

GOREAN Adventures BLACK DAGGERS



TALES OF
GOR
COREAN ROLEPLAYING



POSTMORTEM
STUDIOS



Tales of Gor

GOREAN ROLEPLAYING

FANTASTICAL ADVENTURES ON THE COUNTER-EARTH

Authorised and based on the Gorean books of John Norman

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Black Daggers

The Black Caste has waxed and waned significantly in its fortunes over the last fifty years. From honourable instruments of death to creatures of scorn and ridicule hiding – rather than lurking – in the shadows, only to slowly grow in importance again. It can be hard to think of the caste as honourable, but they have their own codes, restrictions and way of life. They're a society hidden within a society, and once they take coin, they will take a life or die trying. Save in the most exceptional of circumstances.

Most Goreans reason that a person who is marked for death by an assassin must be deserving to some degree. Paying the – usually exorbitant – fee to have someone killed, all but guarantees their involvement in criminality, espionage or some other skullduggery and the presence of assassins used to help keep people honest.

Diminished in number, but not in skill, the Caste of Assassins is rebuilding its reputation as dealers of death without equal – even amongst the Scarlet Caste. Now they have set their sights on Tyrtaeus the Slaver, a friend and ally to the agents of the Priest-Kings whose death would be a significant blow.

POSTMORTEM STUDIOS

Postmortem Studios is an independent role-playing game company formed and run by James 'Grim' Desborough, with a reputation for tackling unusual, 'edgy' and adult gaming material. Postmortem Studios has published Tales of Gor, but this is far from the company's only game.

- You can find more information at postmortemstudios.wordpress.com
- Videos are found at youtube.com/PostmortemVideo
- Twitter: [@Grimasaur](https://twitter.com/Grimasaur)
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- There are Gor RPG support groups on Minds and Facebook.
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- We value your feedback and queries and suggestions can be sent to grim@postmort.demon.co.uk

OVERVIEW

Caution, for here be spoilers if you're going to play the adventure!

Players all stopped reading?

Good.

Tyrtaeus is a thoroughly unpleasant and unscrupulous piece of work, for all that he is useful. He is not just strict with his slaves, but abusive and overly demanding, especially with new collars and barbarians. His loyalty is also something that is bought, and he has no sense of loyalty.

Tyrtaeus has crossed people and made enemies in every corner of Gor in his long and prosperous life, so there are any number of people who may have hired the assassins to kill him. He is also in the process of betraying his 'friends' amongst the agents of the Priest-Kings, having been approached by agents of the kurii. He's not above using his connections, before he severs them, to get protection, after which he can turn to his new masters for assistance and, perhaps, offer his protectors up on a platter in the process.

This is an adventure of suspicion, skulduggery and betrayal where almost everyone's loyalty and goals can be brought into question.



Chapter 1: On the Road

Iliatus rides ahead of you, beckoning you on. A fine mist of drizzle continually falls from the sky, fine enough to penetrate your clothing and soak you to the skin, for all the rain is not too hard. The northern, mountain air chills your bones in the damp and makes this ride a genuinely miserable affair.

You are on your way to the Camp of Tyrtaeus, a slaver and friend to your cause, who is – it seems – in no small amount of trouble. Iliatus told you that he was marked for death by the Caste of Assassins and that you must race to his defence. A gold tarn each for your trouble and the hope of higher standing in the eyes of the Priest-Kings was more than enough to garner your interest and Iliatus' urgency sealed the deal. Now you're riding hard along the road that leads from Rarn to Tharna, bell for leather to find him before the assassins do.

You were away and rushing almost before you had time to think and it is only now, in the cold and damp, on the road, that you have time to reflect and think.

Starting a game mid-action can seem like a bit of a cheat to some. In storytelling (in film, TV and books) dropping the viewer into the action is called 'in media res'. This also happens in computer games. It doesn't tend to really work as well in tabletop games, robbing the players of some of their agency in playing their characters.

This isn't quite an 'in media res' opening per se, but it does skip over the 'call to adventure' and assumes the players have taken the job. Some groups won't like this, so feel free to insert a recruitment scene before this one, either in Tharna or Rarn.

If you go with this adventure as it is written, however, they're going to need details and are going to need these to be provided in retrospect, as if 'flashing back', or are going to need to get more details from Iliatus, the messenger who fetched them. Information that they might be able to access (from appropriate rolls and from questioning, an appropriate difficulty for rolls would be 15).

- Iliatus is a trusted messenger for the Priest King's agents and has been for many years. His honour is beyond reproach.
- Tyrtaeus is, by all accounts, a horrible man and a cruel slaver – even in the context of that profession. He has many enemies across Gor, even amongst his own caste, but also great wealth (a roll would be needed to know this much about him).
- Iliatus came to them, as the closest agents, after receiving word that no less than three of the black-clad caste had been paid to kill him.
- Iliatus doesn't know who hired the assassins and doesn't think that it matters.

- **Tharna was once ruled by an all-powerful Tatrix and women were the dominant force there (the players may have encountered Tharna in earlier adventures). Now virtually all women in Tharna are slaves – and so prices are low. That must be why Tyrtaeus spends so long in this area.**
- **Rarn is a much smaller city, without the glamour or wealth of the silver mines of Tharna and similar towns. Rarn produces copper, which is used in the production of bronze, other alloys and devices of the builder and physician caste. Being overlooked for the glitter of silver has served Rarn well, making it a bit hidebound and traditional, but safe and secure.**

SIDE NOTE – RARN

Rarn is not a city or settlement that is well documented in the existing Gorean books, past that we know it is a producer of copper. Gorean demography and population size is also a fairly open question that makes it hard to really grasp what a ‘large’ or ‘small’ city is.

Ancient Rome had a population of around 800,000 at its height, while Ar in the Gorean books is considered about the largest city there, with a population of around 100,000. Gorean medicine, immortality and birth control may work to keep populations low.

As a very, very rough guideline, you could take a modern, equivalent settlement and divide its population by 100 to arrive at rough, Gorean numbers.

As such, we can probably place Rarn as having a population of between 2,000 and 5,000. Another thing to remember when it comes to Gorean cities is that the majority of this population will be able-bodied adults (thanks to the immortality serums). This is very different from real-world demography, and the lack of senescence would likely lead to some interesting quirks. This population will also, of course, include slaves – most of which will be male slaves.

Rarn is likely an unpleasant town to live in, with spoil heaps, mines, heat and smoke but it will have cheap copper, a market for labour slaves, a taste for wild recreation and great pride in its copper, brass and bronze work. It’s likely that Rarn’s slave collars will be brass or bronze coated and that its people will wear copper, brass and bronze and will value it as much as others appreciate gold or silver. City pride is a massive thing for Goreans and covers every aspect of their cities. It is likely their homestone is a copper-laden mineral, and while something like Cuprite is more glamorous, something more humble like Bornite might better fit the city’s character.

THE WILD WAGON

Larl Cage

A day of travel and at least the rain has eased off. The foothills you travel through are simultaneously barren and inhabited by thickets of dense, short, thorny trees that regularly give you pause and cause to worry about bandits or other unwelcome interruptions. It is not the whoosh of a bolt or the yell of a bellowed challenge that stops you though, but rather a rather bedraggled man in a clashing array of colourful, patchwork garments. The colours are a little muted, as he is covered in mud. Still, he retains a strange sort of dignity as he bows and scrapes the dirt and gravel of the road with his hat.

"Might a troubled traveller and entertainer prevail upon these fine fellows and fellow travellers for a little aid?"

This is Motley who, with his partner Balatro, runs a caravan of curiosities and strange beasts. One of his wagons – he contends – is off the road and stuck in a thorn patch. The bosk that drags the cart is entangled in the thorns and its harness, and as a result, he needs assistance to get it clear as Motley, Balatro and their slaves are incapable of doing so by themselves – thus far.

Motley is a colourful, talkative character, given to flights of fancy and using ten words when one would do. Balatro, by contrast, is sullen, twitchy and silent and, when he speaks, always begins or ends with an oath or an obscenity. Their male slaves are oddly quiet (their tongues have been cut out) and their female slaves are oddities and curiosities as much as any other creature in their menagerie.

Motley directs your attention to the stranded wagon, a heavy looking thing, more cage than wagon. It is lodged firmly in the thorns and scree, along with the bosk that pull it. Pacing in the wagon is a larl – though a sorry specimen – its fur is patchy and it twists and turns and snarls in the close confines of the cage. Every snarl makes the bosk low and pull, lodging them deeper in the thorns.

"Whatever we do we can't seem to get it out. The larl spooks the other bosk worse than the ones that are used to it, and we can't afford to lose such an expensive beast. Untamable, though there are rumours. We're out of ideas, and enough help, but if you can aid us we should be most, most grateful."

The larl cage is the one that has gone off the track and gotten tangled in the thorns, along with the two bosk used to pull it. Other bosk won't approach the wagon, so can't be harnessed to draw it. It's too big and too dangerous (thanks to the larl) to be manhandled, and the thorns will take a long time to cut clear (the most obvious route forward). Players may come up with some innovative solution, but otherwise, it's merely going to be hard graft and time to cut the wagon loose. Once it is loose – if they do decide to stay and help – Motley will offer them a copper tarn each for their help, and allow them free use of the slave wagon and the wagon of curiosities before they go on their way.

If the players refuse to help and – instead – decide to travel on, Motley will thank them for their consideration and go back to cutting away at the thorns.

Slave Wagon

This must be the slave wagon, a hint of perfume and the scent of women, lingers around it. Its doors are curtained, a mesh-like veil hangs over its shutters, and despite its size, the bosc pulling it seems mostly unbothered, quietly biting what little greenery remains at the sides of the trail. A curtain twitches and a full, almond-shaped eye peeks out at you before quickly withdrawing.

Like everything else here, the slaves are curiosities. As much to be gawped at (for a tarsk bit) as to be used (for a copper tarsk). Bred exotics and other oddities of various kinds, they are as much of a sideshow attraction as anything else.

Kit: Kit is a bred slave, the most common of the exotics, but an exotic nonetheless. Bred slaves are made for passion and sexuality and exude it in every aspect of their being. Many slaves become passionate and liberated in their bondage, but bred slaves are literally made for it. Kit is a curvaceous brunette with a mass of ringlets, dressed in scarlet silk and adorned with many beads.

Puerl: Puerl is an exotic curiosity, a hermaphrodite. They are slight, androgynous but effeminate, able to pass for man or woman. While some are curious, Puerl's features are not considered attractive by most Goreans and their worth is more a matter of their rarity and exotic nature than anything else.

Olivia: A barbarian girl, wrapped in a free-woman's under-robe but with her collar very much on show, beneath the robe she is covered in tattoos, all over her body save her feet, hands, face and neck. These tattoos are a mix of illustrations and styles but these kinds of decorations – rather than brands – are rare on Gor. Because of her tattoos, she is not branded, but her command of Gorean is slight, and she still harbours a lot of defiance.

Emika: Despite contact between the Pani and the Gorean mainland and the existence of barbarian slaves for Earth's east, and slaves from the wagon peoples, 'oriental' slaves are still rare across much of Gor. Emika is one of the earliest Pani slaves to be brought to the mainland and as such is in high demand. She is a lost and despondent soul, having lost any hope of ever seeing her homeland again.



Wagon of Curiosities

This wagon seems to be their main attraction, a 'wagon of curiosities' if you can read, and if you can read the writing on the side correctly. A coin box is set next to the door, and it seems it costs a tarsk bit to enter and to see the curiosities within.

If they enter – and the pair of entertainers will charge, if this is before they grant aid.

It is dark and dusty inside, packed to the rafters with shelves and nets full of oddities. The smell of incense clings to everything, but cannot entirely bide the foetid reek of some of the exhibits. Motley throws the slats open to let in more light and air, and the strange things within are revealed to you.

The curiosities inside include:

- A two-headed vulo in a cage.
- A tarsk foetus crammed into an impossibly small jar.
- A trunk of barbarian female garments (bras, panties, t-shirts and other oddments).
- A fragment of stone from the old city of Ko-Ro-Ba.
- A black tarn feather as tall as a man.
- A pani short sword (a wakizashi)
- A huge, bat-eared, fanged head – partially cloven by an axe – preserved in vinegar.
- A glass case with finely preserved wingfish pinned inside it.
- A silver collar from Tharna.
- A coffer of shark teeth, some embedded in salt crystals.
- A bowl of stones marked 'find the home-stone'.
- Some ancient kaissa pieces on a shelf.
- A small, dead, rock-spider in a glass case.
- A spider-person's translator box. You can speak into it and hear your words changed into their clicks and whistles.
- A silver inlaid drinking horn from Torvaldsland.
- A few crumpled and faded polaroids of scenes from Earth.
- A lump of melted metal with a strange handle and lever sticking out of it – a character from Earth will recognise the grip of a gun.
- A small blue thing that goes 'whoop', loudly, at midnight every fourteen days.
- A strange, shivering, bald animal about the size of a large urt that snarls and makes odd yipping sounds when provoked. It shares its caged with a much-chewed, pink leather bag and it wears a collar with strange barbarian markings on its name tag; 'Chico'.
- A rusty-looking meteorite.
- A stuffed and mounted body of one the urt-people with glass eyes that have been put in boss-eyed.
-

- An assassin's brush, ink and template for painting the dagger on their forehead.
- A jar of ashes that smells faintly of ozone, it's label marks it as 'heretic'.
- An albino urt in a cage.
- Feel free to add some mementoes that relate to your group's adventures.

The Beast Wagon

When you get too close to this wagon, Motley interposes himself.

"I am afraid to inform you, my fine fellows, that this exhibit is not yet ready to be seen. It contains a vicious and legendary beast we believe to be the fabled 'Bear'. It is proving even harder to teach to behave than the larls however."

There is a rumbling below from the iron-bound and heavy-shuttered wagon, and you briefly catch a glimpse of teeth, and a baleful eye before Motley jams his tarn-goad against the bars.

"Back! Back you cur! Learn to behave!" He sighs. "As you can see this beast is not safe to approach, even in the wagon. Come, let us show you something else."

What actually lurks within the wagon is a kurii who is masquerading as a beast to travel with these men – his agents. He has a radio device hidden in his 'cell' and is here to cement the kurii deal with Tyrtaeus who insisted upon meeting his new sponsors face to face.

Living Wagon

The most spacious wagon, this one overhangs its sides and has a small, bent chimney sticking out the top – from which grey smoke is billowing. This seems to be their home wagon. A pair of bunk-bed cots sits on one side – one above the other. A small stove serves for heat and small-scale cooking. The floor is layered with rugs and cushions and the bare few knick-knacks that Goreans allow themselves are all over the place, biggledy-piggledy scrolls and notepaper, slave beads and kaissa pieces. There's no sign of the board.

There is nothing exceptional in here. Some of the scrolls are records of kaissa games, hiding encoded messages to and from their kurii masters.

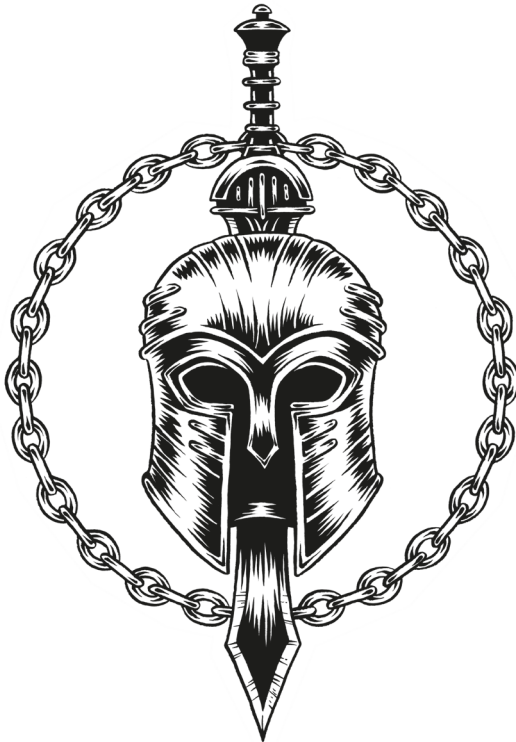
THARLARION ATTACK

“What strange fellows,” remarks Iliatus once you are well clear of Motley and his entertainments. “Madmen perhaps, do you think? Or do people really pay money to see their freaks and lay with their oddities?”

Take the opportunity here to engage in some light roleplay. Iliatus is a good-humoured man and will – charitably – laugh at any witticisms or jokes that the players might make. At some point, when it is his turn to speak again, he will open his mouth and then...

With an abrupt suddenness that makes you question your very eyes, Iliatus vanishes from the saddle of his tharlarion, which hisses and roars in shock and rears up, tongue flicking the air. No, not vanished, but dragged, you catch a glimpse of him flying backwards through the hedge thickets that line the sides of the roads, a bright red something bound around his waist like a sash.

Iliatus has been snatched by a squat, toad-like, cave tharlarion that has set its nest – and trap – at the side of the road here. It is fully described later on but was hoping for a quick and easy meal. It will try to pull Iliatus back into its cave to kill and swallow him, emerging after to attack anyone who pursues it.



ROAD ENCOUNTERS

Roll 2d6	Encounter
2	A herd of 2d6 wild verr, grazing in the scrub and thorns. They will scatter quickly once they think that anyone or anything is a threat, leaping from rock to rock or pushing into the spines, using their thick fur to protect themselves. At night this encounter will be at a distance, dozing, standing verr off the side of the road. They are light sleepers and rouse easily if hunted.
3	A herd of 1d6+1 hurts small, black, woolly, wallaby-like creatures. They graze on the road verges and when they run, tend to follow the line of the road in surprisingly rapid, leaping bounds. At night the hurts will be huddled in a scrape under some bushes, piled on top of one another to sleep and keep warm. They will be easy to miss and pass by.
4	A group of 1d6 travellers, either on foot (1-2 on a D6) or riding (4-6). These could be anybody, but while Gor has become more cosmopolitan in recent years, travel is still relatively rare for anyone other than pilgrims, entertainers, merchants and soldiers. Travellers are rare enough that they must have a particular reason to do so. The Games Master is encouraged to make this a bit of a more interesting encounter. At night these travellers will have made a camp around a little fire of dry, resinous thorns. One will be on guard at all times unless they are horribly inexperienced or naive.
5	The roads are maintained by work slaves, many of which may otherwise work the mines. These slaves can be from Tharna or Rarn, but Tharna bears the majority of the cost and does the majority of the work. The work party is likely to be around 4d6 slaves with 1d6+1 armed guards minding them and a bosk wagon for transportation. At night the wagon will either have returned to the nearest city or be drawn up, slaves cramped inside while the guards cook, eat and sleep, half awake, half asleep.
6	1d6 wagons loaded with silver ore (1-5 on D6) or ingots (on a 6). Guarded by 1d6, well-armed guards per wagon (minimum 2). The mixture of ore, ingots and the number of guards and carts is a deliberate ploy to throw off potential bandits or thieves. At night the wagon will be drawn up, without a fire. Half the guards will sleep, wrapped in blankets, while the other half stand guard, one with a gong or bell to rouse the others if necessary.
7	Birds flying up as you startle them, the distant call of sleen or the great northern tabuk, the remains of a camp. Something non-impactful but slightly interesting that brings the world to life.
8	1d6 wagons loaded with copper ore (1-4 on D6) or ingots (on a 5-6). These are guarded by 2 guards per wagon. Rarely this might be a shipment of brass or bronze instead. At night the copper wagon will be drawn up, its guards around a small fire of proper wood – brought from the city. The guards take turns on watch throughout the night.
9	A group of 2d6 guards either on foot (1-2) or riding as light cavalry on tharlaron back (4-6). Tharna handles the majority of the patrols, but they may be the shabbier and less well-equipped guards from Rarn (1-4 Tharna, 5-6 Rarn). They are suspicious of travellers and strangers, as all Goreans are, but can be satisfied by cooperation and humility. At night the guard patrol will be camped just to the side of the road – perhaps even on it, covering half the way. They will have a small fire, and half will be on duty as guards while the other half sleeps.
10	A merchant wagon (1-4), a band of entertainers (5) or slaver's wagon (6) plying trade between the northern cities. There are 1d3 wagons (1d6 divided by two, and round up) each with 1d6 people, which includes guards. They may be willing to trade with the characters if they can offer a reasonable price. At night the wagons will be drawn up with one or two standing guard while the others rest and eat.
11	A herd of 2d6 mountain goats, grazing on flowers, thorns, moss and lichen. They will startle and scatter at high speed the moment they feel threatened – with remarkable climbing skill. At night this encounter will be at a distance, dozing, standing verr off the side of the road. They are light sleepers and rouse easily if hunted.
12	A wild tarn sweeps overhead, circling. On a 1-5 it will continue to spiral, looking for easier prey, on a 6 it is hungry enough to stoop to the attack, trying to carry off one person or one beast to satisfy its hunger. Tarns will only hunt at night if starving. On a 1-5 they will encounter this tarn as a roosting silhouette on a rock outcropping, on a 6 it will stoop to the attack.

Chapter Two: The Camp

The majority of this adventure will take place in The Camp of Tyrtaeus, a semi-permanent way-station, used by Tyrtaeus along his regular routes picking up slaves and providing them to the mining industries of Rarn, Tharna and other surrounding cities and encampments. Tyrtaeus has decided that familiar territory is the best place for him to secure himself and defend against the assassins, and the agents of the Priest-Kings have concurred.

While there are assassins on the way, this part of the adventure – oddly – relies on boredom and routine. The camp should become a way of life for a few days, following its regular schedule to help lull the players (and their characters) into a false sense of security. This kind of slow-burn builds tension and allows for a great deal of soft roleplay, characterisation and a sense of the world in which the game takes place.

If things get too slow and dull, you can always mix things up with a little in-camp drama. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Two female slaves get into a catfight over some small issue – a scrap of food or a string of beads.
2. A pair of male work slaves are matched in a bare-knuckle fight to the death to break the boredom.
3. A hunt is organised to bring some fresh meat to the camp. A herd of northern tabuk have been spotted not too far away.

4. A slave has taken the opportunity to escape, and a hunt is planned to capture and punish them.
5. A camp kaissa tournament is organised to pass the time until the assassins show themselves.
6. An annoyed slave buyer arrives at the camp, wondering where his shipment is.

THE CAMP OF TYRTAEUS

A side road appears, carving between two large rocks and lined with stone chippings and gravel. A crude wooden sign attached to one of these boulders proclaims – in an amateurish hand – that this is the way to the Camp of Tyrtaeus. Passing between the rocks, you find the path rising up onto a shallow-sided clearing cut from the thorns and scrub.

Bounded by a rough-hewn stone wall of the local stone, this encampment is – despite its walls – little more than a temporary campsite. It seems there is only one permanent structure – a raised wooden hut of treated planks. Everything else within the walls is either a wagon or a tent. Guards, standing on a riser behind the wall, observe your approach and make a show of their crossbows, a pair marching out to meet you.

If Iliatus is still with them, there'll be no question of their bona-fides. If they recovered Iliatus' body, they might still have his letters of introduction. Otherwise, they will have to convince the guards that they are not the assassins and so long as they can get to see or speak to Tyrtaeus himself, he will allow them within. Fighting the guards without killing them, may also earn them sufficient trust to be granted admittance.

Once they are to be allowed in they will be escorted into the hut – Tyrtaeus’ personal quarters – to meet the man they will be protecting and to get a taste of the rewards they might gain from aiding such an influential person. There will, of course, also be hints, that build over time, that Tyrtaeus is a horrible person, for all he might be useful.

Tyrtaeus’ Greeting

The guards escort you to the hut, it seems more substantial than you thought as you draw close, but still, little more than a hut – planks put together, the wood must have been brought here from elsewhere, and that must be why it is the only actual building here. The heavy curtain is drawn aside, and you are ushered in.

Inside it is warm and dry, the first real warmth and dryness you’ve felt in a while. The inside is hung with tapestries, the floor covered in layered rugs. Tyrtaeus – at least you assume it to be him – lounges in the blue and gold robes of his caste. He is not the soft merchant you might have thought him to be, his hands are calloused and body, used to hard work at one time, if not any longer, and his face carries a scar down his cheek to the corner of his lip, giving him a permanent half-smile.

He pushes a slave girl away from him as you’re brought before him and shifts to stand. He calls out a loud ‘Tall!’ and moves to clasp your hands and shoulders in greeting.

My saviours! Come to protect me from the fierce and unstoppable assassins! You are welcome, most welcome indeed! Heroes, blessed by the Priest-Kings themselves! My camp is your camp, what’s mine is yours. Anything you need to be comfortable and to better protect me, it’s yours!’

Tyrtaeus will be all smiles and help, for now. ‘Anything you need’ isn’t exactly true; however, there will always be excuses for anything that would inconvenience him even slightly. Anything that doesn’t cost him, but would cost his men or his slaves, however, that’s another matter. Having greeted them all, he has them taken to the grandest tent in the camp – formerly occupied by guards who are going to be none to happy and being made to leave...

Your Tent

The tent, so recently vacated by guards, is large and spacious. A handful of cots surround the outside – simple, folding beds – and the floor is covered with rugs and a scattering of cushions, laid atop a canvas floor. Everything seems taut, tight, tied and well pitched, though it catches both the cool moisture of the outside and the warmth of the sun as it pours through the thin cloud, making it a little stifling.

It’s comfortable enough, in the conditions, but these tents are meant for mercenary campaigns or travel between cities, not for prolonged stays such as have been imposed on these ones and, as the days wear on, they may get a bit more ragged and worn.

You can allow the players to settle in, there’s nothing of particular note about this tent, other than that they’ve been given what passes for comfortable accommodation over a few resentful caravan guards. They have not been given access to camp slaves (at least no more than anyone else), that would be going a little too far. Once they are settled a messenger will arrive to invite them to a welcome feast.

The Welcome Feast

You have just about had enough time to unpack your things and settle in when a slave girl, shorn-headed and clad in nothing but bone-yellow bead necklaces appears and kneels on the rugs, waiting to be given permission to speak.

Presumably the characters will allow her to talk.

"I come from Tyrtaeus. My Master intends to throw a feast this evening in your honour, as his saviours and protectors. You are invited to join him in his huts for this feast, beginning at the sounding of the next bar." She lowers her head, waiting to be dismissed or ordered otherwise.

The ringing of long metal bars is used to mark time in Gorean cities and many other places, despite the existence of chronometers. Goreans prefer tradition and to keep things simple. The camp has its own bar, time kept by a pair of male slaves, one with a sundial, the other with the bar and a hammer, chiming each ahn during the day.

The huts are transformed for this feast, only Tyrtaeus and his most trusted guards within – besides the slaves that serve. You are given places of honour opposite his seat, and then the feasting begins. You cannot help but wonder how he is putting on this feast, given he's stuck camping out here in the wilds, but there does seem to be plenty of food. Stuffed vulos, spiced eggs, cuts of tabuk, suls and wild herb salads – and the paga flows very freely indeed.

You get the feeling that he is showing off, the slaves in service are not the fastest or the most well-trained, but they show promise and are all beauties, taken from the cream of his stock, both male and female, dressed in beads and chains, scurrying and dancing to his every order – and he has many. It seems Tyrtaeus prefers not to do anything for himself and – instead – prefers his slaves to literally spoon feed him and even wipe his mouth.

"Do you see any you like? I'd be happy to sell you a fine piece of slave flesh, and at a knockdown price for my saviours – of course. This damn assassination threat has put a crimp on my business."

True to his word, he is willing to sell slaves to them. A merchant never passes up an opportunity for profit, and a slaver is no different. He is particularly salacious and even pushy in describing the merits of each slave, especially if one of the characters does show an interest. Towards the end of the meal and well into his cups, Tyrtaeus will call the slaves forward one at a time for him to extol their virtues and their worth as a sound investment. Then something changes...



The Mask Slips

"Marcus, stand forth!"

Tyrtaeus calls to one of the male slaves, a scarred brute of a man in heavy wrist and ankle rings and nothing else.

"What do you make of this specimen hmm?" He stands and paces, swaying drunkenly, around the man. "A worker perhaps? A pleasure slave to feed a woman's fantasy of taming a beast? Maybe suitable to be a fighter, stable fights or the arena?"

There is the merest flicker, for a moment, of a defiant sneer on the face of Marcus, but it doesn't escape Tyrtaeus' notice.

"What a great and wonderful institution slavery is. Here we have a man who, like the assassins set to come after me, could kill me in an instant. He could grab my neck in his boary hands and snap it like cordwood. He doesn't. Why? Because he is a slave! It would violate everything about our culture for him to rise up, and — of course — the guards would kill him. Still, despite that spark of defiance in him, I am quite safe!"

Tyrtaeus abruptly punches Marcus between the legs, with all the cruel strength he can muster. The colossal man doubles up and falls to his knees, coughing and retching, wiping bile from his mouth with the back of his hand as he struggles to breathe.

"One defeat and a man, or woman, is ours to buy and sell. Ours to have the power of life and death over!"

Before any of you can react, he has slipped a razor-sharp Pani dagger from his sleeve and has drawn it across Marcus' throat. The huge man collapses, bleeding out onto the rugs while the slave girls recoil, crying, to the corners of the hut.

"Power friends! More than anything else, to be a Master means to have power. You must exercise it, you must have it. You must avail yourselves of it when it is there for the taking. Slaves, clean this mess. Friends, I shall see you tomorrow."

This scene is not intended to question slavery within the context of the Gorean world or paradigm. Instead, it is designed to show that there is a bad side to it on Gor and that even to Goreans mistreatment and slaying slaves out of hand, while legal, is shocking and looked down upon. Tyrtaeus has, even within the Gorean norms, shown that he is a sick and terrible person. If still a useful one.

THE CAMP

Tyrtaeus' camp is made up of several elements, and it can be a good idea to allow the players to explore the field, through their characters, and to become familiar with it by experiencing it. The game – as a whole – can be elevated by recreating the day-to-day life of the camp, even though this can seem boring in the moment.

The Bounds

The whole camp sits in a scrape in the dirt, a little lower than the surrounding land and prone to puddles and dampness. The surround is marked by a crude stone wall, wedged together with smaller stones. The lower part of the wall is older – perhaps – with more lichen, moss and weeds, while the upper layers are more clear. It doesn't present too much of an obstacle – maybe four feet in height – but it's better than nothing.

The wall is somewhat variable and relies on its weight to stay together. A crew of male work slaves is working its way around in circles building up the wall, but it's slow going and is mostly being done to keep them tired and occupied than to actually build up the wall. The front 'gate' is just an opening, and there is a narrow, squeeze-gap cut into the wall to allow people access to the midden.

Tyrtaeus' Hut

Without invitation there is no entry to Tyrtaeus' hut, even for you, at least not without good reason. A pair of caravan guards lurk around the hut at all times, watchful – at least as watchful as bored men can be – for trouble. Tyrtaeus remains inside, not showing himself, it's probably the best thing in terms of his safety. There too, he can keep – and hide – his comforts and luxuries.

Tyrtaeus' hut is split into two sections, the section they have already seen – his personal 'room' – and a smaller section where is personal slaves sleep and serve. This is also where he keeps his luxuries, his wine and preserves, and his locked coffer where he keeps his money and ledgers. As the days pass, Tyrtaeus gets more and more stir crazy, taking it out on his slaves and his hirelings, with harsh words or the whip – depending which they are. It's not a very strong building, but the wood is treated to resist fire.

The Midden

A well-worn little path cuts narrowly through the outer wall and winds its way through the thorns before it arrives at the midden. This is little more than a heap of waste, a scrape in the dirt over which is spread the debris from the camp. Excrement, broken pottery, animal bones, peelings and more are all intermingled with dry, dead thorns and handfuls of mountain grass, to compost the dirt and cover some of the smell. Slaves regularly walk the path to dump chamber-pots and buckets into this rotten, stinking pool.

The midden has been used as long as there have been camps here, and that is many years. The bottom layer of the midden is a rich compost, and around the edge of this smelly mound are many mountain flowers and healthier looking, greener thorns. The camp isn't meant to be used for as long as it has been, however, and the midden is dangerously over-full.

The Wagons

The wagons are pulled together in a circle within the outer wall of the camp. Were this a camp out in the wilds they would be the outer wall, in here they're more like an inner defensive line. They're not suited to camp out in – they're just transport wagons – but if there were an attack they would provide cover and a second defensive line. As things stand they're virtually deserted, the bosk watched over by a couple of disinterested drivers.

Supplies and everything else of worth have been removed from the wagons, so other than a few grains there's really nothing here. They do provide potential cover for assassins, guards or anyone else – should things devolve into a fight. The bosk are relatively placid, domesticated bosk but if they could be urged to stampede, it would still be devastating.

The Tents

A scattering of tents – haphazardly arranged – makes the camp for the wagon drivers and the guards. They're quite crammed in and clearly irritable from the delay. Camp slaves – some of them taken from the cages – scurry to do the bidding of the bored and grumpy men. Some of them are getting a harsh and rapid lesson in service as a result. The whole thing is a disorganised mess.

The disorganised nature of the tent encampment is a vulnerability for the camp. There is such a mix of people, and they're so crammed together that a suitably disguised attacker could – reasonably easily – move amongst these people. The guards are also resentful of these outsiders, doing their job, and will take just about any opportunity to criticise them, badmouth them or start fights.

Slave Cages

The slave cages are stacked to one side of the camp. These are all full of male slaves – work slaves and prisoners, intended for the mines. These men cannot be trusted free, so they are kept contained in the cage wagons – which have been wheeled over here, and the smaller, individual cages intended for slave girls. The men in those, branded or not, glower sullenly from these spaces, not truly big enough even for them to turn around. A handful, it seems, are taken to scavenge for wood and to work on the wall each day, before being returned.

Men are inherently more dangerous, and slave revolts are not uncommon, especially amongst men who have nothing left to lose. This area keeps them locked down, but is also a powder-keg. A determined man might break free of a woman's cage – given the opportunity and enough time. Still, in the view of Tyrtaeus, this is the only solution – and he may not be wrong.



Slave Pen

A crudely fenced in area has been bounded with thorns, taken from the surrounding land. It's little more than a marker, and the female slaves from the camp have all been crammed in here, under the threat of the whip if they don't stay within the 'fence'. That seems to be enough to keep them in line, though as you pass many kneel and appeal to be bought, or to look after your tent, just to get away from this grubby little field where they have to fight over scraps of dirty blanket.

There's no threat of rebellion here, but it's a miserable little camp, and many of the girls are genuinely desperate for something – anything – to do. Those that aren't, and these are mostly new to the collar, huddle in the middle avoiding contact with anyone or anything save when the food is doled out.

Stores

One larger tent is filled with most of the camp's collected supplies. A great deal is distributed elsewhere, but here – under cover of canvas – are sacks of grain, rice, animal feed, suls and barrels of water, salt and dried meat. There isn't really enough to keep the camp going as long as it might have to and the supplies will need to be bulked out with foraging and hunting.

With rationing, there shouldn't be any immediate problem, but one of the assassins could poison or destroy the food supply as a way of flushing Tyrtaeus out. Hunting and foraging are things that the characters could do to help, and that might soften some hostility towards them, at the expense of less protection for Tyrtaeus.

Fire Pit

There are smaller campfires around the enclosure, but small. These smaller ones burn dried dung, twigs and scraps. Anything that doesn't go into the midden. One central campfire serves for everything else, flatbreads cooked on hot stones, stew pots, and a big kettle, continually boiling slave gruel. The slaves here are sweaty, filthy with ash, and unceasingly busy.

The characters' meals will need to be prepared here too, everyone's is. This is another point of vulnerability that an assassin could exploit to attack. A poison or a mere incapacitant (like tassa powder) smuggled into the food supply could cause considerable problems for the defenders.

Chapter Three: Three Deaths

Over the next three days, three assassins will come for Tyrtaeus, one after another. Each will use a different tactic to try and get to him. That three assassins have taken coin shows the ardour with which his enemies wish him dead. This is a costly undertaking and a deadly and unusual one. Usually, only one assassin, or a group of assassins, takes a contract at a time. Either a special deal has been struck, or these assassins did not know each other had been hired.

DAY ONE

A Gorean day is divided into 20 ahn, each 72 minutes long, and further divided into Ehn and Ihn. The 10th Ahn is noon on Gor, and the 20th Ahn is midnight. There are 40 Ehn in an Ahn and 80 Ihn in an Ehn. An Ihn is about 1.35 seconds (a 'Mississippi' with an extra 'ippi'), and an Ehn is about 108 seconds long.

This game is assumed to take place in the early Autumn, with a sunrise in the 6th Ahn and sunset in the 17th ahn.

Each day the working slaves rouse, or are roused in the 6th Ahn and put to work preparing the breakfast meal and cleaning the camp (or working on the wall). Mealtimes take place at the 8th Ahn, 12th Ahn and 16th Ahn with most bedding down by the end of the 20th Ahn. Guards change shifts at the 10th Ahn, each set of guards working 10 Ahns and being brought their meals by slaves.

Each day comes with a few optional events/pieces of local colour (some of which are listed earlier), but Day One also comes with one non-optional event:

The Entertainers Arrive

Without much fanfare, the entertainers who the characters may or may not have helped will arrive at the camp, during the 9th Ahn. With the excuse of being bored out of his mind, Tyrtaeus will approve for them the right to stay at the camp, provided that they pay their way in entertainments. The entertainers will act happy to see familiar faces who helped them or will chide the characters for not helping them (if they didn't). If the characters fought them and killed them off, this is all moot, but otherwise they – and their hidden charge – will become part of the warp and weft of camp life for the next few days.

Optional Additional Colour

One of the camp scouts returns and brings word that he found an abandoned tarn nest of branches and twigs that would make good fuel for the campfires – better than the greenery and thorns found around the mountain. Some help and a barrow would make this much more manageable. If you want to spice things up, it's possible that the nest isn't abandoned, or that it is rife with lice and fleas that hungrily attack anyone disturbing it (use a swarm as a stand-in for it).

NIGHT ONE – THE STEALTH ASSASSIN

Night time at the camp is still somewhat active, and the lack of fuel prevents decent campfires from being made, so it is reasonably dark and shadowy. Anyone sneaking around in this – including the assassin – gets an extra dice for their Stealth rolls. Don't forget to make rolls for the guards, for the assassin and for the assassin to spot or anticipate any traps or other cunning schemes that the players have put in place.

The assassin's plan of attack is as follows:

1. Ride his tharlaron to within a couple of hundred metres from the camp – well able to spot even the small campfires from that distance without being visible himself.
2. To creep the distance between his mount and the camp, sticking mostly to the road (as the thorns are hard to move through). He's at risk of running into a patrol here.

3. Crossing the low wall between two sets of guards, as far as possible between them.
4. Sneaking to the empty wagons, to get the lay of the land.
5. Waiting until midway through the 3rd Ahn to launch their attack, trying to get as close as possible to Tyrtaeus' hut, dousing one of the torches (Tyrtaeus has preferential treatment there) and prying away a board or two to get inside.
6. The assassin will proceed to try and slit Tyrtaeus throat in his sleep and – if possible – to kill the slaves he beds with, in the same way, to delay the alarm being raised.
7. He will then attempt to slip away in the same way.



DAY TWO

After the first attack, people are much more on alert (unless it succeeded, of course). Tyrtaeus will invite the characters to tighten the camp's defences further and will insist that either one of them, or a camp guard is alongside him, and awake, day and night (though with a changing shift at the same shift-change time).

The slaves working on heightening the wall will also be pushed especially hard following the first assassination attempt, with the whip being employed much more and more of the male slaves being put to work to build it up. This means more guards watching over them and more chance of them being stirred up or taking any opportunity that might arise to escape. This will play into the night's events unless the characters intercede or change what's going on in some way.

Optional Additional Colour

One of the slaves working on the wall smashes a rock into his chains, breaking a link he has been working on, then attacks a guard with the same stone. Depending on how successful he is and what the characters do, this may turn into a full slave break-out (though the keys are kept secure at the camp and away from the slaves). This may also alter some of the evening events.

NIGHT TWO THE FIRE

The second assassin has chosen a much more direct method of attack. A tarn-rider he intends to swoop over the camp and to 'bomb it' with fire jars, which are typically used as siege weapons. He hopes to flush out Tyrtaeus and then to take a clean shot with his crossbow.

Starting around the 2nd Ahn he will begin his attack according to the following plan:

1. Make several high passes over the camp (very unlikely to be noticed at such a height and in the dark).
2. Make his first swooping attack, dropping a fire jar and gauging the response.
3. Make his second fire-jar attack (he only has two).
4. Make another pass, looking for Tyrtaeus.
5. He will continue to fly back and forth over the camp, taking pot-shots at guards – or Tyrtaeus – until the tarn is below half health or he is out of bolts.
6. He will then dismount, leaving the tarn to fly off for cover, and will continue his attack on foot. Assassins do not stop (under usual circumstances) until they have killed their target. Tyrtaeus is his target, over and above all other considerations – even death.

Fire Jar One:

An ear-splitting shriek cuts through the night, followed by a sudden blast of wind. In its wake, a spark – like an ember from a fire – drops and touches the earth. Where it lands, fire blossoms in a great roaring rush, engulfing part of the wall and some of the tents beyond. In the sudden light, you see the bosk rearing up, bellowing in fear, and burning men rolling in the dirt to put themselves out.

Fire Jar Two:

The camp is in chaos, people running, slaves screaming and shouting. A smouldering vulo – loose from its cage – runs and bounces along the dirt past you, squawking and booming. That ear-piercing shriek sounds again, and a fresh spark falls from the sky, smashing close to Tyrtaeus' hut. The blast of flame lights up the camp for a second time, enclosing you between two pyres as your attacker wheels about in the night sky.

DAY THREE - THE FREE WOMAN

The last assassin intends to try subterfuge to get to the target if nothing else has worked thus far. They have swaddled themselves in the robes of a free woman to disguise themselves – a breach, even of Assassin's honour codes – and have taken a tincture to alter their voice, along with dousing themselves in a strong, women's perfume. They have hidden their blades – two daggers – on the inside of their thighs, where a free woman should not be touched.

They will arrive at the camp, accompanied by a bodyguard who doesn't know about the subterfuge and who will be genuinely horrified as and when it is revealed.

Their story, as they approach the camp (the guard is aware of this part of the subterfuge and paid to go along with it) is that their caravan was attacked by bandits and that they are seeking shelter and accompaniment to the next city. This is not too uncommon a story, but they will have to make up all the other details (caste, what happened exactly to the caravan and so on) on the fly. As the Games Master, you may well have trouble keeping the story straight yourself, which is an excellent way to roleplay someone lying without necessarily having prepared enough.

NIGHT THREE - CELEBRATION

With the third assassin exposed and killed or captured, the threat has come to a close. Tyrtaeus is wildly grateful and now that he is freed from the danger of assassination and the need to be careful with supplies he throws another massive party and feast with whatever remains (and whatever supplies the assassins may have had on them). The paga flows like water, the wine with it, and a bosk killed in the fire-bombing is roasted to provide everyone with plenty to eat.

Tyrtaeus will state his gratitude over and over, promising them riches, rewards, their pick of slaves either here or at one of his estates. His intent is to lower their guard, get them good and drunk and to leave them vulnerable to his final betrayal, which is detailed in the next section. If you want to go with a more climactic ending than the one suggested, do feel free – but it is very likely to end with the deaths of some or all of the characters.

IN CASE OF FAILURE

It is always possible – more than likely – that the players will fail to protect Tyrtaeus. Should he die, then there's no need to continue or for the betrayal to take place. In simple failure they – and any survivors – will have to move on.

Nobody is expected to succeed all the time, but in Gorean society, their honour and prestige may well take a hit and any trust extended to them as agents will be far more grudging. On the flip-side, Tyrtaeus being so hated by so many, their failure to protect him may well earn them the jovial appreciation of his rival slavers and enemies.



PART FOUR BETRAYAL

The morning after the celebration the characters – hung over if they indulged – will be awakened early by the camp being struck, the slaves being herded back into their cages, fires being put out and goods being loaded up. Tyrtaeus will be spotted ascending into his howdah (carried across the backs of two bosk) when they spot him, Motley and Balatro smiling and talking to him as he clammers up.

“Ah, you have awakened, but no matter. I thank you, very much indeed, for saving my life all those times. I am afraid, however, that I have had a better offer. Our friends here have made me a far better offer. What did the Priest-Kings send to take care of me? A handful of men, a motley rabble, who succeeded more by luck than judgement. These fine gentlemen bring me an offer from beasts, beasts perhaps more powerful than our absent gods. While I thank you for your valiant effort, I am afraid I must take my leave.”

Tyrtaeus finishes his climb up into his howdah and reclines on the cushions therein, a pair of slave girls flanking him, distinctly uneasy to be up so high.

Tyrtaeus will not be swayed from this course, in spite of threats, appeals to honour, even the lure of gold. He judges – correctly – that the Kurii will best be able to support him, protect him and provide him with a lucrative source of barbarian slaves. The man has no honour whatsoever.

Fighting is distinctly unwise for the characters to engage in here, Tyrtaeus has his own guards as well as Motley and Balatro willing to fight by his side. However, should it come to a battle his private guards – being men of more honour than he, will put down their arms and turn their backs on him. That still leaves them facing Tyrtaeus himself, Motley, Balatro and the beast that lurks within their wagon – a Kurii here to bring Tyrtaeus into the fold directly.

Whichever way you slice it, this adventure ends on a down-note. It ends in betrayal, death and questions about the future of the struggle as a whole. They should have doubts and disillusionment, but it is probably a good idea to follow this scenario up with a much more upbeat adventure.



CARAVAN GUARDS

These are typical caravan guards – especially for slave caravans. Armed with spears, shields and crossbows they're well equipped to defend the caravan, should it come under attack. Most guards will not give their lives unnecessarily purely for the sake of goods, however, and will retreat if hard pressed.

Power Bonus: 2D, Accuracy Bonus: 2D
Health: 36
Movement: 15/22/45/75
Helmet and Small Shield: Armour 2D+1
Dagger: 3D damage, Short Spear: 4D damage,
Effective Range 20 ft, Crossbow: 4D+2, Range
100 feet.

AGILITY: 3D
Athletics: 4D
Blades: 4D
Evade: 5D
Fistfight: 4D
Riding: 4D
Spears: 4D
Throwing: 4D
Whips: 4D

ARTS: 2D

BODY: 3D+2
Fitness: 4D+2
Run: 5D+2

DEXTERITY: 3D
Crossbow: 4D
Draft Beast: 4D

CHARM: 3D
Animal Handling: 5D
Command: 4D
Intimidation: 5D
Slave Handling: 5D
Will: 5D

REASON: 3D
Initiative: 4D
Navigation: 4D
Senses: 5D

ILIATUS

Iliatus is a low level agent of the Priest Kings who primarily works as a messenger, taking missives – reliably – from one cell to another. He has been thrust into a much more high profile mission by the apparent urgency of protecting Tyrtaeus. He rides astride a riding tharlarion.

Power Bonus: 3D, Accuracy Bonus: 2D
Health: 38
Movement: 15/22/45/75
Dagger: 3D damage, Peasant Bow: Damage
5D+2, Range 120 feet, Short Sword: Damage:
4D+2
Armour: Buckler Shield, Leathers, Tharlarion
Boots: 2D+1

AGILITY: 4D
Athletics: 4D+1
Blades: 4D+2
Clubs: 4D+1
Evade: 4D+2
Fistfight: 4D+1
Riding: 4D+1
Spears: 5D
Stealth: 5D

ARTS: 1D

BODY: 5D
Fitness: 5D+1
Endurance: 5D+1
Run: 6D
Survival (Forest): 6D
Swimming: 5D+1

DEXTERITY: 4D
Bow: 5D
Crossbow: 5D
Rope Work: 4D+1
Sleight of Hand: 4D+1

CHARM: 2D
Animal Handling: 2D+1
Bluff: 3D
Will: 2D+1

REASON: 3D
Healing: 3D+1
Initiative: 3D+2
Navigation: 3D+1
Senses: 4D

TYRTAEUS

Tyrtaeus is a shy, conniving, duplicitous slaver with a list of enemies as tall as he is. His golden tongue cannot entirely hide his cruel and opportunistic nature. He will happily say one thing and do entirely another.

Power Bonus: 1D, Accuracy Bonus: 1D
Health: 28
Movement: 6/9/17/30

AGILITY: 2D
Blades: 2D+1
Evade: 2D+1
Fistfight: 2D+1
Pleasure: 2D+1
Riding: 2D+1
Whips: 2D+1

ARTS: 3D
Aesthetics: 3D+1

BODY: 2D
Fitness: 2D+1
Swimming: 2D+1

DEXTERITY: 2D
Draft Beast: 2D+1
Rope Work: 2D+1
Sleight of Hand: 2D+1

CHARM: 5D
Confidence: 5D+1
Animal Handling: 5D+1
Bluff: 5D+2
Charisma: 5D+2
Command: 5D+2
Convince: 5D+2
Intimidation: 5D+2
Slave Handling: 5D+2
Speaking: 5D+1
Will: 5D+2

REASON: 4D
Philosophy: 4D+1
Culture: 4D+1
Initiative: 4D+1
Kaissa: 4D+1
Scholar: 4D+1
Senses: 4D+1
Trading: 7D

STEALTH ASSASSIN

Power Bonus: 2D, Accuracy Bonus: 2D
Health: 34
Movement: 12/18/36/60
Dagger: 3D damage., Shortsword: 3D+2 damage, Hand Crossbow: 3D damage, range 25 ft.

AGILITY: 5D
Coordination: 5D+1
Acrobatics: 5D+1
Athletics: 5D+1
Blades: 6D
Escapology 5D+1
Evade: 6D
Fistfight: 5D+1
Stealth: 9D
Throwing: 5D+1

ARTS: 1D

BODY: 3D+2
Fitness: 4D
Endurance: 4D
Run: 4D
Swimming: 4D

DEXTERITY: 5D
Care: 5D+1
Burglary: 5D+1
Crossbow: 5D+2
Rope Work: 5D+1
Sleight of Hand: 5D+1

CHARM: 1D
Bluff: 1D+1
Command: 1D+1
Intimidation: 1D+1
Slave Handling: 1D+1
Will: 1D+1

REASON: 3D
Healing: 3D+1
Initiative: 4D
Kaissa: 3D+1
Senses: 3D+1

TARN ASSASSIN

Power Bonus: 3D, Accuracy Bonus: 3D

Health: 34

Movement: 15/22/45/75

Light Crossbow: 5D+2, Range 100 feet,

Shortsword: 4D+2 damage, Fire Jar: 3D damage per turn, attack at -1D.

Armour: Buckler Shield, Helmet, Leathers: 1D+2

AGILITY: 5D

Coordination: 5D+1

Acrobatics: 5D+1

Athletics: 5D+1

Blades: 6D

Escapology 5D+1

Evade: 5D+2

Fistfight: 5D+1

Stealth: 5D+1

Tarn Riding: 7D

Throwing: 6D+1

ARTS: 1D

BODY: 4D+1

Fitness: 5D+2

Endurance: 5D

Run: 5D

Swimming: 5D

DEXTERITY: 5D

Care: 5D+1

Burglary: 5D+1

Crossbow: 6D

Rope Work: 5D+1

Sleight of Hand: 5D+1

CHARM: 1D

Bluff: 1D+1

Command: 1D+1

Intimidation: 1D+1

Slave Handling: 1D+1

Will: 1D+1

REASON: 3D

Healing: 3D+1

Initiative: 4D

Kaissa: 3D+1

Senses: 4D

FEMALE ASSASSIN

Power Bonus: 2D, Accuracy Bonus: 2D

Health: 32

Movement: 9/13/27/45

Sleeve Dagger: 3D damage, +1D to conceal, the sleeve dagger is poisoned

with a venom that does 1D additional hitpoints immediately, and on each

following turn for 1D+2 turns. The

assassin also carries an antidote to this

poison on them, which halts the effects of

this poison immediately.

NB: In the earlier books The Assassins were commonly too proud to use poison and it was often stated that it was against their codes. More recent books seem to suggest that, perhaps, they have embraced poison as brewing it is a part of their training. The make and use of poisons may also be due to a weakening in the strength and reputation of the Caste, or they may have been bluffing about not using poison in the past. Either way, this assassin is using poison, perhaps simply out of desperation, or perhaps because of a more liberal interpretation of the codes.

AGILITY: 4D

Coordination: 4D+1

Acrobatics: 4D+1

Athletics: 4D+1

Blades: 5D+1

Escapology 4D+1

Evade: 5D

Fistfight: 4D+1

Stealth: 4D+1

Throwing: 4D+1

ARTS: 1D

BODY: 3D+1

Fitness: 3D+2

Endurance: 3D+2

Run: 3D+2

Swimming: 3D+2

DEXTERITY: 3D
Care: 3D+1
Burglary: 3D+1
Crossbow: 3D+2
Rope Work: 3D+1
Sleight of Hand: 4D

CHARM: 4D
Bluff: 7D
Command: 4D+1
Intimidation: 4D+1
Slave Handling: 4D+1
Will: 4D+1

REASON: 4D
Healing: 4D+1
Initiative: 5D
Kaissa: 4D+1
Senses: 4D+1

THE BODYGUARD

Halgar is a jovial man whose long, braided beard sticks out and drapes from under his helmet. He is solid, stolid, good humoured and honourable – for a mercenary.

Power Bonus: 3D, Accuracy Bonus: 2D
Health: 39
Movement: 15/22/45/75
Gladius: 4D+2 damage, Quiva throwing knives: +1 attack when thrown, -1 attack when used in close combat. 2D+1 damage, range 10 feet.
Armour: Furs, large shield, Helmet: 3D+2

AGILITY: 4D
Athletics: 4D+2
Blades: 7D
Clubs: 4D+1
Evade: 5D+2
Riding: 4D+1
Spears: 4D+1
Throwing: 4D+1

ARTS: 1D

BODY: 4D+2
Fitness: 5D+1
Endurance: 5D+1
Run: 5D
Survival: 5D
Swimming 5D

DEXTERITY: 4D
Crossbow: 4D+1
Draft Beast: 4D+1
Rope Work: 4D+1

CHARM: 2D
Animal Handling: 2D+1
Command: 2D+1
Intimidation: 2D+1
Slave Handling: 2D+1
Will: 2D+1

REASON: 3D
Healing: 3D+1
Initiative: 4D
Kaissa: 3D+1
Navigation: 3D+1
Scholar: 3D+1
Senses: 4D

MOTLEY

Power Bonus: 1D, Accuracy Bonus: 2D
Health: 31
Movement: 9/14/27/45
Sleeve Knife: 2D damage, +1D to conceal, ost venom 6D damage extra if it does even a single point of damage.

AGILITY: 3D
Acrobatics: 4D
Athletics: 3D+1
Blades: 4D+1
Escapology: 3D+1
Evade: 4D
Fistfight: 5D
Stealth: 4D
Throwing: 3D+1

ARTS: 3D
Music: 4D
Poetry: 4D
Singing: 4D

BODY: 2D+2
Fitness: 3D
Run: 3D+2

DEXTERITY: 3D
Draft Beast: 5D
Rope Work: 3D+1
Sleight of Hand: 2D+1

CHARM: 4D
Animal Handling: 4D+1
Bluff: 4D+2
Charisma: 4D+1
Convince: 4D+1
Speaking: 6D+1

REASON: 3D
Culture: 3D+2
Kaissa: 4D
Navigation: 3D+1
Senses: 4D
Trading: 3D+1

BALATRO

Power Bonus: 3D, Accuracy Bonus: 2D
Health: 41
Movement: 12/18/36/60
Quarterstaff: 5D damage
Armour: Hidden Ring Mail Shirt under tunic 1D+2 armour.

AGILITY: 3D
Acrobatics: 3D+1
Athletics: 3D+2
Clubs: 5D
Escapology: 3D+1
Evade: 3D+1
Fistfight: 6D
Stealth: 3D+1
Throwing: 3D+1

ARTS: 2D
Music: 3D
Poetry: 3D
Singing: 3D
BODY: 4D+2
Fitness: 6D

DEXTERITY: 3D
Draft Beast: 5D
Rope Work: 3D+1
Sleight of Hand: 3D+1

CHARM: 2D
Animal Handling: 3D
Bluff: 2D+2
Charisma: 2D+1
Convince: 2D+1
Intimidation: 2D+2
Speaking: 2D+1

REASON: 4D
Culture: 4D+2
Kaissa: 4D+1
Navigation: 4D+1
Senses: 4D+1
Trading: 4D+1

CAVE THARLARION

A relative of the swamp tharlarion, this creature lurks in the mouths of caves for cover and to maintain their damp skin. They dig pools in their caves which they fill with water and sink spare food into when times are lean. The cool, clean water keeps the meat 'fresh' for long periods.

Scale: +3

Power Bonus: 4D, Accuracy Bonus: 1D

Health: 55

Movement: 12/18/36/60

Teeth: 7D

Tongue: 6D – grapples and entangles from a distance.

Armour: 1D+2 (thick, rubbery hide)

AGILITY: 1D

Athletics: 3D

Evade: 1D+2

Fistfight: 4D

Stealth: 4D

Throwing: 4D

ARTS: 1D

BODY: 7D

Fitness: 9D

Endurance: 6D

DEXTERITY: 2D

CHARM: 1D

Intimidation: 5D

Will: 3D

REASON: 1D

Senses: 5D

THE CAGED BEAST

This Kurii non-dominant is the lowest ranked Kur from their ship who is knowledgeable enough to act as an on-planet agent. They are revelling in being found so intimidating and scary by the humans around them, and in being held in such high regard. This has made them arrogant, overbearing and overconfident.

Scale: +1

Power Bonus: 3D, Accuracy Bonus: 2D

Health: 38

Movement: 15/22/45/75

Claws & Teeth: 3D+2

Armour: Fur +1

AGILITY: 3D

Acrobatics: 3D+1

Athletics: 4D

Blades: 3D+2

Evade: 4D

Fistfight: 4D

Spears: 3D+2

Stealth: 4D

ARTS: 2D

Craft (Ship Tech): 2D+1

BODY: 5D

Fitness: 6D

Endurance: 6D

Run: 6D

DEXTERITY: 3D

Crossbow: 4D

CHARM: 2D

REASON: 3D

Philosophy: 4D

Initiative: 5D

Scholar: 4D

Senses: 4D

Playing With Conspiracies

Many games concentrate on battles, fighting monsters and other creatures, delving into ruins and other forms of swashbuckling. There's plenty of that in the Gorean setting, of course, but a big part of the draw is also the intrigue, skulduggery and espionage that goes on at every level of Gorean society. Conspiracy-oriented games involve tugging at threads, finding connections and unravelling and exposing the bad actors to the light of day.

Real Life Conspiracies

While there will always be argument and while some conspiracies cannot be taken seriously and others may or may not be true, there's no doubt that people have conspired to do things throughout history. There are two commonalities that hold true across most of these conspiracies.

1. They are relatively small in size.
2. They are made up of influential people.
3. They have a means of keeping people quiet.

By small in size, it is meant that there are very few people who know what is actually going on.

There may well be legions of people going along with the conspiracy, but they needn't know how or why it is happening or be aware of their participation.

If companies conspire to control or drive up prices, the workers on the ground will know little or nothing about it. If a specialist unit of the military is engaged in the testing of weapons or techniques, the low-level troops will not even be told anything – and may be the subjects of the experiments. Inside government, conspirators only need to exist in small numbers and to share information to exert a great deal of power, since they so often represent so many others.

Influential people can be contextual. Gang leaders might conspire to divide up territory, but they're only powerful concerning their own city or district. More often, though, conspiracies occur amongst the genuinely powerful. Politicians scheme together to secure leadership or to forward their agendas, military officers plot coups, the wealthy conspire to shift the public mood and political zeitgeist to preserve and extend their power. As with many things, once you have power, the easier it is to gather even more strength.

The means conspiracies use to keep people quiet can be many and varied. Some exist as cults, using religious or ceremonial linkages or the threat of eternal torture to keep people in line. Some have legal means to enforce silence, the risk of sanction or breaches of acts intended to preserve military secrets will keep many quiet. Some use the threats of brutality or murder, killing anyone who steps out of line. Far and away the best means to maintain secrecy is simply to keep most people ignorant of it.

While not all of this will translate directly to Gor, plenty of aspects of it will. As a caste system with strict hierarchies, a great deal of social, economic and other power is held in the hands of very few people – who can easily conspire. When

it comes to keeping people silent, there are many forms of threat from the danger of assassination to the evident and dangerous power of the Priest-Kings or the Kurii. Caste loyalty and the Gorean sense of honour also work to preserve their conspiracies as many, even most, regardless of caste, would rather die than betray a pledge they have made.

Cells and Nodes

Conspiracies often work and survive their best when they have no single point of failure when the various groups that make up the conspiracy can operate alone and can be taken out without bringing down the whole. When members of these conspiratorial cells are unaware of the whole conspiracy, then they can't betray it or expose every element of it. The groups do still need to be able to communicate, however, so chains of communication need to be in place. Perhaps chains of communication may only exist between two points in the chain, but communications must be able to be passed on and disseminated throughout the whole.

If, for example, you have three cells in a network, Al-ka, Ba-ta and Ga-ma, and they only converse with one other group in the conspiracy, you would have two channels of communication. Perhaps Al-ka communicates with Ba-ta via couriers with sealed satchels, and Ba-ta communicates with Ga-ma using specially trained messenger urts. Exposing one aspect of the conspiracy will still leave one part, able to continue.

Constructing Your Conspiracy

When you're putting together a conspiracy for your players to unravel, that's part of what you need to remember. You're not seeking to create an invulnerable conspiracy with perfect secrecy, you're building a puzzle that you intend to be undone, in an exciting and entertaining way.

Define a goal for the Conspiracy

For example, your conspiracy might seek to build up the Sun Sect to draw power away from the Initiates and their religion of the Priest-Kings.

Work out who needs to be Involved

In our example conspiracy, the Sun Sect itself has been co-opted, but it still needs to exist and to retain some of its original members. So the groups involved need to include:

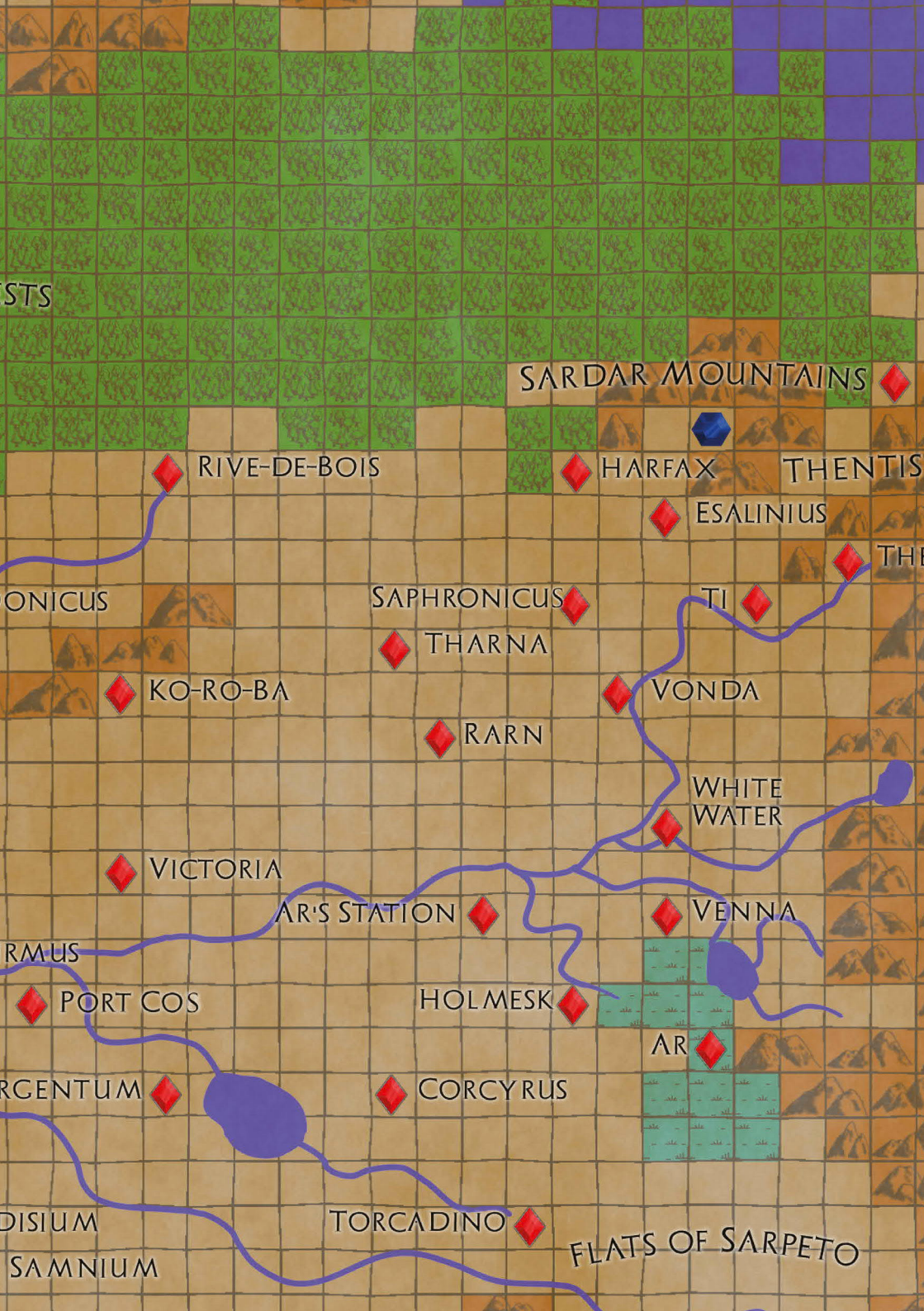
- The authentic Sun Sect and its temples.
- The False Sun Sect and its temples.
- A false messiah of the Sun Sect, ignorant of how they are being used and given supernatural seeming 'gifts' from the Kurii.
- The Kurii who are handling this.
- Kurii agents bringing wealth from Earth to increase the power and influence of the Sun Sect.
- Fake pilgrims, transporting goods and information around Gor for the conspiracy.
- Technicians operating spy devices to feed information to the 'messiah'.

Work out which groups know which other groups

- It's necessary for the Kurii to be in contact with their agents, they can do this from space using hidden communications device.
- The Kurii will also be in contact with their agents, or trained agents brought from Earth, with sufficient technical training.
- The agents will be embedded within the false Sun Sect, close to the 'messiah' reinforcing their delusions and ensuring they are not questioned or pushed too far.
- The agents will also be taking control of the real Sun Sect – though there may be resentment and suspicion, so there's a point of contact there.

With all of these aspects created and understood, you can move forward with your game, understanding how the conspiracy might work – and how it might react to their poking and prodding.





STS

SARDAR MOUNTAINS

RIVE-DE-BOIS

HARFAX

THENTIS

ESALINIUS

ONICUS

SAPHRONICUS

TI

THE

THARNA

KO-RO-BA

VONDA

RARN

WHITE WATER

VICTORIA

AR'S STATION

VENNA

RMUS

PORT COS

HOLMESK

AR

ARGENTUM

CORCYRUS

DISIUM

TORCADINO

FLATS OF SARPETO

SAMNIUM