests a linen-wrapped corpse. The room reeks of cardamom and cinnamon.

This room is safe for the characters to rest.

10. SLAVE CRYPT

A lowered portcullis bars access to this gruesome chamber. Through its bars, you can see a mound of bones heaped into a pile that brushes against the ceiling. Claw marks on the walls suggest the people were alive when interred here.

A creature can lift the portcullis with a successful Strength check (DC 20).

Creatures (1,850 XP): A curse binds shreds of the slaves' souls to the bones. Should a creature enter this room, the bones assemble themselves into skeletons that attack the intruders.

- 13 skeletons

II. EYE OF MENG

Below the pyramid and likely accessed via the pit in room 1 is a vault containing the jewel of power known as the Eye of Meng.

A fist-sized emerald rests in a bronze cradle held in the mouth of an enormous coiled serpent carved from stone. Eight wide columns support the ceiling overhead. Each column is made from hundreds of animated stone faces whose expressions show pain, fury, ecstasy, grief, and more. What appears to be leather scraps litter the floor, though inspection reveals they are pieces of flayed skin—swatches with hairs, ears, tongues, and other, obscene parts. All these pieces jump and twitch, as if somehow still alive.

Creature (7,200 XP): The stone serpent holding the cradle is a behir that has been held in stasis for nearly a thousand years. The stony surface is simply dust on its scaly body. Should a character relieve the cradle of the jewel, the stasis ends and the behir rises up to attack the intruders. It fights until it has been reduced to half its hit points, at which point, it scurries up through the shaft in the ceiling and attempts to exit from the complex.

- 1 behir

Treasure (2,500 XP): The giant emerald in the cradle is called the *Eye of Meng* and is worth 5,000 gp on its own, but it also possesses magical power. Removing the jewel from the complex causes the Watchers of Meng to animate and attack the characters.

Eye of Meng: A faint light shines inside this fist-sized emerald that's worth 5,000 gp. The gem has magical power, counting as a unique magic item. It measures its power in charges, of which it has 10 and replenishes expended charges once each day at dawn.

A character holding the Eye may use an action to cast the *light* spell without expending a charge. Alternatively, the character may use an action to expend 1 or more charges to cast any of the following spells from it: *aid* (2 charge), *augury* (2 charges), *daylight* (3 charges), or *flame strike* (5 charges).

A character may also use an action to expend any number of charges. For each charge expended, the character regains 1d4 hit points.

Each time a character possessing the jewel completes a long rest, he or she must make a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the character's alignment shifts one step toward chaotic evil, starting on the good-neutral-evil axis first. Changes to alignment are permanent, but ridding herself of the jewel and being targeted by a remove curse spell cast using a 6th-level spell slot can restore the character's alignment.

ESCAPE

If the characters emerge from the ruins in possession of the Eye of Meng, when they reach the perimeter of Watchers (the giant stone heads about a mile from the ruins) they witness one of the Watchers pull itself out of the ground and begin to march toward them.

Creatures (7,800 XP): The Watcher moves toward the bearer of the Eye of Meng, attacking any who stand in its way. As they defeat the first of the Watchers, a second Watcher enters the fray. The PCs can fight the watchers, or flee into the jungle. There are twelve total Watchers, and they move very slowly through the jungle, so the PCs can outrun them easily once they disengage from combat. However, as soon as one Watcher is destroyed, the next begins its pursuit.

- 2 Watchers of Meng (see appendix)

THE END

The adventure ends when the characters escape the ruins. You can play through what happens after, expanding the adventure to include additional challenges, or you can just narrate the conclusion. If Oola survives, she likely doesn't have enough slaves to pay her debts, so unless the characters offer to help her, she disappears, leaving her lover to her fate and plotting vengeance against the crime lord who killed her.

The characters might also escape with the Eye of Meng. If so, the watchers remain animated and they pursue the thief to the ends of the earth. Such foes show up at inopportune times, likely causing trouble for the characters, since the watchers are unobtrusive and violent in their need to reclaim the stone. Of course, if they sell the jewel, the watchers become the buyer's problem, who will likely be none too pleased if he or she survives.

APPENDIX

WATCHER OF MENG

Giant heads stand on the ground throughout the Jungle of Zaal, each boasting a monstrous visage. Few know who fashioned these statues or for what purpose, but it's clear with a glance that they belong to a culture strange and alien. Each tusked head sports a long horn emerging from the center of its brow above a single, bulging eye. When awakened, the buried body works to free itself from the dirt. After a few moments, the monstrosity pulls free, standing some 30 feet tall.

WATCHER OF MENG CR 8

N Gargantuan construct XP 3,900

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., average Perception 9

Languages —

BASE STATS

AC 17 (natural armor)

hp 165 (10d20 + 60)

Speed 20 ft.

ABILITY SCORES

Str 22 (+6), **Dex** 8 (-1), **Con** 22 (+6)

Int 6 (-2), **Wis** 10 (+0), **Cha** 4 (-3)



TRAITS

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

Bound Guardian A watcher of Meng, and other creatures like it, are bound to protect an item of magical power. Provided the item remains in the place where it's secured, the watcher of Meng is an object with AC 17 and 27 hp with a damage threshold of 10. If the item is removed from its resting place, the watcher of Meng becomes a creature until the item is returned or the watcher is destroyed.

COMBAT ACTIONS

Multiattack The watcher makes two fist attacks.

Fist (melee weapon) *Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3d8 + 6 bludgeoning damage.

Shout The watcher of Meng emits a thunderous noise into a 30-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 6d8 + 6 thunder damage and becoming deafened for 1 hour on a failure, or just half as much damage on a success. Once the watcher uses this action, it must wait 1 minute before it can use it again.

DEGENERATE

These wretched and terrible creatures might have once been something like humans, but they have been driven mad and have no shred of humanity remaining. Now they exist only to feed, preferably upon the flesh of other humans. They are drawn to places like the ruins of Meng, and can gather in great numbers. They are not subtle attackers, but will take advantage of an opportunity to carry off a captive to feast upon later.

DEGENERATE CR 1

CE Medium humanoid XP 200

Senses darkvision 60 ft.; average Perception 10

Languages Kalay

BASE STATS

AC 12

hp 22 (5d8)

Speed 30 ft.

ABILITY SCORES

Str 13 (+1), **Dex** 14 (+2), **Con** 11 (+0)

Int 7 (-2), **Wis** 10 (+0), **Cha** 8 (-1)

TRAITS

Immune charmed, frightened

COMBAT ACTIONS

Multiattack The degenerate attacks with its claws twice.

If both claw attacks hit, it can use feed as a bonus action, gaining tactical advantage on the attack.

Claws (melee weapon) *Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4+1 slashing damage.

Feed (melee weapon) *Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+2 piercing damage, the degenerate regains 1d6 hit points, and attacks against the target have tactical advantage until the end of the degenerate's next turn.

SECRET OF THE MOON-DOOR

by Richard Baker



An adventure for characters of levels 10-12



SECRET OF THE MOON-DOOR

An adventure for characters of Levels 10-12

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The gods of Thule are ancient and mysterious. Over the centuries new gods have arisen, and old ones have fallen into obscurity or been abandoned altogether. One of these forgotten gods is Selene, the goddess of the moon. A thousand years ago her shrines dotted the city-states and holy places of the primeval continent, but over the course of generations her worship died out, and her temples fell into ruin.

One such ruin is the Temple of the Moon-Door, located on the southern shores of Lake Haal. Behind its horned altar stands a great stone door carved in the likeness of the crescent moon and decorated with mysterious sigils. Even though the temple has long been abandoned, explorers and treasure-seekers occasionally visit the place with some idea of opening the “Moon-Door” and uncovering the legendary treasure said to be hidden behind it.

No one has managed to open the Moon-Door yet, but that is soon to change. The wizard Dhargo Maath, a member of Thran’s Black Circle, made contact with the vile creatures known as moon-beasts. From them he learned the secret of the Moon-Door. To win the moon-beasts’ allegiance, Dhargo Maath must recover the Moon-Door’s mystic key. As for what use the monsters intend to make of the temple’s ancient doorway, the Black Circle wizard could care less.

Adversaries and Treasure: *Secret of the Moon-Door* is intended for a party of four 10th- to 12th-level characters. The monsters and villains featured in this adventure can be found in either the core rulebooks or the 5e PRIMEVAL THULE Campaign Setting. If your party is smaller or made up of lower-level characters, you may need to adjust some of the combat encounters to be less lethal by reducing the number of monsters involved or providing the PCs with opportunities to use stealth or clever play to bypass the more dangerous encounters.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins when the heroes learn that the famous sage and seer Ghilean has disappeared under mysterious circumstances. She was apparently abducted from her library in the heart of Katagia by monstrous assailants. Upon investigation, the heroes learn that Ghilean had recently come into possession of a strange key of white metal. A curio dealer named Turjak Bom—secretly an agent of the Black Circle wizard Dhargo Maath—came to see Ghilean soon after she obtained the key, offering her a king's ransom, but Ghilean refused. The next night, monstrous creatures appeared, ransacked the library, and then carried off Ghilean to parts unknown.

In Part I, when the PCs look more closely into Ghilean's studies and her scattered notes, they learn that she was specifically interested in a jungle ruin known as the Temple of the Moon-Door. The temple is known for a mysterious portal or vault that no one has ever managed to open, and it's clear that Ghilean suspected that her newly acquired key might be able to unlock the Moon-Door. The PCs also learn that Dhargo Maath is not yet finished with the library; when the PCs investigate, the wizard's servants attack.

Armed with the key that unlocks the legendary Moon-Door and the knowledge that someone is very interested in the place, the PCs' next step is to try to beat the villains to the temple. Part II of the adventure takes place in the Temple of the Moon-Door. Naturally, it's a monster-infested ruin. Fighting their way to the Moon-Door, the PCs learn its true secret: It doesn't lead to a vault filled with treasure. Instead, it's a mystic doorway that leads to the Moon, and Dhargo Maath is ahead of them.

In Part III, the heroes venture through the door to rescue Ghilean and deprive Dhargo Maath of his prize. The Moon to which the door leads is not the barren, airless Moon of the later Earth. This is the Moon of a dream-Earth, a parallel world, and it is a strange but not lifeless place. The Moon-Door leads to a forbidding island in one of the lunar seas, the Isle of Screams. Here the PCs confront Dhargo Maath and his moon-beast allies.

BACKGROUND

As a sage of great erudition, Ghilean was well acquainted with descriptions of the Temple of the Moon-Door and speculations about what the ancient priests of Selene hid behind the portal. A month ago, a freeblade wandered into Katagia and sold a strange key to a merchant named Jangar. No one recalls the freeblade's name; he was a

down-on-his-luck mercenary who found the key in a jungle tomb (in fact the burial site of the last of the temple's high priests, although the mercenary had no idea whose tomb he was plundering).

Jangar brought the key to Ghilean to find out what it was. Ghilean recognized it as the "Moongold Key" mentioned in some of her old tomes about the Moon-Door and paid Jangar richly for it. Unfortunately, not all of Ghilean's apprentices were loyal to her. One of them, a young man named Plooth, had been bribed long ago to report any interesting developments to a Black Circle agent. Plooth reported Ghilean's acquisition, and news swiftly reached Dhargo Maath. Maath quickly arranged for his agents to buy the key. Ghilean, however, did not wish to sell it.

Because the sage was not inclined to be reasonable, Dhargo Maath decided to remove her. He chose to use summoned monsters (a pair of moon-beasts) to do his dirty work, hoping to disguise his involvement. The moon-beasts seized Ghilean and terrorized the scholars of the library, but they missed the key.

Dhargo Maath still wants the key—if nothing else, he wants to make sure no one else can make use of it. However, with Ghilean in his hands and his own magic, he can open the doorway without it. As the adventure begins, he is on his way to the Temple of the Moon-Door, leaving his agents to tidy up loose ends in Katagia.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Noble goals such as foiling the Black Circle or saving people from a moon-beast invasion may not be sufficient to engage a party of mercenaries unless those events impact them directly. Find an adventure hook that works best for your players from the suggestions below.

Old Friend in Trouble: If any of the PCs has a relationship with a sage, astrologer, or educated patron who helped in earlier adventures, then replace Ghilean in this adventure with the PCs' old friend. You can shift Act I of the adventure to any library or sage's tower in Thule without affecting the story. The PCs become involved when they hear that their old friend disappeared under mysterious circumstances.

Offer of Employment: Ghilean realizes that she'll need hardened adventurers to explore the Moon-Door. She sends a message to the most well-known PC explaining that she wants to mount an expedition to a mysterious ruin, promising the equivalent of a small treasure hoard as payment (roughly 10,000 gp). When the PCs arrive to take her up on the offer, they find her missing.

Find Our Sage: Monsters tearing up libraries and a prominent sage abducted from the heart of the city certainly gain the attention of Katagia's ruler. The PCs are hired by Lord Protector Denech Saurane to find out what happened to Ghilean and to get her back if possible. The pay is equivalent to a small treasure hoard for the characters' level (roughly 10,000 gp).

ACT I: THE LYKEION

The adventure begins at the scene of Ghilean's disappearance: the Lykeion, a renowned academy in Katagia's Temple Ward. The Lykeion is home to seven "masters"—sages and philosophers of note—and sixteen "aspirants," students who live on the grounds. Another thirty or so "novices" live in the city nearby, spending most of their days in studies at the Lykeion but returning home each evening. Most of these novices are young, high-born men and women whose families were able to secure appointments for them to study here.

If you prefer to begin this adventure in Quodeth, then use Onther Tower (PTCS, page 188) instead of the Lykeion. If you choose to set this adventure in a different city, simply add the Lykeion (or an institution like it) to Ikath, Orech, or Lomar. Scholarly institutions are rare in Thule, but most of the larger cities boast one or two.

The Lykeion, home to the sage Ghilean and the foremost academy in Katagia, stands in a park-like enclosure in the middle of the city. It is a grand stone building of three stories with a golden dome, surrounded by paths winding through well-trimmed myrtle trees and elegant statuary. Five bored-looking Katagian soldiers guard the front door.

In addition to the front door, the Lykeion has five more ground-level doors, plus numerous windows in its upper floors. Two more **guards** patrol the grounds, keeping an eye on the other entrances (and likely noticing if the PCs try to avoid the guards at the front door).

The Guards: The squad standing watch consists of 4 **guards** and 1 **veteran**, a noble-born Atlantean officer named Veox. The city watch posted them here to reassure the nervous scholars of the Lykeion. Privately they scoff at the idea of monsters carrying off people, and they believe that Ghilean was probably just murdered by a rival. They can confirm that no one suspicious has entered or left the building since the afternoon after Ghilean's disappearance (several days ago).

The guards do not impede the PCs unless the PCs behave in an extremely suspicious manner. If the PCs inform Veox that they're here looking for Ghilean, he's reasonably helpful:

"Ghilean, you say? Well, that's the mystery of the hour, it seems—good luck with that. I'll take you to Master Hestoth. He can tell you more than I can."

Veox personally leads the PCs to meet Hestoth. Continue with The Master's Welcome, below.

Building Layout: Exact details of the floor plan aren't important, but players interested in thoroughly searching the Lykeion may visit some or all of these locations:

Cellar Level: Kitchen, servant quarters, storerooms, alchemical laboratory, workrooms.

Ground Floor: Entry hall (also serves as a debate hall), refectory, museum hall (mostly natural history with interesting animal remains), classroom-like lecture halls.

Second Floor: Library, workrooms, aspirant quarters.

Third Floor: Restricted library (for valuable or dangerous tomes), Masters' Hall (a small debate hall and council room), masters' chambers.

Roof: Observatory, pigeon coop (for messenger birds).

THE MASTERS' WELCOME

Characters asking about Ghilean or looking for someone who can tell them what happened are quickly directed to Master Hestoth. With Ghilean missing, he is the most senior of the Lykeion's masters. He meets the party in the Masters' Hall, a private council room.

You enter a council chamber on the Lykeion's third floor, where three scholars wait for you: a stoop-shouldered Atlantean scholar with a long white beard, a venerable Kalayan woman in green robes, and a dwarf who wears a leather apron that serves as a toolbelt over her brown robes. The white-bearded scholar speaks first. "Welcome, friends. I am Hestoth, Master of Collections. This is Nimira, Master of Philosophy, and Thurannifer, Master of Laboratories. I understand you're here about Ghilean. We are very glad to see you."

Hestoth does most of the talking. As Master of Collections, he's responsible for the Lykeion's various curios and artifacts. He tends to ramble and get distracted; Nimira, the Kalayan woman in green, keeps him on track and finishes sentences for him by getting to the point. Thurannifer the dwarf is taciturn and adds little, but she's friendly enough when asked a direct question.

THE MOON-DOOR

When prompted, Master Hestoth gets to the story:

"The attack was three nights ago, two hours after sunset. Ghilean was alone in the restricted library, just down the hall there. Her research has been keeping her up late for weeks now. Several people in nearby rooms heard a sudden commotion—glass breaking, furniture falling over, heavy thumps and footfalls, and Ghilean screaming in fright and calling for help. Plooth, one of Ghilean's students, was the first to reach the room. He said he saw two huge, terrible monsters holding Ghilean between them; the creatures and Ghilean all turned to mist and flowed away out the window."

Master Hestoth is anxious to aid the PCs' investigation—Ghilean is a close friend of his, and he is beside himself with worry over her fate. He can lead the party to any spot they wish to investigate in the Lykeion, including the restricted library, Ghilean's personal quarters, or even the personal quarters of other masters. He can also arrange for the PCs to speak to anyone they want (including Plooth).

Some specific questions and answers Master Hestoth might provide at this time include:

What kind of monsters took Ghilean? "I don't know. Plooth had the best look at them; perhaps he could describe them in more detail."

You're all masters of something. What was Ghilean master of? "Histories. She knows more about the Thule of yesteryear than most know about the Thule of today."

Did Ghilean have any enemies? "Not that I know of. She was well regarded by all here."

What was Ghilean working on? "A month or so back she became very interested in lore pertaining to temples dedicated to the goddess Selene. We can show you some of the texts she was studying if you think that might help."

Wait...the goddess Selene? "An ancient folk-religion that died out centuries ago. Selene was associated with the moon, I believe, and eventually her priests

merged with those of Ishtar. Ghilean could tell you more—if she were here..."

Did anything out of the ordinary happen recently? "Not that I can think of—no, wait, there was something. A dealer in curios came to see her a couple of weeks ago and wanted to buy some old relic or another in her possession, but she didn't wish to sell it. She didn't seem alarmed, but she did mention it to me. What was his name...Turjak Bom, that was it."

What old relic? "She didn't say, but Plooth might know. He is an aspirant to the Lykeion—and Ghilean's leading student."

Development: If the players don't know what to do next, Hestoth suggests that they might begin by looking at the scene of the attack or perhaps interviewing the aspirant Plooth, one of Ghilean's students.

THE SCENE OF THE CRIME

The restricted library is where the scholars of the Lykeion store books and scrolls that shouldn't be left in the academy's general library. Master Hestoth, Plooth, or Veox can confirm that Ghilean spent most of her time here over the last month (although in Veox's case, he is simply summarizing the results of his own inquiries since Ghilean's disappearance).

Signs of a struggle are clear in this small library. A heavy table lies overturned on its side, a big bookshelf lies where it toppled over with dozens of tomes and scrolls scattered about, and the frame of one of the large windows is broken, although a heavy canvas cover has been nailed up over the opening.

The Lykeion masters have held off on tidying up until they're certain they have found every clue possible, though they begin to clean up after the PCs view the damage. Important finds here include:

The Door: Sturdy and undamaged, though it creaks loudly when opened. The Lykeion masters are certain

DIVINING GHILEAN

The PCs may attempt to use divination magic to locate Ghilean. Their success depends on which spell they use to locate her. Ghilean is currently alive on the Isle of Screams, which is on a dream-dimension Moon. It's on a different plane. She is under the slave-stupor of the moon-beasts and can't muster the volition to think a coherent thought.

Locate creature and *locate object* fail because the range is too short. *Scrying* fails because she's on a different plane. A *sending* is likely to reach her, but she can't form a coherent reply. The *sending* does reveal that Ghilean is alive but very distant, and she manages to mumble, "Help me, please...they took me through the moon-door...help."

Commune, *contact other plane*, and *divination* can also reveal the truth about Ghilean's condition. Depending on the questions the caster asks, the responses suggest that she is a captive of moon-beasts, she is on the Moon, she is in danger, and the best way to get to her is to find the Moon-Door and go through it.

The masters of the Lykeion are sages and philosophers, not high-level spellcasters. They may suggest that the PCs perform divination magic, but they lack the ability to do it themselves.

the monsters did not come in this way, because they didn't hear the door creak until after the commotion started. On the floor inside the library near the door is a rolled-up map of the Lake Haal region. (Plooth dropped it in terror when he saw the moon-beasts.)

The Window: The broken window looks out over a 30-foot sheer drop. It would be a difficult climb. Debris from the window lies inside the library room, suggesting that the window was broken from the outside. The window frame is quite large (8 feet tall and 5 feet wide). With a successful Intelligence/Investigation check (DC 15), a PC studying the window notes claw scrapes on the framework consistent with something about the size of a large bear forcing its way inside.

Tomes and Texts: After a careful look at the books on the floor and the toppled bookshelf, a PC can sort the books into those that were probably sitting out on the table and those that were shelved (DC 15 Intelligence/Investigation check). Studying the tomes to determine what Ghilean was specifically researching requires 1 hour, and the ability to read High Atlantean, Dhari, and Kalayan helps. Make a Intelligence/History or Intelligence/Religion check with a +5 bonus for sorting the books first and a +2 bonus for literacy in each of the three languages. The character examining the tomes learns the following:

- *Result of 10+:* Ghilean was gathering lore pertaining to something called “the Moon-Door,” a mysterious barrier in a ruined temple of Selene.
- *Result of 15+:* All of the above, plus the Temple of the Moon-Door lies near the village of Ayanari on the southwest shore of Lake Haal.
- *Result of 20+:* The above, plus the Moon-Door is supposed to be impossible to open, but there is a key: a strange rod of white metal, about a foot in length, said to be made of “moongold.”
- *Result of 25+:* The above, plus the texts hint at some kind of “chamber of power” behind the Moon-Door.

On a failed check, the book's esoteric writings stymie the character, who can spend another hour and make another attempt.

Magic: No magic auras linger in the room. (At your discretion, some of the tomes in this room might be arcane spellbooks or even spell scrolls; the Lykeion scholars may agree to let the PCs make use of them.)

The Moongold Key: No key is in evidence here (Ghilean kept it in her own room). If the PCs ask Master Hestoth about the key mentioned in the text, Hestoth remembers that the key was the old relic that Turjak Bom asked Ghilean about. If the PCs ask Plooth about the key, he tries to lie about it (see The Eyewitness, below).

THE EYEWITNESS

When the PCs indicate that they want to speak to anyone who witnessed the attack or to someone who worked closely with Ghilean, Master Hestoth sends a student to fetch Plooth, an aspirant (senior student) who studied under Ghilean.

The student proves to be a young man of about twenty-five years, tall and gangly with tangled dark hair. He wears the robes of a Mithran acolyte, and he seems badly rattled—he is pale and his eyes dart nervously from side to side. “I am Plooth,” he says. “Mistress Ghilean was my mentor. Tell me that you can do something to help her!”

Plooth has good reason to be nervous, although the PCs might not know that when they begin their interview. Turjak Bom pays Plooth to inform him of any interesting finds at the Lykeion. When Ghilean obtained the Moongold Key from Jangar, Plooth reported it to Turjak Bom. He suspects that Turjak Bom had something to do with the abduction.

If asked about the attack or the monsters he saw, Plooth relates the following:

“Late in the evening, Mistress Ghilean sent me down to the main library to fetch a map for her. It took me some time to find it. As I returned, I heard a terrible commotion from the room where she was working. I ran ahead and threw open the door, only to see her caught between two huge, pallid monstrosities. Each of them had her by an arm. They looked like big, faceless toads, with tentacles squirming where their faces should be...I shudder to recall it! I stood petrified in terror for a moment, then the monsters and Mistress Ghilean turned to white mist. The mist streamed out the window and vanished into the night.”

Plooth knows quite a lot more, if the PCs question him further. He knows that Ghilean was looking for information on the Temple of the Moon-Door and that the recent acquisition of the Moongold Key from the merchant Jangar spurred her interest. He avoids any mention of Turjak Bom, although he suspects that Turjak Bom was somehow behind the moon-beast attack.

The Map: If asked about the map he was retrieving, Plooth stammers and says, “It was an old map—of the Lake Haal region.” PCs can find the map on the floor of the restricted library (if they haven't already).

Plooth's Lies: Plooth denies any knowledge of Turjak Bom and claims not to know where the key is now, but he is not a good liar. A character skeptical of his story may attempt a Wisdom/Insight check (DC 10) to discern that Plooth is hiding something.

The Moongold Key: After the moon-beast attack, Plooth went to Ghilean's room and removed the key (he'd seen where Ghilean was keeping it). The Moongold Key is now hidden in a trunk beneath Plooth's bed in his quarters on the Lykeion's second floor. Plooth knows that Turjak Bom wants the key and he hopes to sell it to the "curio dealer" later.

Creature (450 xp): If threatened with punishment or exposure, Plooth does his best to flee the scene and seek Turjak Bom's protection.

- Plooth (priest)

GHILEAN'S QUARTERS

Master Hestoth does not object if the PCs decide to make a thorough search of Ghilean's quarters. The sage's room contains many interesting mementos and minor valuables—a collection of knick-knacks and curiosities from all over Thule. Most are not relevant to her disappearance. However, thorough and attentive characters may turn up one clue on a successful Intelligence/Investigation check (DC 10):

Among the clutter and curiosities decorating Ghilean's rooms, you find something out of place: an old case made of black, lacquered wood. It's lying on the floor near the sage's desk. The interior is filled with beeswax so old it's as hard as stone. The wax holds a large, key-shaped depression about a foot long.

Plooth slipped into Ghilean's room shortly after the attack and took the key, but he was so rattled that he neglected to put the case back in its place. If the PCs show the case to Master Hestoth, he can confirm that it held a strange key of silver-white metal that Ghilean recently acquired. A character studying the case itself can determine that the craftsmanship appears to be Dhari (human), several centuries old, with a successful Intelligence/History check (DC 20).

THE WIZARD'S MINIONS

While Dhargo Maath has Ghilean, he realizes that the Moongold Key is not yet accounted for. After a careful interrogation of the captive scholar, he divines the location of the key (and Plooth's role in the affair) and dispatches more monsters to the academy to get it from the student. Maath's minions arrive while the PCs are conducting their investigation.

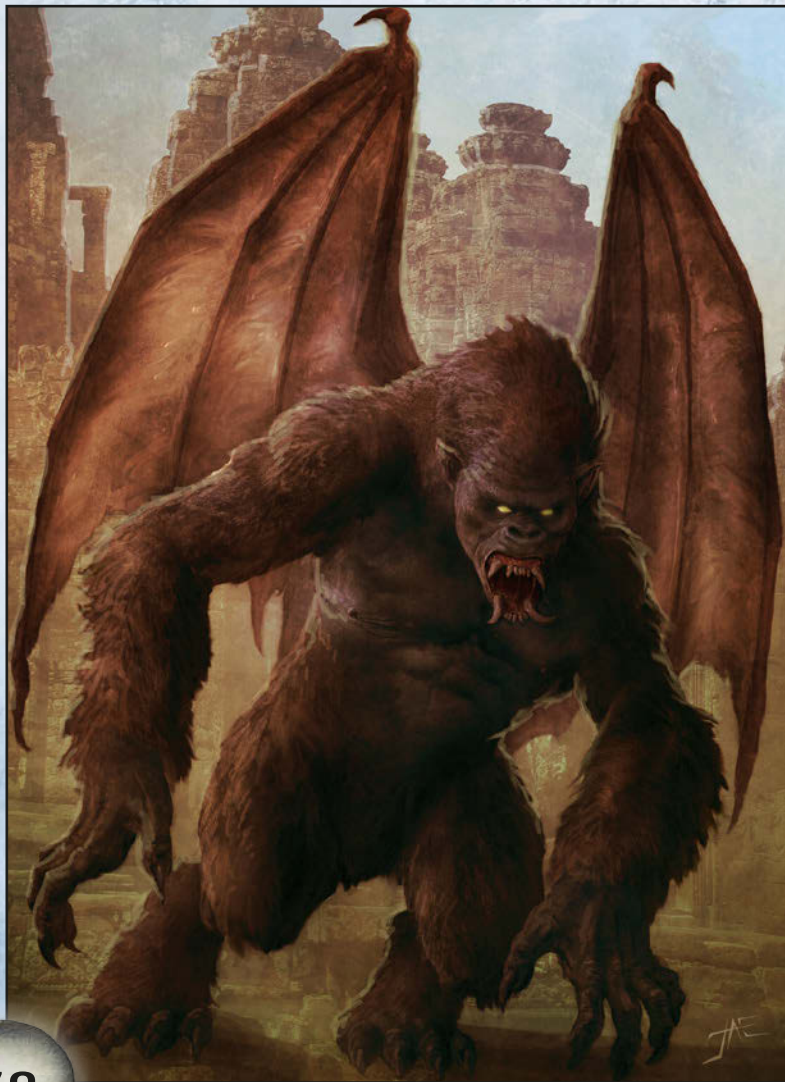
Run this encounter at any time while the PCs are searching the Lykeion or studying Ghilean's books. At your option, you can run this encounter when the PCs are interrogating Plooth, interrupting the conversation with the sudden arrival of Maath's monsters.

A sudden crash echoes through the halls of the Lykeion, followed by cries of alarm and the angry roar of some great beast. "Monsters! They're back!" someone screams in the distance. It sounds like the commotion is coming from the student quarters on the second floor.

Creatures (5,400 xp): Two winged apes swoop down to the second-floor balcony outside the quarters reserved for the aspirant and break into the building in search of Plooth. The winged apes have only two commands—slay Plooth and get his key. However, they are free to slaughter anyone unfortunate enough to cross their path, and they do so with savage glee.

- 2 winged apes (PTCS page 242)

Development: If the PCs have so far missed Plooth's involvement or don't realize they should be looking for the key, they discover Plooth among the dead, torn limb from limb by the apes before they reached the scene. The Moongold Key is lying beneath a cabinet just out of his reach (he was trying to hide it when the winged apes caught him).



TURJAK BOM

If the PCs decide to follow up on Ghilean's mysterious visitor from a couple of weeks past, they find that no one at the Lykeion knows Turjak Bom or where to find him. However, a few hours of asking around in the city districts outside the Lykeion (or the right divination spell) proves more useful—Turjak Bom resides in one of the city's mercantile districts, dealing in curios and collectibles out of his home.

The home of Turjak Bom is located on a high hillside in Katagia's market district. It is a fine stone courtyard-style house on a corner; the door is closed, and the few exterior windows are shuttered.

It's easy to scale the outer wall, cross the roof, and drop into the courtyard. However, Turjak Bom's guards assume that anyone sneaking into the house is an assassin or robber, so they attack immediately. If the PCs approach the house openly and just knock at the door, read:

A servant answers the door, and shows you in. A well-maintained garden lies in the middle of the house; two guards keep watch by a door leading into a sitting room just off the garden. "Please, wait here," the servant tells you. "I shall fetch Prince Bom."

Turjak Bom is a short, burly man of 40 years, with mixed Kalay and Dhari heritage. He is secretly an agent of the Black Circle, a skilled assassin and spy who passes himself off as a moderately prosperous merchant. (Prosperous enough to get his servants to call him "prince," at any rate.) He attempts to maintain this guise and deflect the PCs' questions, while subtly questioning them about why they're here. He openly admits that he visited Ghilean and attempted to buy "the white key," since he trades in such things. He denies knowledge of any attack on the sage (his Charisma/Deception check is a 15).

Creatures (10,500 xp): When Turjak Bom determines that the PCs know too much, he gives the command to attack. His two legionaries are well-trained and need only one sharp look from him to make their move. Allow the PCs to make Wisdom/Insight checks (DC 15); those who fail are surprised for the first round of the fight. Turjak's lover and mystic advisor, a Lomari woman named Deema, is elsewhere in the house. She appears and joins the fray at the end of the first round.

ENTER THE BLACK CIRCLE

Depending on the adventures the PCs have had in Thule so far, they may or may not be familiar with the Black Circle, wizards who rule the city of Thran. They're described in Chapter 4 of the *PRIMEVAL THULE Campaign Setting*, but almost everyone in Thule whispers of them as powerful, sinister figures who lord over Thran from an immense, black orb that hovers over the city.

Dhargo Maath isn't the most powerful wizard in the Black Circle, but he's among the most ambitious, and he has more than his fair share of rivals. That's why he avoids Thran in favor of his new domicile on the Moon (described in Part III).

- Turjak Bom, Black Circle Agent (PTCS page 226)
- 2 legionaries (PTCS page 79)
- Deema (cult fanatic)

Treasure (2,400 xp): Turjak Bom runs a prosperous business, and he receives secret funds from Thran to use in the Black Circle's interests. A search of the house reveals two chests containing a total of 4,400 sp and 1,700 gp. In addition, there are two art objects worth 750 gp in value (a copper statuette and an ornamental mask), and four more worth 250 gp each (a bracelet worn by Deema, a small tapestry, a ceremonial scepter, and a collection of scrimshaws).

Development: A desk in Bom's study contains a locked drawer (DC 10 Dexterity check to open with lockpicks, or easily forced). Inside is a stack of reports and letters. These make it clear that Turjak Bom works for a wizard of Thran by the name of Dhargo Maath, and that Bom is an agent of the Black Circle. Bom learned of Ghilean's acquisition of the Moongold Key from her student Plooth, and later reported to Maath his failure to buy the key. He requested permission to assassinate her and take it, but Maath informed him that "he would take care of it" and that Bom was to do nothing more that might put Ghilean on her guard.

The most recent communication from Maath reads:

Our allies failed to find the key when they carried off the sage. My divinations suggest your friend Plooth may have it. I am sending new assets to rectify that oversight. They will bring the key to your house. Unfortunately I cannot have them simply bring me the key, so you must do so once you have it in your possession. Send a report when you know your travel arrangements—I will meet you at the Moon-Door.

The drawer also contains a map of the Lake Haal region (similar to the Lykeion's map). It has the temple's location marked with a handwritten "X."

PART II: TEMPLE OF THE MOON-DOOR

The mystery of Ghilean's disappearance from the Lykeion points at one obvious lead: the Temple of the Moon-Door. Unfortunately, it is quite a long way from the heart of Katagia. The temple stands about ten miles southeast of the village of Ayanari on the Katagia-Thran track.

The Journey: As the crow flies, Ayanari is about 300 miles from Katagia; for characters who choose to follow the established track, it's closer to 400 miles. A party on foot can make the trek in about three weeks; a mounted party can do it in two weeks. (If the PCs are anxious about reaching the temple swiftly, magical means will be required.)

Feel free to complicate a long overland journey with "random" encounters along the way—no track in Thule is truly safe, after all. A band of serpentmen, a Thulean cyclops, or a small herd of angry mammoths on the plains of Nar would be appropriate.

Arrival: When the PCs reach the area, they find that the Temple of the Moon-Door is a well-known local landmark.

A few miles south of the village of Ayanari, a disused track splits off from the main trail, leading toward the shore of Lake Haal. A short march brings you to a forest-covered hillside overlooking the lakeshore. The ancient temple stands at the top of the hill, surrounded by trees that must be centuries old. The winding causeway climbing up to its entrance is cracked and broken by roots, and vines cover the once-elegant marble dome. The building seems mostly intact, although heaps of rubble and dark fissures in the walls show its age.

Vines partially choke many of the old windows in the building, but missing stones in the walls and holes in the roof admit light from outside. The illumination inside depends on the time of day. The floors are carpeted with plaster debris, leaf mold, and tumbled masonry that has fallen from overhead.

I. THE PORTICO

The front of the temple is a portico about 100 feet wide and 15 feet deep. Four large columns spaced evenly across the front of the building are decorated with carvings that depict the Moon in its four phases. A once-impressive double entrance leads to the temple interior; one doorway is merely a heap of rubble, while a broken stone door lies on the ground in the other doorway.

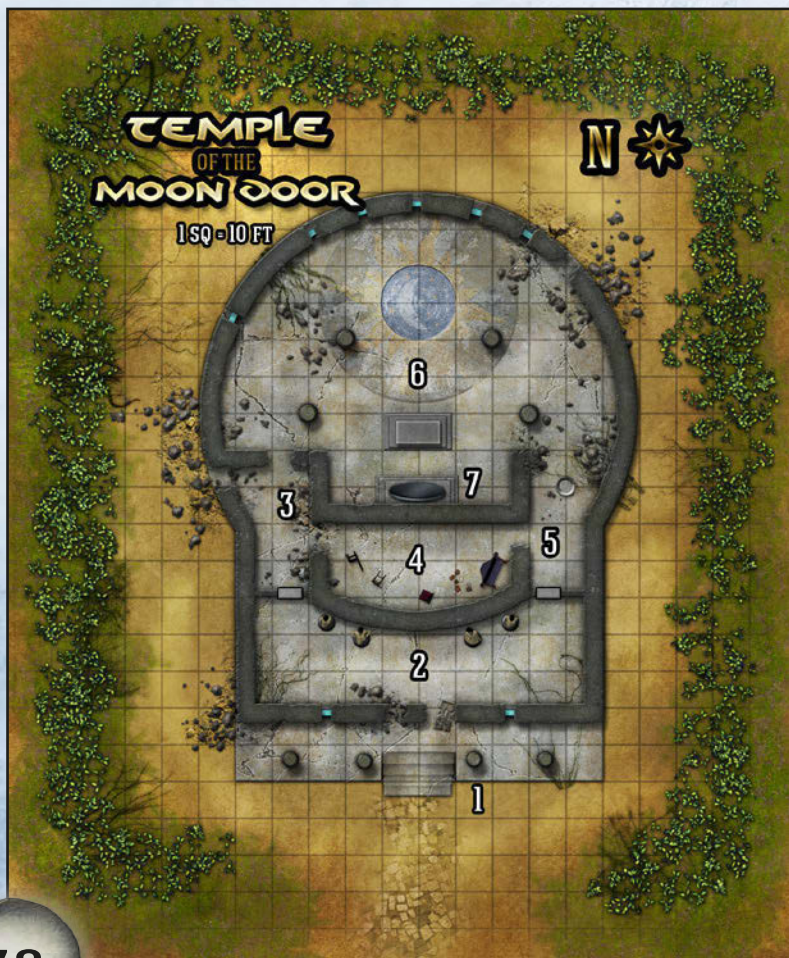
No particular force destroyed the front door—it was ruined by the simple passage of time. If the PCs make a lot of noise out here, they may alert the cannibals in area 2, who will hide and observe the PCs.

2. HALL OF STATUES

The temple's entrance leads to a large foyer that spans the width of the building. Two stone doors at either end of the foyer lead east into the temple interior. Four large statues stand along the curving eastern wall between the doors, depicting a tall, beautiful woman in robes. Each statue shows her in a different pose and profession—a wise healer, a caring mother, an amorous lover, and a huntress armed with a bow. Dead leaves and dirt cover the floor.

The statues depict Selene, the moon goddess, in four of her aspects. A character studying the statues identifies them with a successful Intelligence/Religion check (DC 15).

Creatures (300 xp): Two Tcho-Tcho cannibals (sentries from the band encamped in area 6) are lurking in the shadows of the statues, keeping watch. If the PCs made a lot of noise in area 1, the Tcho-Tcho are well-hidden (DC 20 Wisdom/Perception check to spot them). Otherwise, the DC is 16.



The Tcho-Tcho intend to observe the party for a few rounds, then slip away to the south (area 5) to warn their fellows in area 6. If they need a distraction, one tosses a pebble toward the northern corner: Let the players see you roll a die, and tell them, “You hear a clatter of stone near the door to the north.” Any character reacting to the noise doesn’t notice the Tcho-Tcho slipping out, but any other character with an average Perception score of 16 or better sees them make a break for it. If the cannibals manage to get away, they warn the Tcho-Tcho in area 6 to prepare an ambush for the PCs.

If spotted, the Tcho-Tcho flee immediately.

- 2 Tcho-Tcho cannibals (see appendix)

3. SERPENT’S DEN

It looks like this chamber might once have been a robing room or sacristy, but this part of the temple is heavily damaged. A large portion of the northern wall has collapsed, leaving a ten-foot wide fissure in the side of the building. Another doorway leading into a dark chamber to the south has also collapsed. Stone doors at the east and west end of this room remain intact. A heavy, musky odor hangs in the air.

This room has become the lair of a giant viper, which found the fissure in the wall leading outside and took a liking to the dark, cool den. The Tcho-Tcho found out the hard way that the viper laired here, and they now avoid this room.

Creature (2,300 xp): The viper is curled up, dozing among the debris and leaf-mold near the eastern doorway, and is a little hard to see (DC 12 Wisdom/Perception check). Characters who wish to pass through this room without rousing the creature can attempt to do so with Dexterity/Stealth checks (DC 12).

- Giant viper (PTCS page 221)

4. PRIESTS’ QUARTERS

Dank and dark, this chamber is filled with mildew-covered furniture and debris from a partially collapsed ceiling. Puddles of standing water indicate several spots where the roof leaks. Among the ruined furnishings are a sagging bed frame, a damaged armoire, a collapsed bookshelf, and a debris-covered table.

This room once served as the personal chambers of the temple’s intendants. It’s been picked over by previous explorers, but they missed something—a secret compartment in the wall. A successful Intelligence/Investigation check (DC 10) reveals the old cache.



Treasure (2,400 xp): An ebony coffer in the hidden compartment contains 260 pp, seven fine black pearls worth 500 gp each, a *potion of vitality*, and an *arrow of slaying extraterrenes* (substitute a crossbow bolt or sling bullet if you prefer).

5. THE FONT CHAMBER

A large font of white stone, about six feet in diameter, stands in the middle of the eastern end of this chamber. It appears to be full of clear water. Peeling murals along the walls show priests performing ceremonial ablutions under moonlight. Stone doors lead north and west from this room, but a doorway to the east is badly damaged—a path through the rubble opens up into a larger room beyond.

As the murals suggest, this room was used for ceremonial purification before participating in rites in the main chapel (area 6 to the east). The basin water is pure and wholesome, renewed by an ancient blessing.

The Font: Any good-aligned character who washes his or her hands or face in the basin receives the benefit of an *aid* spell (no character can benefit more than once per 24 hours from the effect).

6. SHRINE OF THE SILVER LADY

This large semicircular chamber lies beneath what was once a magnificent dome, although partial collapses now show glimpses of sky overhead. Tall windows high above the floor in the dome's eastern side look down on a twenty-foot-wide mosaic of silver and black tile depicting a crescent moon, and four large pillars support the dome overhead.

To the west, a low dais about twenty feet wide leads up to an altar-stone of white marble. Behind the altar, a huge stone disk stands in the middle of the western wall of the chamber. It appears to be covered in strange carvings.

Characters who studied Ghilean's notes in the Lykeion instantly recognize the Moon-Door (the stone disk standing against the western wall). When the PCs take a closer look, read the description for area 7.

The shrine was formerly one of the foremost temples of Selene in all of Thule. For centuries pilgrims journeyed here from distant cities, until the worship of Selene died out and none but a few forgotten priests remained to tend her holy places. The windows in the eastern part of the dome align with the rising Moon at various times of the year, serving as a lunar calendar of sorts. (Any character with the Seer narrative notices this automatically; others must study the mosaic and succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence/Religion check to make the connection.)

Anything valuable in this chamber was long since looted, except for the altar block itself—a fine slab of marble weighing more than 5,000 pounds.

Creatures (7,500 xp or 9,600 xp): Dhargo Maath arranged for some unsavory allies to guard the shrine until he concludes his dealings with the moon-beasts. A dozen Tcho-Tcho tribesmen—degenerate subhumans devoted to the Great Old Ones—keep watch here, ready to waylay intruders.

If the PCs did not notice the Tcho-Tcho scouts in area 2, there are two additional cannibals here. The Tcho-Tcho are all hidden, ready to spring an ambush. They conceal themselves behind the altar and among the rubble piles in the corners of the room, apply poison to their weapons, and strike as soon as two characters are in the room. Any PC whose passive Perception is 15 or better is not surprised. The Tcho-Tcho also have time to ready an ambush if the party makes a lot of noise in areas 3 or 5.

- 2 Tcho-Tcho lamas (see appendix)
- 8 or 10 Tcho-Tcho cannibals (see appendix)

If the PCs found the Tcho-Tcho in area 2 or find a way to reach this room without making much noise, it's a fair fight—the cannibals can't ambush the party.

Development: The Tcho-Tcho are extremely sullen and would almost rather die than spill information to outsiders. However, if the PCs succeed in questioning the surviving Tcho-Tcho, they learn that this group of Tcho-Tcho hail from a village a day's march away. They agreed to help Dhargo Maath and serve as the Moon-Door's guardians in exchange for his help in recovering some long-lost idol, which now resides in a place of honor in their squalid village.

The Tcho-Tcho know that the Moon-Door is a magical portal and that it leads “to a place of the Great Old Ones,” but they do not know how to open it and they have not been to the other side. They can confirm that Dhargo Maath and a small number of Thranish soldiers have been coming and going from the temple for months, and that a prisoner matching Ghilean's description was dragged through the Moon-Door a couple of weeks ago.

7. THE MOON-DOOR

When characters examine the stone disk at the western end of the chamber more closely, read the following:

The disk with the carvings is a single piece of pale stone, housed in a strange archway. The design on the disk appears to be a complicated chart showing the movements of the Moon in the sky. About six feet above the floor there is a large keyhole in the disk, which otherwise appears to be solid stone.

Opening the Moon-Door: The portal can be opened simply by inserting the Moongold Key. Other methods require careful examination and access to the right sort of magic. A character who studies the disk's carvings can attempt an Intelligence/Arcana or Intelligence/Religion check (DC 20) to devise an alternate method. These include:

- A *passwall* or *stone shape* spell cast upon the Moon-Door activates it for 1 hour instead of creating its normal effect.
- The sigils covering the door provide enough information to make the Moon-Door's far end the target of a *teleportation circle* spell.

When the portal opens, read the following:

The stone disk begins to glow with a pearly light, and one by one, bright gleams of silver shine from the sigils. Within the span of ten or fifteen heartbeats, the white radiance from the disk fills the chapel. Then the stone, still glowing, seems to become insubstantial. You cannot see through the misty stone—but suddenly a huge, monstrous form bursts out of the mist!

In the door's ghostly state, a character can walk right into the Moon-Door. This instantly transports him or her to area 1 on the Isle of Screams (see Part III). However, the Isle's denizens know about the potential of the Moon-Door and keep a sentry posted by its lunar terminus.

Creatures (8,550 xp): A moon-beast and its bodyguard (a lanky, pinkish-purple moon-thing equivalent to a troll) are warned by the silvery glow that the portal is about to open. Dhargo Maath has informed the creature that no friends should be expected to journey through the Moon-Door, so the moon-beast decides to investigate for itself. The moon-beast and the PCs are equally surprised, so roll initiative normally.

- Moon-beast (PTCS page 245)
- Guardian creature (troll)

Using the Moon-Door: A character that moves into the Moon-Door while it is insubstantial is transported to the other side. If the portal is activated by the Moongold Key, it remains open for 1 minute after the key is removed. It can be opened from either side by means of the right spell or the key.

PART III: THE ISLE OF SCREAMS

The Moon to which the Moon-Door leads is not the airless, lifeless rock one might expect. Instead it's the Moon of an alternate Earth in a sort of dream-dimension. It is weird, dangerous, and alien—but it's a place where humans can survive. The air is cold and quite rarefied; it's roughly similar to an altitude of 15,000 feet on Earth. Nights are bitterly cold, but during the long lunar day the temperature rises to a level comfortable for a lightly dressed human and remains there until night falls.

The specific locale linked to the Earth through the Moon-Door is a place called the Isle of Screams. Once it was home to a mystic Selenite oracle, but after that place fell into ruin, moon-beasts took it over and built a horrible laboratory in the island's interior. The terrible shrieks of the laboratory's subjects (humans who fell into the moon-beasts' clutches) can be heard miles away through the clear, cool air.

Dhargo Maath figured out how to open the Moon-Door using his spells, but his moon-beast allies want the Moongold Key so that they can use it whenever they want. Maath intends to trade the key for their future cooperation.

Environment: Due to the light gravity, PCs can lift twice the normal amount of weight and jump twice the normal distance. The thin air is equivalent to high altitude.



I. THE MOON-DOOR

When a PC traverses the Moon-Door from the Temple, read the text below:

Stepping through the misty silver doorway, you find yourself standing on a stone terrace beneath a dark, starry sky, even though the sun is low on the horizon. The Moon-Door looks the same from this side—a misty barrier in the shape of a great stone disk.

The terrace stands in a clearing about a hundred yards across. Ahead of you there is a field of scarlet grass leading up to a low bluff, which looks out over a strange, dark sea. To your right stands an old ruined chapel of white stone, which looks out over the sea. The air is thin and cool, and you feel oddly light on your feet.

On all other sides of the clearing a bizarre purple jungle presses in close, although you can make out two distinct trails leading away from the clearing—one by the ruined chapel, the other behind you to your left.

Characters who still haven't figured out where they are might recognize the moon-beasts' home with a successful Intelligence/Arcana check (DC 20). A few obscure tomes, such as those Ghilean was studying, provide enough of a description to identify

THE MOON-DOOR

the place; the DC is only 10 for a PC who read those books in Part I.

2. RUINED CHAPEL

This small building is a surprisingly familiar sight in such a strange place. It's an ordinary temple much like you would see almost anywhere in Thule. In fact, it looks like the Temple of the Moon-Door near Lake Haal, with similar architecture and design motifs. It seems that it was abandoned long ago—a large statue of a beautiful robed woman lies broken in several pieces on the floor inside the temple, next to an empty pedestal.

The statue depicts Selene, the goddess of the Moon. A character can identify the idol with a successful Intelligence/Religion check (DC 15). The statue was pulled down off its pedestal by the moon-beasts when they took over the island. A lingering blessing of Selene makes extraterrestrial creatures uncomfortable near the chapel, so this can serve as a safe place to rest if the PCs need to.

3. LUNAR SEA

The sea ringing the isle is oddly dark and viscous, more like a thick wine than water. It has a rich, almost musty smell. The waves are quite small, and there is no debris or tidal range on the shore.

The water is fresh and drinkable, if a little strange to taste. No other land is in sight; characters who decide to sail off in search of new lands to explore can find them after a voyage of a hundred miles or so. What they find there is outside the scope of this adventure!

4. LUNAR JUNGLE

The jungle is like nothing you've ever seen in Thule. Most of the vegetation is a vibrant purple in color, with bizarrely thin trunks and a profusion of feathery leaves. A sweet, heady aroma spills from huge, pale blossoms that sway softly with no breeze.

The jungle is dangerous. Characters who stray from the paths or clearings find that the jungle impedes movement, and is treated as difficult terrain. Anything more than 10 feet away from a character is lightly obscured by the foliage, and anything more than 30 feet away is heavily obscured.

Hazard: Each time a character moves 10 feet or more through the jungle, roll a d10. On a roll of 1, the character stumbles into a patch of brown mold. On a 2, the character stumbles into a patch of yellow

mold. A character trained in Nature or Survival notices the danger and can avoid the mold if his or her passive Perception score is 15 or better.

Once a character has encountered both varieties of mold, he or she knows what to look for and can avoid this hazard in the future.

5. THE QUAY

The jungle path leads downhill to a strange harbor on the dark sea. Several stone piers jut out into the water, although no vessels are present now. A group of large, bulbous buildings that look like giant examples of puffball fungi stands near the waterfront; strange, round doorways lead into each one.

The moon-beasts are notorious for their gluttony and avarice, sending their more warlike slaves out as corsairs against other lunar civilizations. The Isle of Screams serves as a base for this piracy, although none of the moon-beasts' corsairs are present when the PCs visit.

The Doorways: The doors are made of living fungal tissue as strong as hardwood; they dilate open at a touch from a living creature's hand (or tentacle, as the case may be).

The Buildings: The three large buildings located near the quay are warehouses where stolen goods are stored until they can be shipped back to moon-beast cities. The small building at the west end of the harbor is the moon-beast equivalent of a harbormaster's office, and it features a number of strange wooden tablets covered in weird, dot-like indentations (moon-beast cargo manifests and inventories).

Creatures (10,500 xp): A small crew of lunar creatures long enslaved by the moon-beasts toil in the warehouses, rearranging the cargo stored here. The lunar creatures are pallid, bestial humanoids equivalent to quaggoths; they are fiercely loyal to their masters and attack any intruders that appear in the area. Their overseer is a moon-beast, keeping watch over this area from the small solitary building. Any commotion (such as a pitched fight) in the warehouse brings the moon-beast out to investigate; it shows up at the end of the second round of combat. Likewise, a fight against the moon-beast brings the quaggoths hurrying to defend their master.

- Moon-beast (PTCS page 245)
- 3 quaggoths

Treasure (2,400 xp): Most of the cargo stored here is bulky and not very valuable—for example, fungal timber cut from lunar forests, barrels of pitch, iron ingots, and sacks of gray, oily grain.

However, a group of three iron chests in the moon-beast's lair hold treasure recently dropped off here by moon-beast corsairs: 4,000 sp, 7,200 gp, and 900 pp, along with a small leather sack containing nine yellow sapphires worth 1,000 gp each.

6. MOON-BEAST SLAVE STOCKADE

A large clearing in the center of the island contains a strange-looking stronghold of some kind: a group of bulbous, dome-like buildings huddled together like a patch of puffball fungi. Jungle paths lead away from this clearing to the north, south, and west. Strange, round doorways lead into each building. From somewhere inside comes a horrible, thin piping sound, along with the tortured groans and baying of some large beast.

This area is the center of the moon-beast's activities on the isle, and it's the reason why this place is known as the Isle of Screams. The three southern domes of the structure serve as the moon-beast equivalents of a barracks, shrine, and mess hall. The doorways leading into the domes (and the doors between the domes) are the same as those described in area 5—living fungal tissue that dilates open at a touch.

Barracks: Humanoids from Thule might not recognize this room for what it is, because there are no bunks. Instead, this chamber (the largest of the southern group) is filled with two dozen "resting pools"—shallow pools of foul water surrounded by nest-like walls of slick, gray stone, perfect for a moon-beast to wallow in.

Shrine: This small chamber, the smallest of the southern group, features a foul idol depicting an eyeless, faceless three-legged thing—a depiction of the Great Old One Nyarlathotep (a successful DC 20 Intelligence/Arcana or Religion check identifies the idol).

Mess Hall: The chamber with the doorway facing east is the moon-beast mess hall. It consists of larders stocked with dismembered bodies preserved in a strange pickling jelly—some human, some from lunar beasts no human has ever seen.

Creatures (11,700 xp): The facilities here could easily support a couple of dozen moon-beasts, but at the moment the Isle hosts nothing more than a skeleton crew. Two moon-beasts are resting in the barracks area, although they quickly rouse themselves to investigate any commotion in the other portions of this complex. They attack any intruders they find, hoping to capture useful slaves—or tasty meals.

- 2 moon-beasts (PTCS page 245)

7. THE PIT

This large dome is clearly the origin of the strange piping music and bestial howls you heard from outside. The floor is hollowed out into a huge, shallow pit filled with oddly shaped stone tables and bizarre machines of sinister purpose. A huge, pallid moon-beast squats on the floor of the pit, clumsily playing a pipe-like instrument in its paws. A blue, winged beast with scales, feelers, and a long stinger is chained to a table next to the moon-beast. It writhes and hisses in misery.

This portion of the moon-beast base is given over to the monsters' favorite pastime: torturing things that fall into their power. The floor of the pit is about 10 feet below the rim, which forms a 10-foot wide path just inside the wall of the dome. The stone tables are fitted with shackles that can be adjusted to fit creatures of a variety of sizes and body forms; the strange machines are the moon-beasts' fiendish torture implements.

Creatures (9,300 xp): The creature being tortured by the moon-beast is the lunar equivalent of a wyvern. It is more brightly colored and insect-like in appearance than a terrestrial example, but it's otherwise the same. When the moon-beast becomes aware of the presence of intruders, it uses an action to yank a lever that releases the wyvern from its bonds. Instead of attacking its tormentor as one might expect, the creature springs at the nearest intruder in sight.

- Moon-beast (PTCS page 245)
- Wyvern

Development: If any PCs fall into the moon-beasts' clutches elsewhere on the isle, the moon-beasts bring them to this room and chain them up in preparation for hideous torture.

8. HOUSE OF DHARGO MAATH

At the northern end of the isle, the jungle gives way to a clearing of scarlet grass. Here stands a stone villa at the cliff-edge, overlooking the dark sea. Close by, a small tower stands at the very point of the headland. The villa and the tower are well-maintained, with manicured gardens and freshly painted shutters and doors. They appear to be examples of typical Thulean architecture, similar to the houses of the wealthy in places such as Ikath or Thran.

After striking his bargain with the moon-beasts, the wizard Dhargo Maath had his servants repair and refurbish an ancient Selenite retreat to serve



as his own secure hideout and sanctum sanctorum—a wise precaution, given the bitter rivalries dividing the Black Circle. Here Maath is far out of the reach of his enemies back home, and he can indulge his scholarly interests in the bizarre flora and fauna to be found on the Moon.

The Manor: Maath's home is comfortable, not luxurious; ferrying rich furnishings through the Moon-Door is tedious and difficult, especially without the Moongold Key. There is a bedchamber with a rather plain bed, a dining room with a fine table and only two chairs (salvaged from the old Selenite ruins here), a kitchen stocked with rich viands and preserves (Maath is a gourmand and dines well when he is here), and several guest rooms (all empty). When the PCs arrive, Maath is engaged in research in his tower, a humble structure separated from the manor itself by a fifty-foot path.

The Tower: The tower consists of three stories: a laboratory on the ground floor, a conjury on the second floor, and an observatory on the third floor. The third floor is the only floor with windows. When the PCs enter the tower, add:

This appears to be a wizard's workroom. Alchemical apparatuses are arranged on worktables by the wall; scrolls and texts are scattered about in disorder, along with jars of strange reagents and odd keepsakes. In one corner, an upright, coffin-like chamber of glass holds the unconscious body of a human woman in scholar's robes, about 60 years of age. A flight of steps leads up to a conjury above, guarded by a fierce-looking minotaur.

The woman in the glass chamber is Ghilean. She is currently suffering from the slave-stupor caused by the touch of a moon-beast, and the magic of Maath's glass chamber keeps her in that state until she is removed. If questioned, she remembers little of her ordeal after the moon-beasts attacked her in the Lykeion.

Creatures (13,650 xp): A minotaur stands watch in the laboratory. The creature is fanatically loyal to Dhargo Maath, roaring a warning the instant it detects a threat. Dhargo Maath himself is upstairs in the conjury, making preparations for a scrying rite.

- Black Circle wizard (PTCS page 227)
- Minotaur

If combat appears inevitable, Maath begins by casting *visions of madness*. If things appear to be going poorly, he attempts to escape by climbing to the observatory and slipping out the window, intending to make his way to the Moon-Door or seek the aid of his moon-beast allies.

Roleplaying Maath: While Maath greets any would-be assassins with every spell at his command, he is not unwilling to negotiate if the PCs. If warned by his minotaur, Maath descends halfway down the stairs and demands, "Who are you, and what are you doing here?" He wants to know how the PCs found him and determine whether they are a threat that must be neutralized.

Maath is confident and unapologetic; he feels little remorse at reports of deaths or damage at the Lykeion. Above all, he is pragmatic and efficient, which means that he is perfectly willing to pay the PCs to make them go away. Specifically, Maath is willing to trade Ghilean in exchange for the Moongold Key; he figures that once he delivers the key to his moon-beast allies, his position will be secure enough that Ghilean's knowledge will no longer pose a threat to him.

Treasure (2,400 xp): Dhargo Maath does not bother to keep much in the way of conventional wealth in his lunar refuge. A sturdy wooden coffer in the manor's bedroom contains 800 gp and 220 pp, plus six assorted gemstones worth 100 gp each. He carries a *potion of invisibility* and a *potion of healing* on his person, and the curios in Maath's library include two rare magic items of your choice.

CONCLUSION

Rescuing Ghilean from the Isle of Screams solves the mystery of her disappearance from the Lykeion and completes the PCs' initial mission. Whether the PCs go on to defeat Dhargo Maath (and perhaps destroy the Moon-Door) is up to them. If the PCs rescue Ghilean but leave Dhargo Maath free to make use of his moon-beast allies, the wizard soon makes use of that relationship to climb the ranks of the Black Circle and concoct even more threatening plots.

For her own part, Ghilean is deeply grateful to the PCs for rescuing her. As soon as she comes out of the stupor affecting her, she urges the characters to destroy or block the Moon-Door in order to prevent the moon-beasts from traveling to the Earth by that means. She also provides the PCs with a scroll, tome, or map pointing them toward a future adventure to express her gratitude.

APPENDIX

THE TCHO-TCHO

Hateful and depraved, the Tcho-Tcho are a race of near-humans given over to the worship of dark, prehuman deities. They are zealous servants of the Great Old Ones, and unlike the more alien beings that also worship the primordial gods that ruled over the Earth, they are just human enough to carry out missions for their masters among the more civilized peoples of Thule without attracting undue attention. Most Thuleans believe the Tcho-Tcho to be nothing more than a clannish, unfriendly tribal people with peculiar religious traditions.

The Tcho-Tcho are short, wiry, and hirsute, with long arms, wide mouths, and surprising strength for their slight statures. Most other people find the Tcho-Tcho to be unpleasant at best. In turn, Tcho-Tcho hate other peoples, especially true humans.

The PRIMEVAL THULE *Gamemaster's Companion* describes the Tcho-Tcho in greater detail.

TCHO-TCHO CANNIBAL CR 1/2

CE Small humanoid (human) XP 100

Senses average Perception 13

Languages Dhari, Tcho-Tcho

BASE STATS

AC 15 (leather)

hp 22 (4d6+8)

Speed 30 ft.

ABILITY SCORES

Str 13 (+1), **Dex** 16 (+3), **Con** 15 (+2)

Int 10 (+0), **Wis** 13 (+1), **Cha** 8 (-1)

TRAITS

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +6, Survival +3

Hateful Tcho-Tcho gain tactical advantage on saves against being charmed. Deception and Persuasion checks against Tcho-Tcho are made with tactical disadvantage.

Poison Use The cannibal can use an action to apply poison to a weapon. The poison remains potent for 1 minute. Any creature hit by a weapon coated in Tcho-Tcho poison must make a Con save (DC 10) or take 1d6 poison damage and be poisoned for 1 minute. The creature may make a new save at the end of its turn each round to end the effect, but if it misses 3 saves, it falls unconscious for 1d4 hours.

Sneak Attack The cannibal deals an extra 1d6 damage when it hits a target and has tactical advantage on the attack roll or when the target is threatened by an ally of the Tcho-Tcho.

Equipment leather armor, short bow, bronze handaxe, 3 doses of Tcho-Tcho poison.

COMBAT ACTIONS

Handaxe (melee weapon) *Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+1 slashing damage.

Shortbow (ranged weapon) *Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+3 piercing damage.

TCHO-TCHO LAMA CR 4

CE Small humanoid (human) XP 1,100

Senses average Perception 16

Languages Dhari, Mi-Go, Tcho-Tcho

BASE STATS

AC 16 (none)

hp 49 (9d6+18)

Speed 30 ft.

ABILITY SCORES

Str 11 (+0), **Dex** 14 (+2), **Con** 15 (+2)

Int 12 (+1), **Wis** 19 (+4), **Cha** 12 (+1)

TRAITS

Saves Dex +4, Int +3, Wis +6, Cha +3

Skills Medicine +6, Perception +6, Religion +3, Stealth +4

Hateful Tcho-Tcho gain tactical advantage on saves against being charmed. Deception and Persuasion checks against Tcho-Tcho are made with tactical disadvantage.

Spells The lama is a 7th-level caster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (save DC 14, +6 attack).

At Will: *guidance, ray of frost, resistance*

1st level (4): *bless, command, protection from good*

2nd level (3): *cure wounds, hold person, pass without trace*

3rd level (3): *animate dead, bestow curse*

4th level (2): *blight, summon nightgaunt**

* see PRIMEVAL THULE *Campaign Setting*, Chapter 7

Equipment robes, fetish stick

COMBAT ACTIONS

Multiattack The lama attacks twice with its open hand technique.

Open Hand (melee weapon) *Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d6+2 bludgeoning damage. If the lama hits a creature twice in the same round with open hand attacks, the creature must make a Con save (DC 14) or be stunned until the end of the lama's next turn.

Fetish Stick (ranged spell) *Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 2d6+4 psychic damage, and the target must make a Cha save (DC 14) or be frightened until the end of the lama's next turn.

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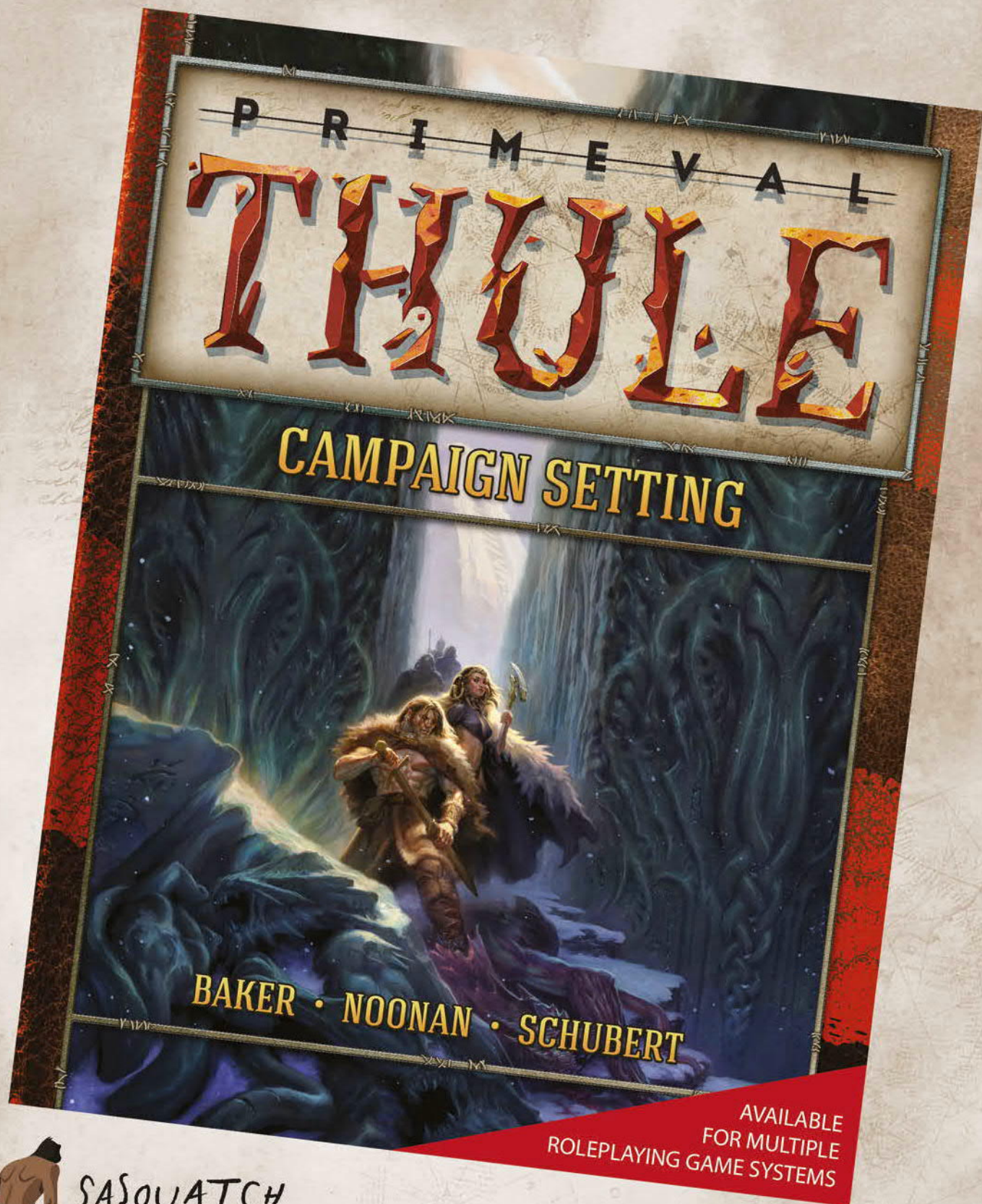
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