

Requires the use of the Dungeons and Dragons® Player's Handbook,  
Third Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast®



*The Last Days of*  
**Constantinople**  
ROLE PLAYING ADVENTURE IN THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

Brien J Miller 2000



Avalanche Press LTD

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*An Adventure Module for Characters  
of 1st - 3rd Level*

# The Last Days of Constantinople

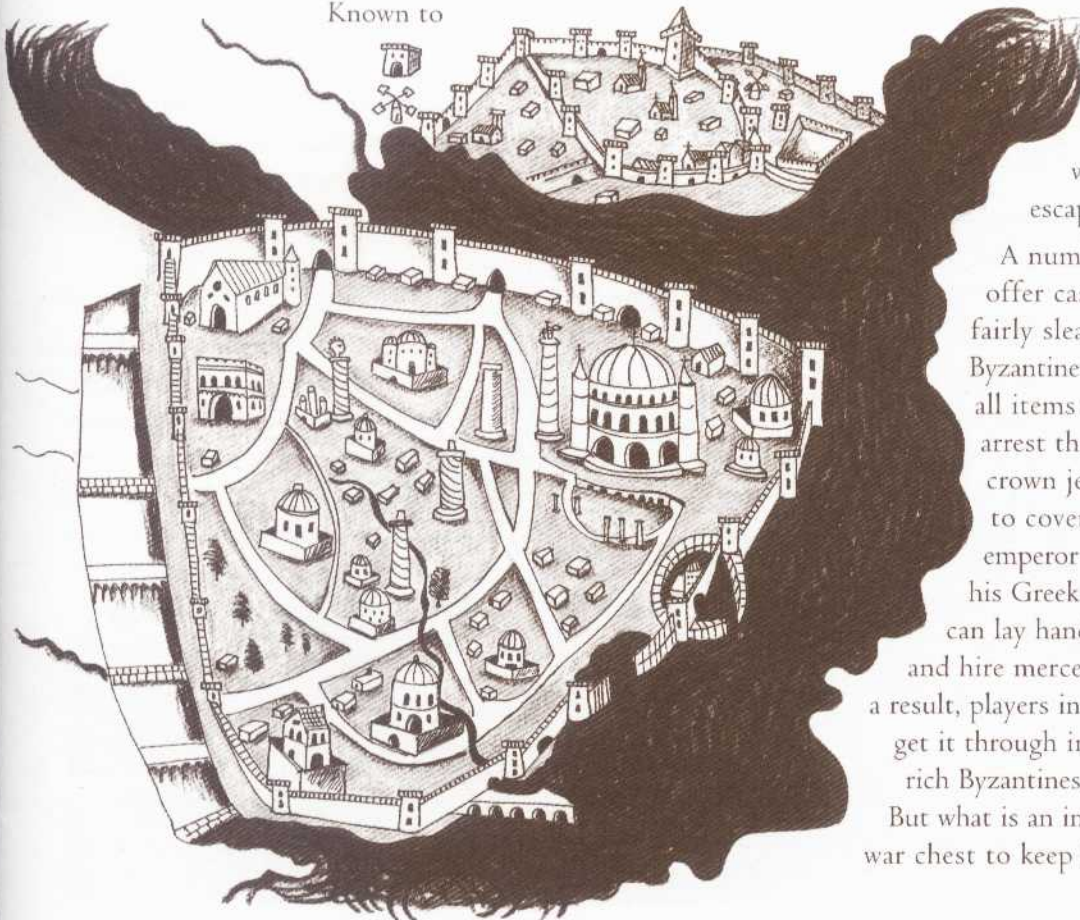
## Introduction

Constantinople. Greatest city of medieval times and last remnant of the Roman Empire. Its fall shook the Christian world, and inspired countless fantasy epics of the great city, last outpost of a once-great civilization, at the mercy of cruel outlander hordes.

*Last Days of Constantinople* is a campaign setting to aid you in taking a party of low-level characters through a series of adventures set in the last days before the city fell to a Turkish assault. If you are intending to play in such a game, rather than administering it, you probably should stop reading after the "Background" section. We know you won't, but knowledge of what's to come will steal some of the fun for you.

The adventures take place in the greatest city of the medieval world, also called Byzantium.

Known to



the inhabitants simply as The City, it has been the seat of Roman emperors for a thousand years. At one time the Byzantines ruled the eastern half of the known world. For centuries their commercial and military power has slowly eroded, until today — mid-April of the Year of Our Lord 1453 — only the great imperial capital and a handful of isolated outposts remain.

While characters from medieval fantasy campaigns can be used in this setting, players may find it more rewarding to create new characters with personal histories more in keeping with late Medieval Europe. The adventure is designed with the viewpoint of western Europeans of the same period in mind, though this is not a strict requirement. Magic-using characters will find themselves greatly restricted by Byzantine attitudes toward their craft, but Byzantine belief in magic makes their presence

wholly appropriate. This is likely to be an epic stand with few survivors, so the party may want to include a bard to record their great deeds (and who the players will want to help escape, to spread word of their glory).

A number of non-player characters will offer cash rewards for services, usually fairly sleazy services. Over the centuries, Byzantine rulers have sold off or mortgaged all items of value in vain attempts to arrest the empire's decline. Even the crown jewels went to Venice decades ago to cover bad debts. More recently, the emperor — known as the *Basileus*, to use his Greek title — has spent whatever he can lay hands on to repair the city's defenses and hire mercenaries to bolster its garrison. As a result, players in search of treasure will have to get it through intrigue and deal-making with rich Byzantines, rather than looting and pillaging. But what is an invading army without a substantial war chest to keep it going?



## Part One: Byzantine Background

### The Turks

It doesn't take a professor of history or literature to figure out where legend got its "orcs." The Byzantines and their allies saw the Ottoman Turks as slaving, mindless killing machines empowered by evil. They had a healthy respect for their Turkish foes' fighting ability, bordering on outright fear. They saw the Turks as both less and more than human.

The Turks follow the Ottoman Sultan, the 21-year-old Mehmet II, and thus are often called "Ottomans" (from the name of the dynasty's founder, Othman). Mehmet's rule is absolute, and if the Turks wasted their time with the same legalistic arguments as the Byzantines all Turks could be defined as Mehmet's slaves, so great are his powers over them. As it stands, the Turks do not worry overmuch about such things. A warrior culture, they fight for their personal honor and booty (most are not paid for their service, but take a share of the loot). There are no penalties for cowardice among the Turks, for they believe that by definition no Turk could show fear in front of the enemy and thus there is no need for such punishment. Turkish warriors are also landholders, with slaves to work their estates and provide the income necessary to keep them in the field. Most of them are thus always on the lookout for a healthy, strong back to help out at home. Sexual slavery is also common.

Turkish soldiers are surprisingly well-educated, and poetry composition is considered a high art and the mark of a well-rounded warrior. In battle, the Turks advance with immense discipline unknown to Western armies. They also have engineering skills (highly useful in siege warfare) well in advance of their Christian enemies.

Mehmet's favorite soldiers, who he keeps out of the fighting until the key moment, are the Janissaries. Every year, Christian villages subject to the Sultan are required to turn over a number of their brightest, fairest children. The brightest boys become government officials, the most beautiful girls become courtesans.

The strongest, toughest boys become Janissaries, superbly trained and armed soldiers. The Janissaries sometimes send forth champions to challenge their enemies to single combat.

The Turks are fairly fanatic followers of Islam, the missionary religion established in the seventh century following the revelations of the Prophet

Mohammed. While Islam (roughly, "submission (to the Will of God)"; its followers are Moslems, "those who submit") is a brother religion to Christianity, the two religions have become implacable foes after hundreds of years of bloodshed.

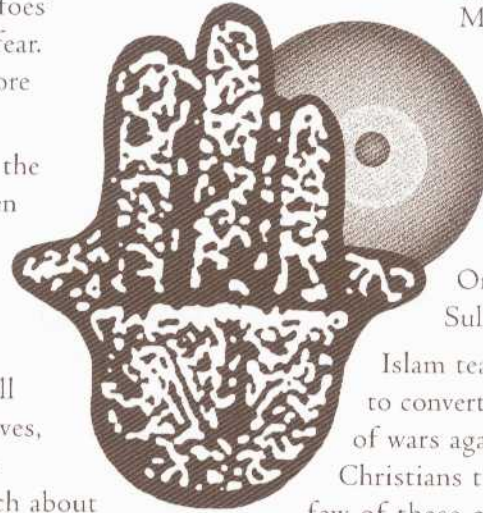
Only those Christians ruled by the Sultan are considered (barely) acceptable.

Islam teaches that an enemy must be allowed to convert on the battlefield, but after a century of wars against the Byzantines and other Christians the Turks have come to realize that few of these conversions have any conviction behind them. Bloodlust frequently leaves no captives in the heat of battle, but those taken afterwards are usually sold into slavery unless the Sultan has commanded otherwise. The Christian world is often an accomplice: Venetian traders have been known to purchase Byzantines taken by the Turks and put them to work on their Cretan sugar plantations.

### Magic

The Byzantine world certainly knows magic — as the work of the evil one, Satanael. Influenced by the Bogomils, a Christian sect the official church holds to be heretics of the worst order, Byzantines believe the world is divided clearly between good and evil. Official church doctrine rejects this notion, for it puts God and Satanael on the same level, and instead sees good as far more powerful with evil lurking about the fringes of reality.

Demons of six types are known to Byzantines and greatly feared: earth, air, fire, water, ether and underground. Most Byzantines will assure anyone who asks that demons indeed walk the earth, and most see the Turks gathered outside the walls as the minions of these evil beings. Byzantine knees also turn to water at the thought of what they call "the evil eye," and many carry amulets to protect





against it, worn under the clothes against the bare skin of their chest for maximum security.

Magic, as the earthly manifestation of evil, is feared and abhorred. If Byzantines view a magic-using character in the act of casting a spell, they will either attack the character and attempt to kill him (if in sufficient strength), or flee in terror (if alone).

This intense reaction, as befits a highly religious society, extends to practical matters as well. Using magic to repair breaches in the city walls, for example, will garner the player character no thanks, but instead a quick trip to the headsman.

If a player character is killed and raised from the dead (an unlikely event for low-level characters), the Byzantines will not view this as a holy act. They will reject the character and his or her companions, perhaps considering them demons themselves. Should they catch a raised character and kill her again, they will make sure she remains dead this time by hacking the body into pieces. If players wish to raise a dead character, they will need to spirit the corpse out of Constantinople. Byzantines bury their dead; the Turks will allow the corpses of executed prisoners to rot within sight of the walls. They routinely burn the bodies of dead enemies (having a slightly better handle on sanitation than the Christian world). Should the player characters raise a Byzantine or Turkish non-player character from the dead, the NPC will be horrified and will probably lose their sanity.

### *Good and Evil*

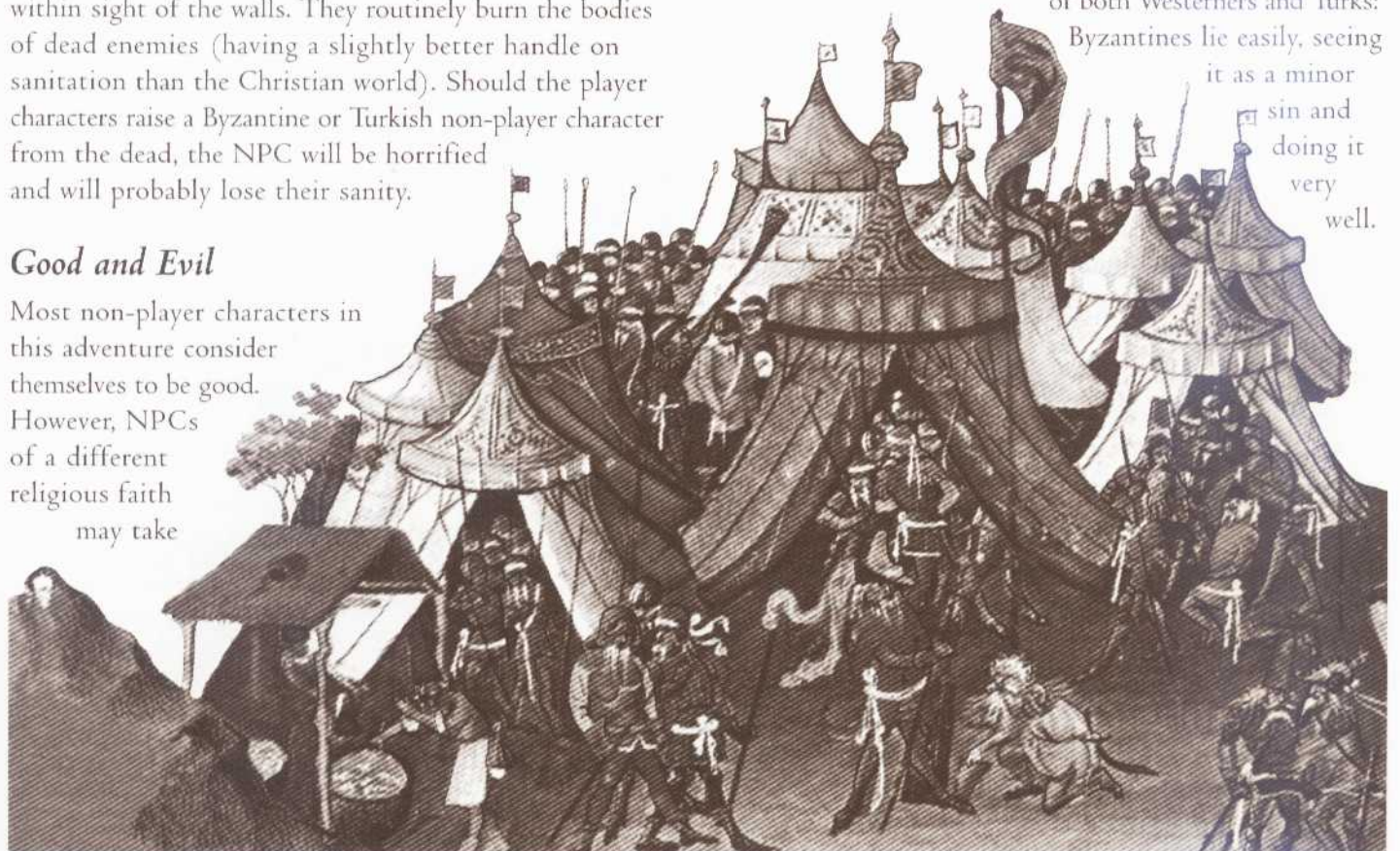
Most non-player characters in this adventure consider themselves to be good. However, NPCs of a different religious faith may take

issue with this. Though Christianity and Islam have co-existed for 800 years, deep strife and even hatred continue between their practitioners. By 21st Century Western standards, both sides in this struggle are "good," yet at the same time each commits and accepts acts which would be considered "evil" 550 years later. By their standards, each sees the other as evil and the Turks especially have committed acts that reinforce this opinion.

Both Christianity and Islam recognize the concept of "just war," and this struggle has the blessing of each side's religious leaders. Few soldiers on either side have any moral qualms about slaughtering their enemies. If the players are using characters generated specifically for this campaign, they should face far fewer moral dilemmas than those brought in from fantasy settings, especially paladins.

All faiths of this world take oaths and oath-breaking very seriously. A good character will not break his or her word if offered as an oath. Only religious values hold higher power with either Byzantines or Turks. While Byzantines take their religion very seriously, there is one trait that has for centuries damned them in the eyes

of both Westerners and Turks: Byzantines lie easily, seeing it as a minor sin and doing it very well.





Despite the centuries-long conflict with Islam, and frequent wars with Slavic peoples to the north, Byzantines have a powerful streak of pacifism. They do not take readily to warfare, and are troubled greatly by taking another's life even in wartime. Many Byzantine soldiers accept St. Basil's teaching that killing another in battle, even in the course of a just war, requires three years of penance afterwards.

The Turks are a warrior culture, and Turkish hearts have been hardened further by decades of war. When the empire's second city, Thessalonica, fell to the Turks thirty years ago, Turkish soldiers ran wild in the streets, killing, raping, looting and burning. Thousands were sold into slavery. Constantinople can expect similar treatment and its defenders realize they have little to lose.

Slavery is legal in both the Byzantine and Ottoman empires. The Orthodox church officially condemns slavery, and monasteries are forbidden to own slaves (though some do so anyway). Many in the Byzantine upper classes condemn slavery in theory, but in practice very few free their own slaves. Slaves include highly educated specialists such as doctors and scribes, as well as domestic laborers and, outside the city, field hands. The educated slaves are chiefly Greek themselves, the laborers captured Moslems.

### *Prisoners of War*

During the early stages of the current siege, the Turks attacked the nearby Byzantine-held fortress of Studius. After a savage fight, the garrison surrendered. Their captors then impaled the survivors within sight of Constantinople's land walls. Soon afterwards, the Turkish fleet captured the island fortress of Prinkipo and burned its surviving defenders to death. When a damaged Turkish galley ran ashore alongside the city's sea walls, the Byzantines retaliated by hauling its crewmen to the top of the city walls to behead them within sight of the Turkish army.

Both Christianity and Islam teach a respect for life and an obligation to protect the helpless, but the cruelty of this war has driven away all such humanitarian impulses. Should the player characters capture enemy prisoners, they will likely be ordered to put them to death.

Note that all types of Turkish NPC consider themselves to be of good alignment. The player characters will probably at some point swear to obey

lawful orders of Constantine IX and his officers. By the standards of the day, directions to kill Turkish prisoners would be considered a lawful order.

### *The Power of Prayer*

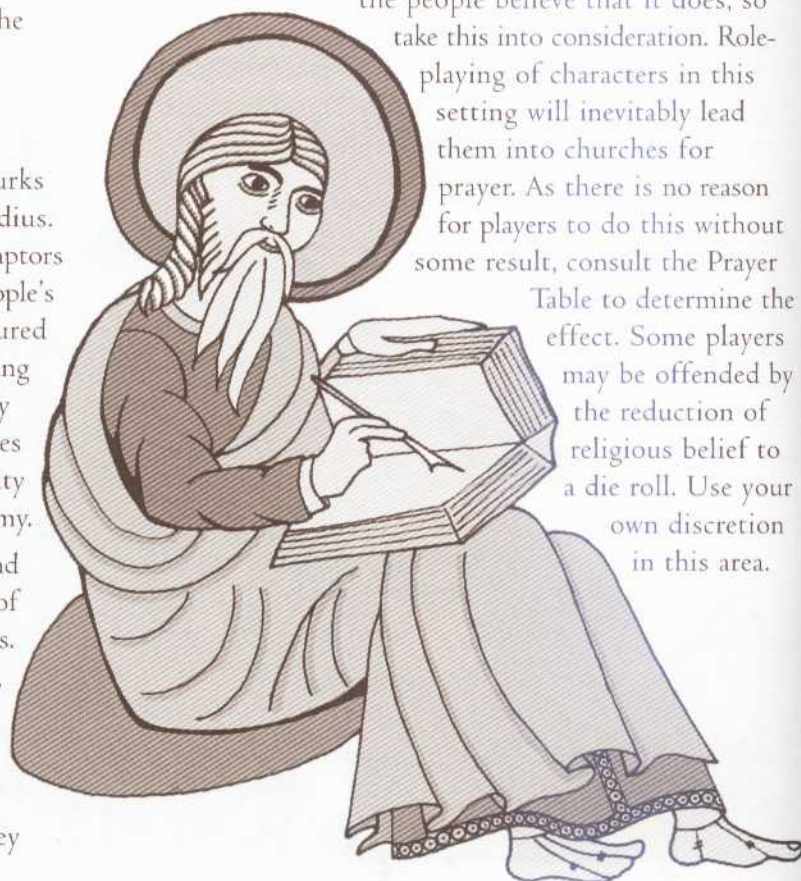
To the Byzantines, prayer is more than a voiced wish. This is a society that believes that prayer works, and has tangible benefits. For accurate role-playing, it should have an equal impact on events. Roman Catholic doctrine holds that God does not answer the prayer of an individual; a priest is necessary to properly convey a prayer to God. Asking a saint for intercession can also aid in a prayer being heard more clearly.

Orthodox practice is similar, though not as strongly tied to the role of the clergy. In a major difference, Orthodoxy allows the use of icons in prayer. A painted image of a saint, usually a small folding wooden panel, the icon is used to focus the prayer's thoughts. While not intended to be a holy object, some icons are venerated to the point of being considered holy themselves.

Whether an icon has special powers or not is a theological question which is not especially relevant to game play —

the people believe that it does, so take this into consideration. Role-playing of characters in this setting will inevitably lead them into churches for prayer. As there is no reason for players to do this without some result, consult the Prayer

Table to determine the effect. Some players may be offended by the reduction of religious belief to a die roll. Use your own discretion in this area.





### *Impalement*

This is a form of torture practiced by the Turks against their enemies, but still rare among their Christian opponents. It consists of taking a long and narrow shaft (usually a spear or lance) and carefully tapping it up the victim's rectum while he or she is firmly held in place. After driving the shaft well into the abdominal cavity, it is then placed firmly into the ground, leaving the victim dangling from it. If done slowly and with care, the victim will be in immense pain and take several days to die.

Byzantines know of no method of saving impaled victims, and their horror of this fate is such that they view killing a still-living impaled victim as an act of mercy. Some of the raids made against the Turkish trenches are designed to kill impaled comrades and spare them further pain.

### *Racial Outlook*

While this is an adventure designed for human characters, The City prides itself on its cosmopolitan outlook. Outlanders of outrageous appearance are not unknown, and the inhabitants make it a point to project nonchalance. In these times of great stress, however, anyone not looking like a Byzantine Greek or their known allies (chiefly, Italians) is likely to be taken for a Turk and assaulted.

### *Gender*

The Byzantine Empire is a man's world. Women are respected within the home, but in public are expected to go about veiled. They are not the social equals of men in any sense, though powerful empresses have broken this pattern in the past.

The idea of female adventurers is utterly alien to the Byzantines. More conservative members of the imperial court will not want to meet with women characters. The *Basileus* himself is not likely to voice opposition, for he needs defenders on the walls and can't afford to be too selective. However, he will not be comfortable with armed women wandering about.

### *Money*

Byzantium has held to standard coinage for over a thousand years, though this has periodically been

debased (the gold content lowered). The standard numisma (called a "bezant" by foreigners) is a fairly heavy, tapered disk — the center is noticeably thicker than the edges. Byzantines also use silver pieces for change, and will cut a numisma into wedges for smaller denominations as well.

Despite the centuries-long decline in Byzantine trade and power, the numisma remains the standard coin of the eastern Mediterranean world.

It is illegal to exchange money anywhere except at the State Bank (near the Blachernae), though port officials, who are state bank employees, can exchange foreign coin as well and are equipped to do so (this is the most common method of exchange for travelers). Most merchants will refuse to accept coins other than the numisma, though in these chaotic times many standard behaviors are no longer applicable.



### *Food and the Byzantines*

Eating is an important ritual to the Byzantines, and they become most distressed if their food is not attractively presented. Meals should be offered in a separate dining room, and all participants remove their boots or sandals before entering. The diners sit around a T-shaped table, on benches or chairs, and their food is brought on plates and in bowls. Forks and spoons — devices largely unknown to western Europeans — are used to handle the food, and afterwards the diners clean their faces and hands with cloth napkins, another practice unknown in the West and considered bizarre.

In normal times Byzantines enjoy spiced meats, especially pork, but meat is scarce in a city under siege and food now usually consists of bread and gruel. The city has massive stockpiles of wine, and the Byzantines continue to drink heartily. Like other Mediterranean cultures, Byzantines water their wine, and the city's massive cisterns assure that there is plenty of water for drinking and bathing even in these times. Byzantines drink their wine

## Weapons

### *Arquebuse and Light Cannon*

Gunpowder weapons have been used in Europe for over a century, and the Turks have seized upon them as the bounty of God, bestowed on the believers to vanquish the infidel ever more quickly.

The Byzantines, on the other hand, have been remarkably slow to adopt these newfangled engines despite a history of rapid adaptation to technology. Personal gunpowder weapons are essentially unknown among the Byzantine soldiery, and rare among their Genoese allies, who continue to rely on the tried-and-true heavy crossbow.

A handful of light cannon dot the walls of Constantinople, but their crews are fairly unskilled and they are far less of a factor than the massive Turkish artillery train with its hundreds of guns.

#### *Arquebuse*

**Damage:** 1d12

**Critical:** x3

**Range increment:** 50 ft.

**Weight:** 35 lb.

**Special:** A primitive hand-held firearm, the arquebuse takes eight rounds to reload.

#### *Light Cannon*

**Damage:** 2d10

**Critical:** x3

**Range increment:** 100 ft.

**Weight:** 1,200 lb.

**Special:** Mounted on a field carriage and drawn by six to eight horses or oxen and manned by a crew of eight to ten. Used to fire stone balls at walls and fortifications, or masses of scrap metal at enemy troops. The light cannon takes 20 rounds to reload.

### *Arrows and Crossbow Bolts*

These are not destroyed when they hit a target; human flesh is extremely soft. However, they are likely to be warped beyond use or splintered by armor. Participants regularly hacked arrows and bolts out of corpses of both sides and the other side's wounded (archers carried a large knife just for this purpose). Roll one d20 to recover an arrow or bolt from a body; on a result of 14 or better the projectile is usable. Hacking an arrow or bolt out of a body consumes one action. Player characters may not attempt to recover arrows or bolts from wounded of their own side.

from bowls, lifting them delicately to their lips. Inability to raise a glass or bottle does not stop Byzantine drunkards from imbibing; they simply rest their head on the table and lap from the bowl until they become totally insensible. It is not unknown, though generally a Byzantine form of urban legend, for especially heavy drinkers to drown themselves in their wine.

## *Weapons and Equipment*

Though the seat of a once-mighty empire, Constantinople does not manufacture weapons and armor in any useful quantity (hence the pope's shipment of gear overseen by the player characters). Over the years the Turks have overrun the empire's armories, and these vital facilities have not been replaced. Thus the player characters will not be able to purchase weapons and ammunition in Constantinople, but if they join the defense will be issued arrows and crossbow bolts (no cost to the players) from military stockpiles.

Steel weapons of this era are not the stainless steel alloy familiar to denizens of the 21st Century. They will hold a much, much finer razor edge; for example, it is fairly easy to plunge a well-sharpened blade deep into a piece of wood. Their effect on human flesh is likewise much more destructive than one might imagine. On the negative side, they lose that edge and they pick up rust and nicks very, very easily. Thus a conscientious warrior oils and sharpens his weapons at any opportunity.

## *Greek Fire*

Constantinople is the center of alchemy, and after hundreds of years "Greek Fire" remains her alchemists' greatest achievement. This is the medieval world's weapon of mass destruction. It has many imitators, as both Islamic and Christian powers deploy combinations of pitch and other combustibles in what they mistakenly call "Greek Fire."

The Byzantines have the real thing. It is loaded in cylindrical containers about three feet long and eight inches in diameter; they weigh about sixty pounds apiece. Along the walls of Byzantium (and on the high prows of Byzantine warships) are long tubes with a carved lion head at the spout end. The crew loads the cylinder into the tube's breach, and slams down a crossbar that breaks the leaden seal on the cylinder's end. The secret chemical mixture ignites on contact with air, blasting out of the spout in a massive gout of fire. The mixture will stick to whatever it lands upon and it will continue to burn. Water does not put it out.

The cylinders can also be flung by catapult. The cylinders



will break upon hitting the ground, flinging the mixture on anything nearby. By design the cylinders — made of fairly thin ceramic — are easy to break. Dropping one can be disastrous to anyone close to the accident.

### *The Great Cannon*

Last year, a German engineer named Urbanus of Transylvania approached Constantine XI with a proposal to build a massive bronze cannon. The notion interested the Basileus, but he could not afford the price named by Urbanus, who then peddled his plan to Mehmet II. The Sultan took the offer, and the engineer accordingly cast a gigantic gun barrel for the Turkish artillerymen.

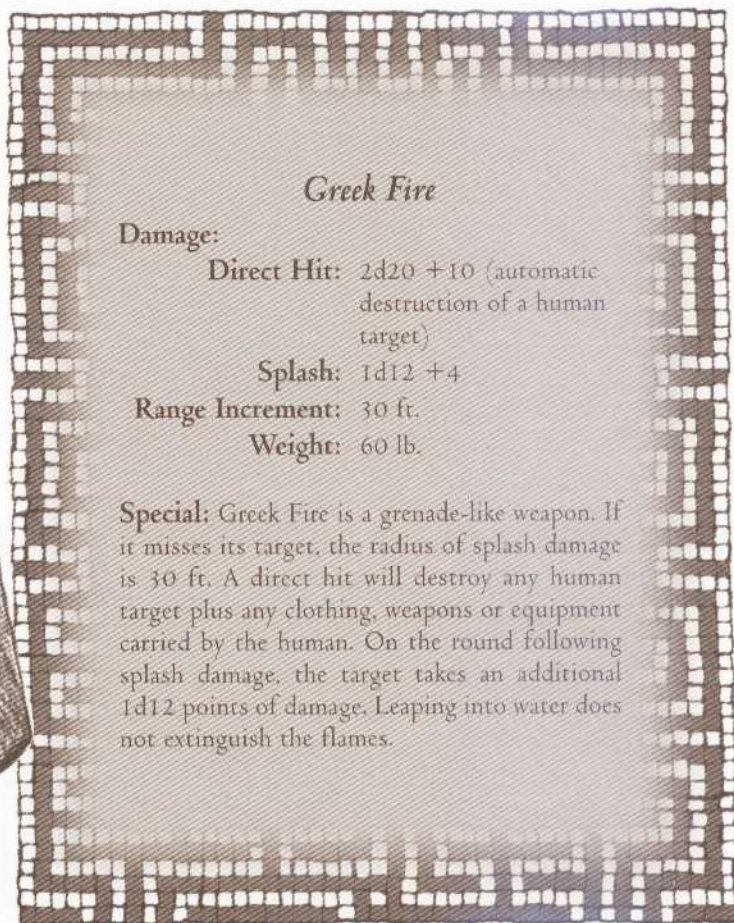
The cannon is the largest ever seen, at least 20 feet long with a barrel a foot and a half wide. It fires carved stone balls over a distance of more than a mile. The Turks brought the cannon into their lines at the start of the siege, and it is steadily pulverizing the thick stone walls that have stood unscratched for centuries. The Turks have aimed the huge weapon at the walls' weakest point, where an archway carries the walls over the River Lycus. They hope to tumble the walls into the riverbed, and it looks like they will succeed momentarily.

There are no stats provided for the Great Cannon, as it is used to destroy immobile targets like fortress walls.

### *Clothing*

Byzantine women prefer a hip-length robe draped over a long, flared skirt. Social class varies the quality of the clothing, but not the standard pattern. All Byzantine women wear hair adornments, usually a metal circlet but sometimes a cloth headband is worn in its place. Heavy makeup is the order of the day, with bright red lips and dark black eyebrows.

Men wear far more elaborate clothing, with heavy influence from both Italian and Turkish customs. Long, ankle-length tunics are common, often ornately decorated with gold thread. Soldiers wear much shorter tunics when not



### *Greek Fire*

**Damage:**

**Direct Hit:** 2d20 +10 (automatic destruction of a human target)

**Splash:** 1d12 +4

**Range Increment:** 30 ft.

**Weight:** 60 lb.

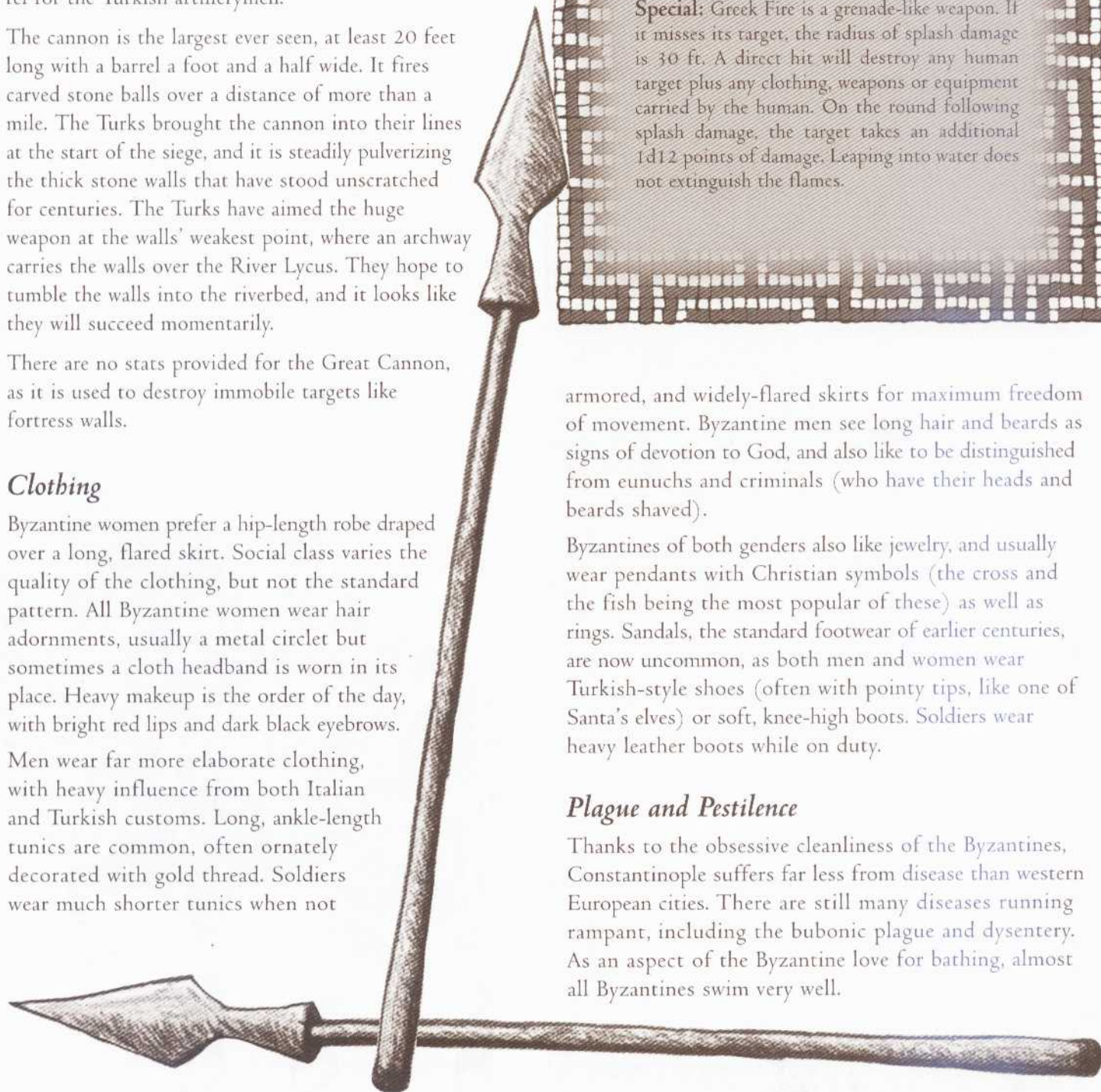
**Special:** Greek Fire is a grenade-like weapon. If it misses its target, the radius of splash damage is 30 ft. A direct hit will destroy any human target plus any clothing, weapons or equipment carried by the human. On the round following splash damage, the target takes an additional 1d12 points of damage. Leaping into water does not extinguish the flames.

armored, and widely-flared skirts for maximum freedom of movement. Byzantine men see long hair and beards as signs of devotion to God, and also like to be distinguished from eunuchs and criminals (who have their heads and beards shaved).

Byzantines of both genders also like jewelry, and usually wear pendants with Christian symbols (the cross and the fish being the most popular of these) as well as rings. Sandals, the standard footwear of earlier centuries, are now uncommon, as both men and women wear Turkish-style shoes (often with pointy tips, like one of Santa's elves) or soft, knee-high boots. Soldiers wear heavy leather boots while on duty.

### *Plague and Pestilence*

Thanks to the obsessive cleanliness of the Byzantines, Constantinople suffers far less from disease than western European cities. There are still many diseases running rampant, including the bubonic plague and dysentery. As an aspect of the Byzantine love for bathing, almost all Byzantines swim very well.



## Prayer Table

Each player character should have a designated religious affiliation, either Roman Catholic or Orthodox. Msgr. Marcello is much more likely to recruit Roman Catholic adventurers, and highly unlikely to have signed up Jews, atheists, pagans or Moslems. Jews are legally bound to their own district of Constantinople (what later generations would call a ghetto); they can exit during the day but must spend the night inside its boundaries. Moslems are of course the enemy and subject to attack on sight. One thing on which Jews, Christians and Moslems of this age can agree is that pagans and atheists should be dispatched to meet the One True God as quickly as possible.

Roll one d20 and apply any modifiers. Prayer is answered on result of 20 or greater. Remember that Byzantines and their contemporaries do not believe in Santa Claus, and prayer should not be used to request goodies. Do not hesitate to punish blasphemous use of prayer (for example, if a player prays for a better sword or sexual prowess, subject his character to a string of bad luck). Rather, the people of this time pray simply for grace, that God will bestow favor on them. This has two possible effects: protection from evil, and a feeling of inner peace. Evil characters may not pray.

### Modifiers:

#### Orthodox character

- +2 use of icon
- +1 request intercession of saint
- +1 character is lawful good
- 3 player has harmed good character/NPC

#### Roman Catholic character

- +1 request intercession of saint
- +1 character is lawful good
- +1 player confesses to Roman Catholic priest immediately before prayer
- 2 player has harmed good character/NPC
- 3 praying without presence of Roman Catholic priest (-1 if Orthodox priest present)

### Effects:

- *Protection from evil.* If a prayer attempt succeeds, overrule the dice on the character's next failed saving throw and declare it successful.
- *Inner peace.* If a prayer attempt succeeds, increase the character's Will modifier by +4 and Fortitude modifier by +1 for the remainder of the day. If a prayer attempt fails, increase the character's Will modifier by +1 for the remainder of the day.

## Part Two: The Mission

The adventure begins in the ornate drawing room of the Genoese governor of Chios, an island trading station in the Aegean Sea. Each member of the party has been summoned by papal legate Monsignor Marcello di San Dimas, a powerful agent of Pope Nicholas V who has selected the player characters for their skills, their adventuring spirit, and their expendability.

Msgr. Marcello, a veteran of intrigue well known to the player characters, will first introduce them to each other. He has a mission to offer them, one which will pay well, but offers little chance of actually collecting on the fee. Declining the offer is not much of an option; those who cross this powerful but little-known figure have a way of regretting their choice, often in the most painful fashion.

Charming, witty and outwardly friendly, Msgr. Marcello is likable enough. Of indeterminate age, he sports jet-black hair and a goatee, and under his black cassock is obviously powerfully built. He carries himself like a soldier rather than a priest, as befits one who has fought many battles in the service of the church. The monsignor is one of the most powerful men in the Roman Catholic hierarchy, despite his lower rank. Each member of the party is already well aware that his patronage will assure them of future success in almost anything they attempt. But his missions often involve extreme danger. A fanatic Roman Catholic clergyman, totally convinced of the rightness of his cause, Msgr. Marcello has absolutely no qualms about



sending others into deadly peril, for he firmly believes that he stands on the side of God and therefore anyone killed in his service will meet with eternal reward. He would gladly enter such peril himself, he will assure any who ask, but God has greater need of him among the living at the moment. A cultured man, of great learning and sophistication, he will brief the party on the current political situation.

Constantinople, capital of the Byzantine Empire, is under assault by a massive army of Ottoman Turks led by their Sultan, Mehmet II. In hopes of gaining aid from Roman Catholic countries, the Byzantines have placed their powerful church under the authority of the pope and accepted Catholic doctrine as their own.

As a result, His Holiness wishes to assist the Byzantines in their desperate, doomed defense of Constantinople. Though the papal treasury stands empty and the Catholic kings of western Europe have offered few fighting men for this task, the pope has managed to assemble a shipload of weapons and other military goods for the defenders. A hired Genoese galley stands in the harbor of Chios loaded with these items. The party's fighting skills will help protect the cargo from piracy, and to make sure the galley's captain and crew follow through on their mission to deliver the goods to the besieged city. Now the only way into or out of Constantinople is by sea. The Turkish naval blockade is not strong.

This is only a cover, and as Msgr. Marcello will readily admit a rather weak cover, but no one will be looking very closely with hordes of Turks right outside the gates. Once in The City, the party is to seek out the young Byzantine empress Maryia and attempt to "rescue" her before Constantinople falls. The monsignor is not especially interested in how willingly the princess comes to Chios, just as long as she is brought to him alive and relatively unharmed.

According to Marcello, the Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI is believed to have recently married the daughter of the King of Georgia, in a diplomatically arranged match. The last empress of the Byzantine Empire would be a formidable piece in the chess game of power politics, and the monsignor is determined that she will serve the church's ends. Msgr. Marcello is not sure if the young princess actually arrived in Constantinople before the Turks closed in, and the party will have to determine this.

A monarch's ability to rule depends above all else on his or her legitimacy. There is no throne of greater

## Honor and Glory

To inspire players to act as 15th-century adventurers, they will need an incentive beyond experience and treasure. This is especially important for *Last Days of Constantinople*, as player characters are very likely to wind up dead. A true adventurer of the time did not mind this so much — as long as their name would be remembered for centuries thereafter.

Glory represents how the player character is seen by others. Honor represents how the player character sees himself. Each has its importance. Some characters will be more concerned with one than the other.

Unknown to the Byzantines, each player character enters the adventure with both Honor and Glory set at zero. Some examples of events that increase or decrease a player character's Honor and Glory:

	Honor	Glory
<i>Slay enemy in single combat:</i>	1xCR	2xCR
<i>Kill in cold blood:</i>	-4	-3
<i>Steal:</i>	-2	-1
<i>Rescue innocent from death:</i>	5	8

You will have to make many judgement calls on this issue. Glory should increase much faster for events which are witnessed by others, especially a bard, and slowly if at all for events with no witnesses. Honor increases are greater for events known only to the character. Giving one's life for an ideal (for example, keeping an oath to defend the *Basileus*) should reap immense awards in both honor and glory.

You may want to translate Honor and Glory into other types of game award, but that is up to you.

lineage than that of the *Basileus*, the last of the Roman emperors. The young widow of Julius Caesar's final heir will be sought in marriage by every sovereign in the known world. Even the Turkish sultan would profit greatly from such a marriage, for it would put great legal and moral force on his conquest of Constantinople. Thus the pope can make great use of the young woman, if she can be safely delivered to his agents.

At this point, you should decide whether to use the

## Monsignor Marcello di San Dimas 6th-Level Aristocrat

**Hit Points:** 30

**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**AC:** 14 (+4 chain shirt; not visible under robes)

**Attacks:** Dagger +8 melee

**Damage:** Dagger 1d4

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +7 (+2 Great Fortitude), Ref +2, Will +4 (Iron Will)

**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 21, Wis 22, Cha 20

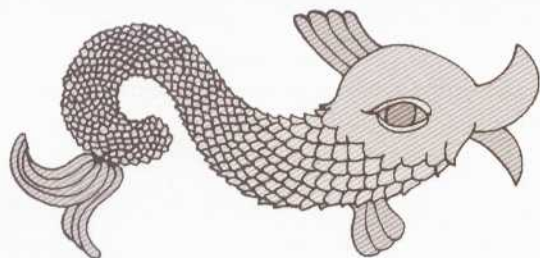
**Skills:** Diplomacy Bluff  
Escape Artist Disguise  
Gather Information Intimidate  
Speak Language Sense Motive  
Forgery

**Feats:** Improved Initiative Alertness  
Lightning Reflexes Iron Will  
Improved Critical Great Fortitude (dagger)

**Challenge Rating:** 8

**Alignment:** Lawful Neutral

**Special:** Msgr. Marcello is the pope's spymaster. As such, he possesses an assassin's abilities of Sneak Attack, Death Attack and Poison Use as well as the saving throw bonus against poison. Though Marcello is a fanatic follower of the pope, his alignment is neutral rather than good, as over the years he has developed an ability to justify any act which advances his vision of the Roman Catholic Church.



young empress as a story hook. As the adventure unfolds, Byzantine officials will insist there is no empress, that the Georgian princess did not arrive before the Turkish fleet isolated The City. If you want the players to seek the empress anyway, you should secretly choose one of these options (and if your players are foul and sneaky types who read adventures like this one to gain an unfair advantage, write down your choice and seal it in an envelope; the mystery thus remains intact):

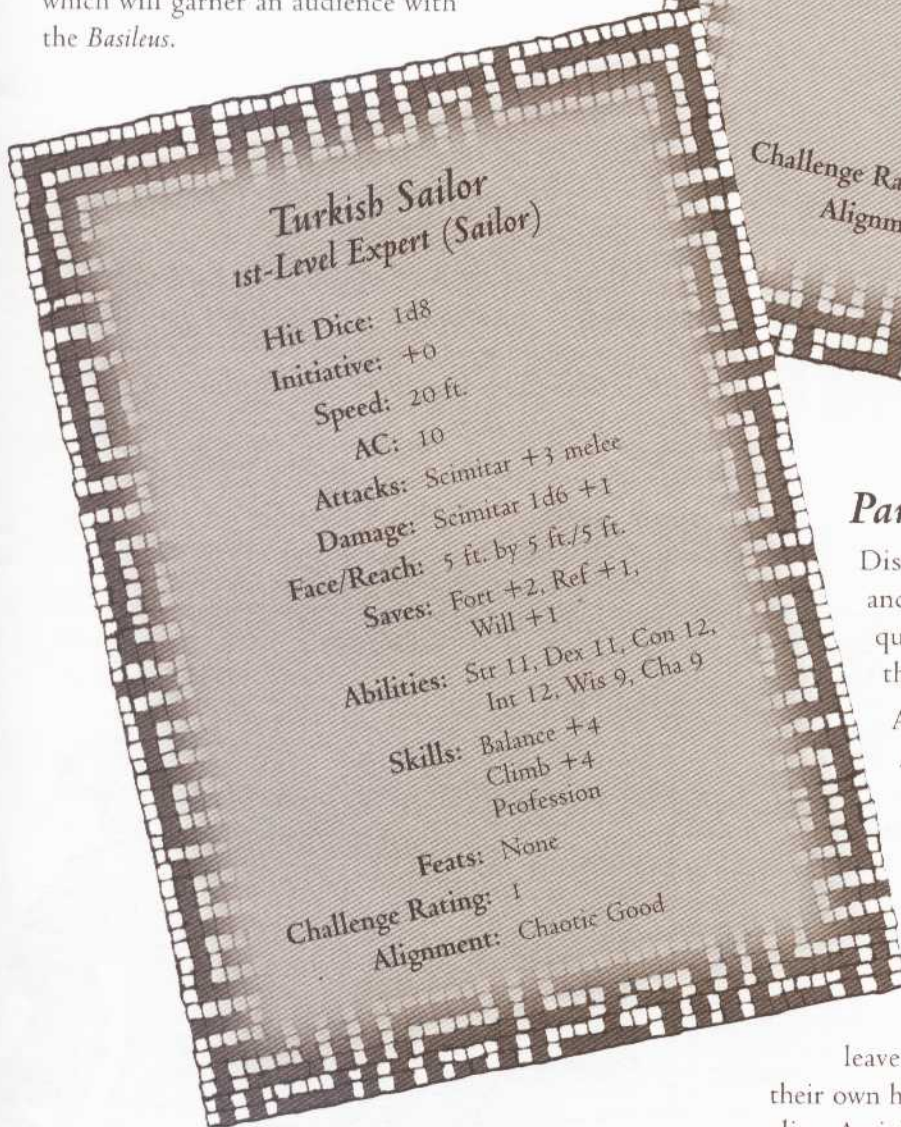
- There is no empress. Rumors abound, and the party will have opportunities to search for her, but the Byzantines are for once telling the truth.
- Constantine is hiding the empress under guard in the Blachernae Palace. He does not wish her to leave, but to die alongside him in the final struggle. The pressure of the coming battle has slightly unhinged the *Basileus*. The empress has no desire to die in this strange land and will welcome the chance to escape.
- The empress is determined to fight alongside Constantine and can be found among the Varangians (see below), a young-looking warrior wearing finely-made armor (adjust her stats accordingly). Seeking to avoid discord in his own ranks, Constantine has allowed this provided she remains incognito. She will bitterly oppose any attempt to leave her new husband's side.
- Constantine has disguised the young empress as a servant, and wants her to escape the siege. She is willing to go if a means can be found.
- Phocas, the conservative Orthodox cleric the party will meet at Constantine's side, has kidnapped the empress and is holding her in his underground lair. He hopes to use her as a bargaining chip when the Turks take the city, to trade her to the sultan in exchange for supremacy over the sultan's Christian subjects. She is actively attempting to escape, and agents of the *Basileus*, headed by his private secretary Sphrantzes (see below) are actively searching for her. With the Turks outside the walls there are not many men to spare for this task, but if Byzantine soldiers spot the princess with the party, they will be most unhappy.

During the course of the adventure, the player characters will encounter a number of Byzantine women. You may want to drop hints to the players that in an age centuries before the invention of photography, no one *really* knows what a stranger looks like. A woman skilled in the courtly arts, of the appropriate age and general appearance, might be passed off as another, perhaps

even as a princess from a far land. Of course, if Msgr. Marcello later discovers that the Georgian princess is still at her father's side, the player characters may come to regret attempting such a scam.

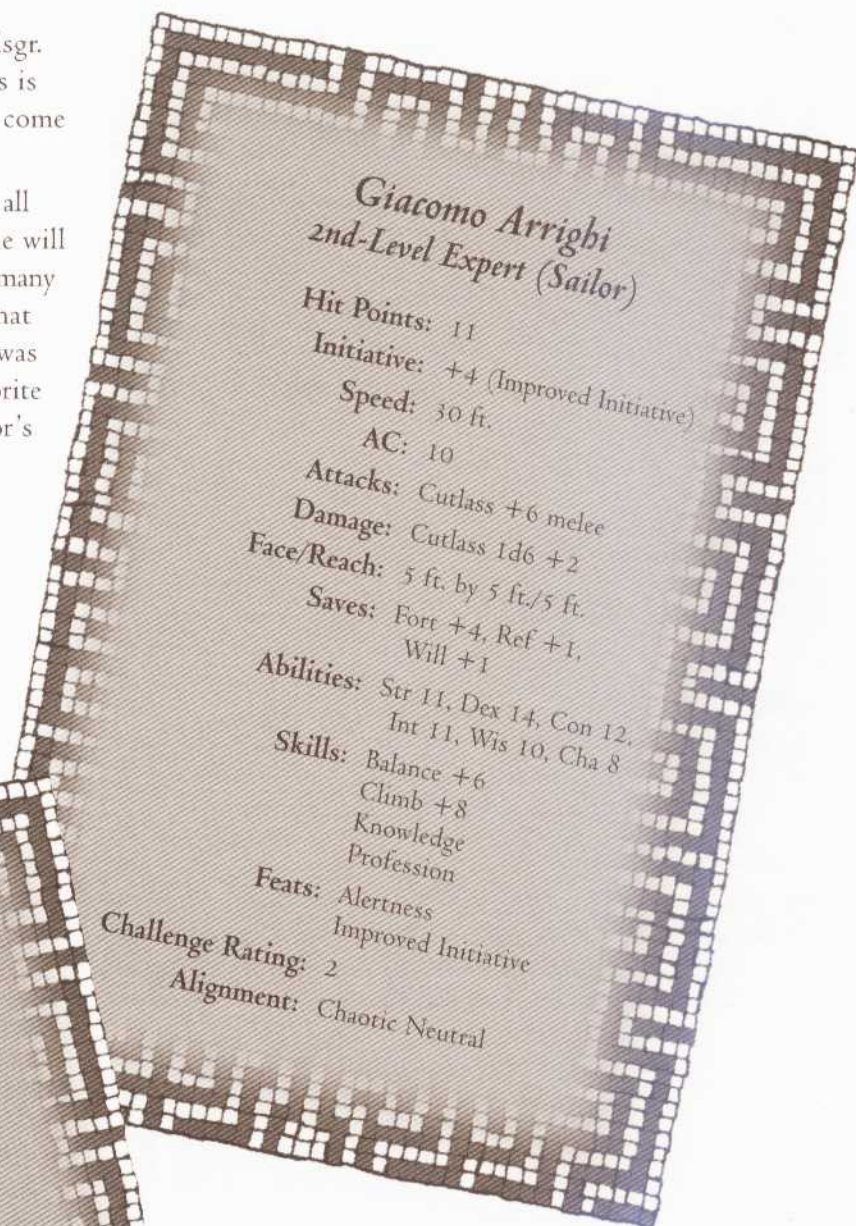
Msgr. Marcello will advise the player characters that all strands of intrigue converge at Gina's. Wistfully, he will note that he himself has made use of her services many times. But he will warn the party most emphatically that while Gina is useful, she is not to be trusted. She was once a courtesan and dancer, he will tell them, a favorite of *Basileus* John VIII Palaeologus, the current emperor's older brother. If the players ask for details about Gina, Marcello will refuse to tell them any more.

Once the orders are given, Msgr. Marcello will entrust the player characters with a chest of 500 Venetian gold ducats for expenses. They will use this to pay the Genoese galley crew upon arrival in Constantinople, and for their own expenses. He will also give them letters of introduction, which will garner an audience with the *Basileus*.



**Turkish Sailor**  
1st-Level Expert (Sailor)

Hit Dice: 1d8  
Initiative: +0  
Speed: 20 ft.  
AC: 10  
Attacks: Scimitar +3 melee  
Damage: Scimitar 1d6 +1  
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1  
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 9  
Skills: Balance +4, Climb +4, Profession  
Feats: None  
Challenge Rating: 1  
Alignment: Chaotic Good



**Giacomo Arrighi**  
2nd-Level Expert (Sailor)

Hit Points: 11  
Initiative: +4 (Improved Initiative)  
Speed: 30 ft.  
AC: 10  
Attacks: Cutlass +6 melee  
Damage: Cutlass 1d6 +2  
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1  
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 8  
Skills: Balance +6, Climb +8, Knowledge, Profession  
Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative  
Challenge Rating: 2  
Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

### Part Three: The Voyage

Dispense with the voyage through the Aegean and the straits known as the Dardanelles fairly quickly. There are no Turkish naval patrols in this narrow waterway.

Aboard the ship, her captain, Giacomo Arrighi, is motivated by gold; he'll be paid well for this journey upon its completion. A Venetian by birth, Arrighi owes loyalty only to his own profit; he has been battered by decades of wind and sun, and appears much older than his 62 years. Arrighi will attempt to bribe the players into calling everything off early: take half the gold,

leave him the cargo, and everyone will go off on their own happy, wealthy, and most importantly of all still alive. Arrighi and some of his crew are having second

## Genoese Sailor 1st-Level Expert (Sailor)

**Hit Dice:** 1d8+1

**Initiative:** +0

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**AC:** 10

**Attacks:** Cutlass +4 melee

**Damage:** Cutlass 1d6 +1

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1

**Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12,  
Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 6

**Skills:** Balance +5

Climb +6

Profession

**Feats:** None

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Alignment:** Chaotic Neutral

thoughts about the one-way nature of their mission. They can probably run the blockade into the Golden Horn, the famous harbor of Constantinople. It's getting back out again that has them worried. The temptation to abscond with the weapons in the hold and flee is great.

Once out of the Dardanelles, the galley must cross the small inland body of water known as the Sea of Marmora. Here a Turkish corsair may be encountered, especially if you wish to give the players a quick, early challenge.

The corsair is roughly a match for the Genoese galley; though it is smaller, it is faster. Arrighi will try to use his ship's greater size to run down the Turk, while the corsair will attempt to come alongside so the Turks can board. Neither ship is equipped with artillery, though the crews will fire at each other with bows and crossbows. Eventually, the corsair will successfully grapple with the galley and the Turks will surge aboard.

The galley is crewed by about 30 sailors, plus Arrighi and of course the player characters. They will be attacked by a boarding party of about 25 Turks. None of the Genoese or Turks are armored, and the Turks will try to push armored player characters overboard. If the player characters and the Genoese successfully drive off the Turkish boarders, they may attempt to board the corsair. If the party falters at this, Arrighi will urge them on, pointing out that the Turks might fetch help if allowed to escape.

The corsair's rowers are Christian slaves, who will gladly help attack the Turks if unchained. There will be very few Turks aboard the corsair beyond those who attacked the galley. Once the corsair is secured, Arrighi will insist on sinking her (unless his own ship was damaged, in which case he will want to transfer to the corsair and scuttle the galley), as they have no way of keeping the ship.

If the Turks take the galley and capture the party, they will take them to Sultan Mehmet's camp outside Constantinople for questioning. The Genoese will be summarily bound, gagged and tossed overboard. The party will be put to work on the oars; give them an opportunity to escape when the corsair rows past Constantinople (if necessary, have one of the NPC galley slaves discover that their chains were broken during the fight).

Should the party have survived this first challenge, the galley will have to run a blockade of corsairs outside Constantinople's harbor. There are not many corsairs on guard and the galley should be able to elude them. The heavy Turkish warships are not present — the fleet is gathering to move some of its ships overland into Constantinople's harbor.



## Part Four: At Constantinople

If the ship successfully gets past the blockade, the Byzantine garrison will cover its approach to the city walls with a hail of missiles (crossbow and ballista bolts for the most part). Once the galley is close to the walls, the great chain covering the harbor entrance will lower slightly to allow it to slip over. She may then dock safely near the gate of Phanar to discharge cargo and passengers.

Even under siege, the Byzantine bureaucracy continues to grind out paperwork. A port official will greet the ship, demanding a bill of lading and asking the ship's business in Constantinople. The pope's letter will instantly bring a much friendlier reception, and the players can safely turn over unloading the weapons to the port official. The bureaucrat will also register the newly-arrived aliens as legal visitors to The City: even impending doom cannot erase the need for paperwork.

The party will then have to pay 300 ducats to Arrighi, who will announce his desire to wait several days for the Turkish patrols to relax again, then run the blockade back out of the city. For a price, a hefty price, the party is welcome to make the run back out — his willingness to rescue the player characters will increase if they played a major role in defending his ship from the corsairs. A down payment will have to be made immediately to hold their places. The ship won't wait for stragglers — anyone not aboard when she casts off can try to swim home.

Walking out of the dock district — there are few horses in evidence — the city is striking by its emptiness. Many of the buildings stretch as high as nine stories, and it's evident that no one has lived in them for many years. Some of the buildings are marble, most are brick. All of them have numerous balconies — Byzantine architects love balconies.

If the players decide to seek lodging, passersby will tell them that there aren't many rooms for rent — what good is money in a doomed city? — but Gina's may still be taking lodgers. If they ask for directions, it is near the Gate of Charisius, not far from where the ship has docked and close to the Blachernae Palace, the imperial residence. Requests for details about Gina's will be met by knowing smirks, and observations that everyone knows Gina.

Byzantines are obsessed by cleanliness — Arrighi, the port official, or any Byzantine characters will strongly urge the party to bathe before seeking an audience with the *Basileus*. Byzantines will be fairly insulting about this. There are many public bathhouses in

### Random Encounter Tables

All random encounters in *Last Days of Constantinople* are with non-player characters. These people are never carrying treasure about with them, though the serving wench's metal platter is made of silver.

#### The City

Percentage	Number and Type
01-50	1d4 Byzantine soldiers, on patrol for strangers.
51-100	1d6 Genoese sailors, drunk and looking for trouble.

#### The Palace

Percentage	Number and Type
01-50	1d6 Byzantine soldiers, on patrol.
51-70	1d4 Varangians, on patrol.
71-90	1 serving wench, scurrying about.
91-100	1d6 Genoese crossbowmen, coming off watch duty.

#### The Trench Raid

Percentage	Number and Type
01-30	1d8 Wallachian Levies
31-50	1d8 Turkish Bashi-Bazouks
51-70	1d6 Turkish Akinjis
71-80	1d6 Turkish Arquebusters
81-90	1d4 Turkish Janissaries
91-100	Vlad, the Impaler and 1d10 Wallachian Levies

#### The Turkish Camp

Percentage	Number and Type
01-40	2d6 Turkish Janissaries
41-50	2d6 Turkish Akinjis
51-70	1d6 Turkish Arquebusters
71-90	Hassan and 2d6 Turkish Janissaries
91-100	1d4 Turkish Eunuchs

Constantinople, but like the rest of the city most of them are closed. Gina's includes a bathhouse.

## Gina

### 7th-Level Expert (Courtesan)

**Hit Points:** 20

**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**AC:** 8

**Attacks:** Dagger +10 melee

**Damage:** Dagger 1d4

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +6 (+2 Great Fortitude), Ref +1, Will +2 (Iron Will)

**Abilities:** Str 9, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 32

**Skills:** Bluff                      Escape Artist  
Disguise                      Intimidate  
Gather Information      Knowledge  
Profession                      Perform  
Speak Language           Sense Motive  
Read Lips                      Forgery  
Swim

**Feats:** Great Fortitude      Iron Will  
Improved Initiative      Alertness  
Improved Critical      Lightning Reflexes  
(dagger)

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Alignment:** Neutral Evil

**Special:** Gina is not a magic-user, but her bedroom skills give her some magic-like properties (these are not detectable by magical means — for edgier role-playing, inform the player that his/her character has fallen under this influence without tipping off the other players. Let them discover what is happening through the character's behavior.).

Treat any character who has sexual relations with Gina as the target of a "Charm Person" spell. Spell resistance does not apply, but a saving throw against Will is made as for a spell. Duration lasts for the remainder of the campaign, ending when Gina is killed or the charmed character becomes aware she has had relations with someone else.

Her allure makes it impossible for male player characters to detect her evil alignment as anything beyond "lingering." If a female character tries to reveal Gina's alignment to her male companions, they are unlikely to believe her.

Also, though not an assassin, Gina has use of an assassin's Sneak Attack and Death Attack capabilities.

## Gina's House of Joy

In all cities there are places where information is traded, where one can learn what is really going on beneath the surface. The overworked tavern scenario sees so much use in role-playing games because drinking establishments did play a huge role in the public sphere.

But in Constantinople, as in most cities of the historical world, man does not live by alcohol alone. Sexual satisfaction is an even more important commodity, one that some will trade like any other. And for a band of adventurers who have been facing danger and quite possibly the lack of such companionship, the local brothel is always a major destination location.

Prostitution is not strictly illegal in Constantinople, though it is frowned upon by "better society" (which does not stop them from patronizing the trade).

Byzantine prostitutes are certainly not streetwalkers, but educated, confident women seen as purveyors of entertainment and companionship as much as sex. With Byzantine society placing firm barriers to the advancement of energetic women, this is one field in which they can exercise power without restriction.

Gina is a foreigner of some repute in The City, and she runs its best-known brothel. She is a strikingly beautiful woman in her late 20's. Very tall and long-legged, a brunette in a city of short, dark-haired and olive-skinned folk, she is instantly noticeable when the party enters the house's atrium. She is obviously a foreigner — her name alone reveals that much — though she will not discuss just where her home country lies.

There are only one or two customers in evidence, drinking wine and chatting quietly with the women and men working the establishment. Gina will welcome the party with apologies for the lack of musicians in these hard times, and also for the poor quality of food available in a city under siege. She will discretely inquire as to the party's ability to pay for their stay.

If the answer meets with her approval, the party will be encouraged to relax and enjoy themselves, sitting in large leather-covered chairs to enjoy conversation with the entertainers. There are both male and female prostitutes, though women outnumber men as Constantine's appeal for all able-bodied men to volunteer for military duty has drawn a few of the male workers away. Gina's bouncers have remained on station, two large and heavily armed thugs remaining very quietly and unobtrusively near the door.

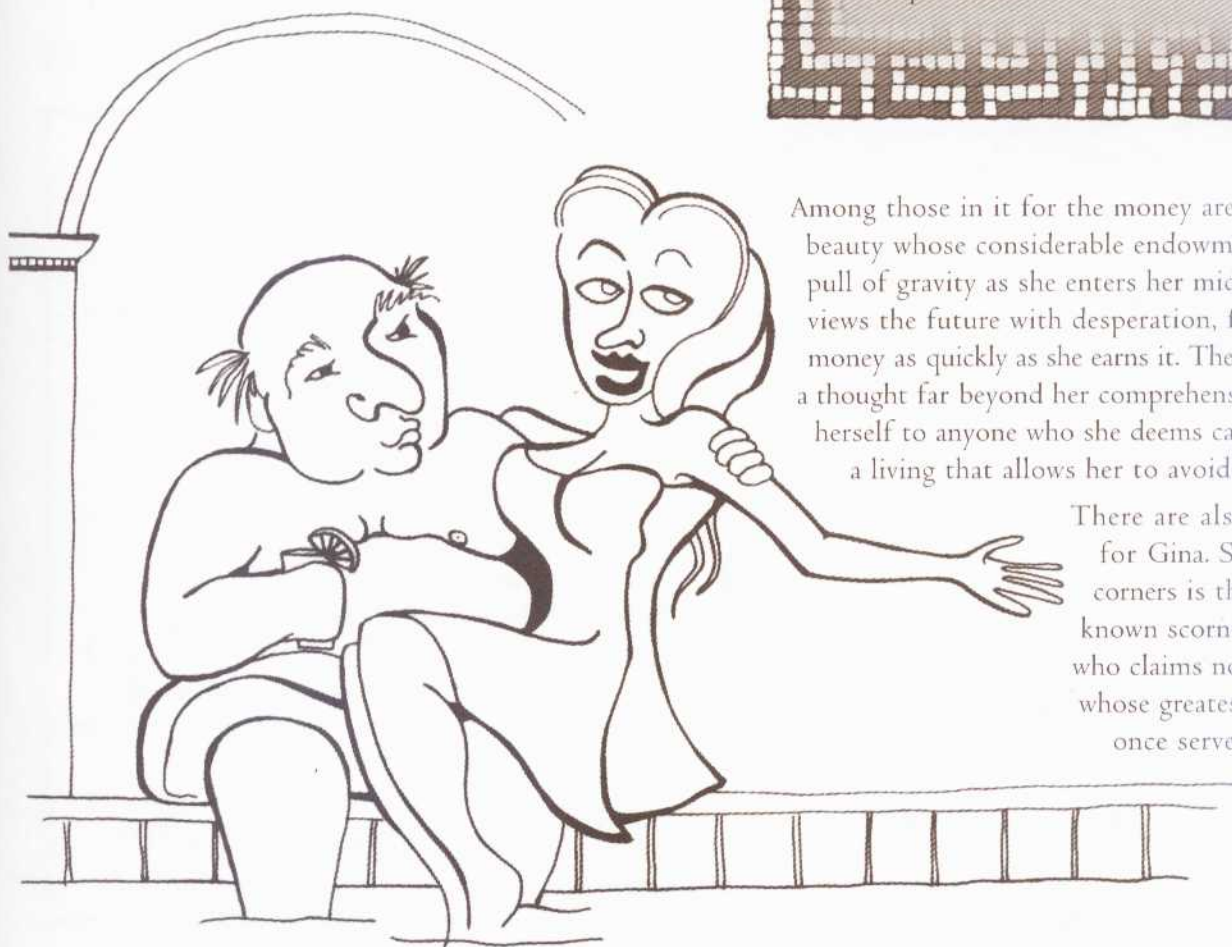
Bowls of wine will be served. The courtesans can converse on a variety of subjects, and all are skilled players of chess.



Much of The City's remaining elite patronizes Gina's establishment. This is where the players can get their questions answered. Private rooms are available for more intimate entertainment; the detail in which to role-play these encounters needs to be determined by the desires and maturity level of your players.

Gina will aim herself at whichever player character appears to be the leader and most capable of fulfilling her needs. While she has become rich through her business, the Turks are said to put prostitutes to death and she will discuss these fears. She wants to escape the city before its fall. With a lack of morality beyond looking after herself, she will not hesitate to abandon her employees and slaves to their fate — and if she joins the party at any point, will act in her own interest above her companions'. She will kill those who stand in her way, if she thinks she can get away with it. Motivated by selfishness, she does not commit evil acts for their own sake, but does not shy away from them if she believes they will advance her cause. Her charms have such compulsion that a character may become infatuated with her, and may hope to "turn" her attitude.

The player characters will meet a number of interesting employees in Gina's house. Many of the employees are actually slaves owned outright by Gina.



## Tamara

### 2nd-Level Expert (Prostitute)

**Hit Points:** 5

**Initiative:** -4

**Speed:** 15 ft.

**AC:** 7

**Attacks:** None

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Saves:** Fort 0, Ref -2, Will 0

**Abilities:** Str 11, Dex 9, Con 9,  
Int 6, Wis 4, Cha 18

**Skills:** Perform  
Profession  
Swim

**Feats:** None

**Challenge Rating:** 0

**Alignment:** Chaotic Neutral

**Special:** Tamara will plead mightily to join the party, but if allowed to join will prove a deadweight of no practical use beyond that of her profession.

Among those in it for the money are Tamara, a fading beauty whose considerable endowments are feeling the pull of gravity as she enters her mid-thirties. She views the future with desperation, for she spends money as quickly as she earns it. The Turkish conquest is a thought far beyond her comprehension: she will attach herself to anyone who she deems capable of giving her a living that allows her to avoid working.

There are also men working for Gina. Slinking about the corners is the young male slave known scornfully as The Baron, who claims noble ancestry and whose greatest pride is that he once served as catamite to a

**Manuel**  
**2nd-Level Expert**  
**(Prostitute)/1st Level Ex-Fighter**

**Hit Points:** 12  
**Initiative:** 0  
**Speed:** 20 ft.  
**AC:** 10  
**Attacks:** Longsword +3 melee  
**Damage:** Longsword 1d8 +6  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +4, Ref +1,  
Will +1  
**Abilities:** Str 15, Dex 18, Con 12,  
Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 16  
**Skills:** Profession  
Swim  
**Feats:** Ambidexterity  
Run  
**Challenge Rating:** 1  
**Alignment:** Neutral Good

**Special:** Manuel abhors violence, but also abhors death. He will therefore resist if attacked, but is not armed and may only use weapons he finds or is given.



false claimant to the papacy. Slender, almost girlish in appearance, he dresses in women's clothing, affecting the same hip-length robe and flared skirt as most of the female prostitutes as well as the standard heavily-rouged lips and darkly accented eyebrows of Byzantine women. Gina and her female employees make him the butt of their jokes. He is spiteful and bitter, and hates Gina and all others he considers his betters. Should both he and Gina leave the House of Joy with the party, he is likely to try to kill her. While he has a sharp tongue, in keeping with his profession he has no teeth, having had them pulled to better serve. The Baron is an utterly loyal minion of Koprostes the Eunuch, who the party will meet at the palace, and does nothing without his overlord's approval. If the party has wounded Koprostes' massive vanity, The Baron will do everything possible to blacken their name.

Manuel, on the other hand, is a friendly former Byzantine soldier who has, as he'll describe it, found a more profitable use for his sword. Like Tamara, he is a paid employee rather than a slave, and knows much of the Byzantine way of war. A lover rather than a fighter these days, he is a handsome, well-muscled Byzantine, at the prime of his manhood and well aware of his effect on others. He fought the Turks several years before, under Constantine's command in Greece, and was shattered by the experience. While he does not mind answering questions, he will resolutely refuse to fight again though he will defend himself if attacked. He hopes to get out of the city as soon as possible.

Gina's House of Joy offers its services to a number of high-ranking Byzantines. The captain of the Varangian guards is a regular visitor, as is the personal secretary to the *Basileus*. There may even be hints that Constantine himself is known to release his tensions here. Power and influence are traded here along with physical favors, and a visit to the bordello often disguises a private meeting with another "customer."

If the player characters are typical outlanders, even relatively sophisticated Italians, they will be unlikely to meet Byzantine standards of cleanliness.

Byzantines bathe at least twice a day; the Orthodox Church considers more than that to be sinful self-indulgence, but three baths are common and even more are not unknown. As a result the House of Joy, like most upper-class Byzantine residences, includes its own bathhouse. Gina and her employees will direct the visitors there with great impatience.

The bathhouse includes both hot and cold basins for

washing, plus a large pool, nearly the size of a swimming pool, in which to rinse off. Like a typical Byzantine bathhouse, the basins are in the open. Unlike other bathhouses, the one in this establishment also has small pools screened off from view, where more energetic entertainment can be offered.

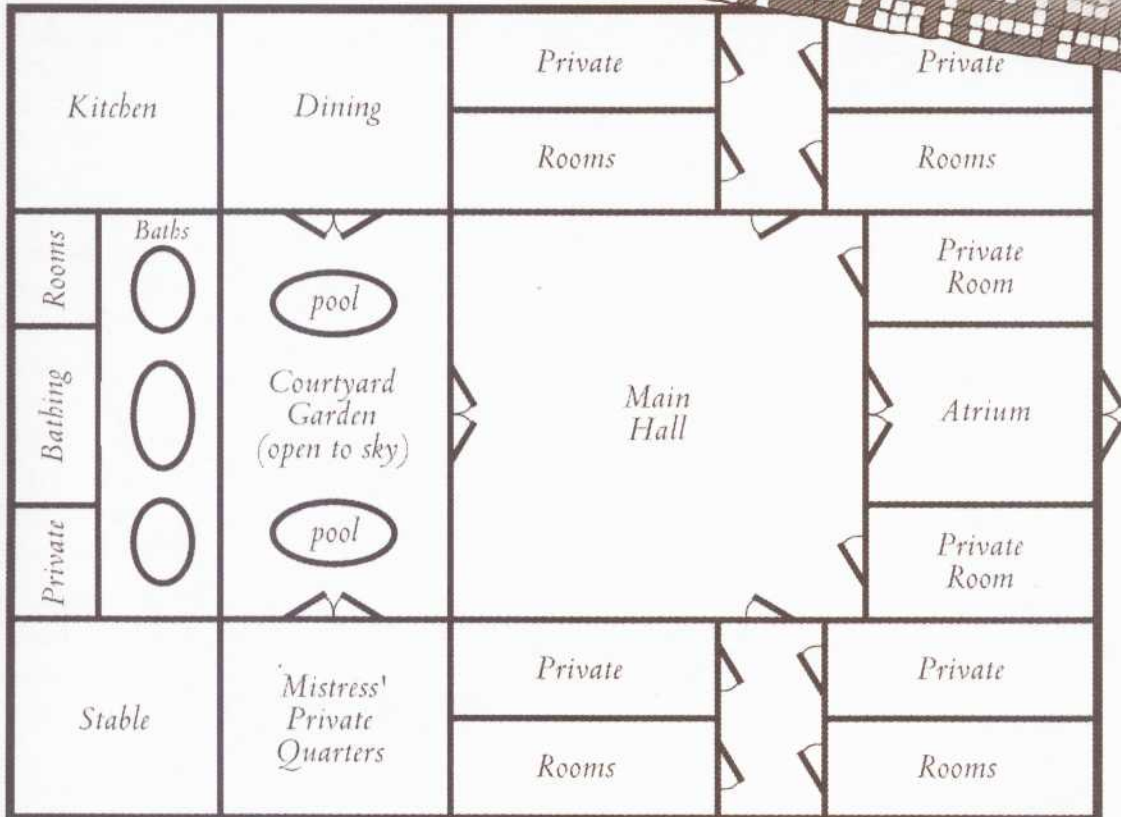
Byzantine residences like this one also contain a facility that will amaze outlanders: the flush toilet. While fantasy adventurers rarely have to consider such needs, Byzantines and their guests relieve themselves in what can only be called futuristic fashion. And, in keeping with the obsessive cleanliness of the culture, the facility also includes a wash basin properly sited to clean up afterwards (a great change from the rubbing sticks and helpful dogs used by western Europeans).

**"The Baron"**  
2nd-Level Expert (Prostitute)

Hit Points: 4  
 Initiative: 0  
 Speed: 20 ft.  
 AC: 8  
 Attacks: Fork +1 melee  
 Damage: Fork 1d2  
 Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
 Saves: Fort 0, Ref -1, Will 0  
 Abilities: Str 9, Dex 6, Con 7,  
 Int 9, Wis 4, Cha 9  
 Skills: Perform  
 Profession  
 Swim  
 Feats: None  
 Challenge Rating: 0  
 Alignment: Neutral Evil

**Special:** Flip a coin to resolve the d2 attack of The Baron's fork (heads = 2, tails = 1).

### House of Joy Floorplan



## Constantine XI Dragastes 10th-Level Aristocrat (Autokrator)

**Hit Points:** 45  
**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)  
**Speed:** 30 ft.  
**AC:** 19 (+4 scale mail, +2 large shield)  
**Attacks:** Longsword +8 melee  
**Damage:** Longsword 1d8 +6  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +6 (+2 Great Fortitude), Ref +1, Will +2 (Iron Will)  
**Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 20  
**Skills:** Diplomacy Intimidate  
 Gather Information Ride  
 Sense Motive Swim  
 Speak Language  
**Feats:** Alertness Ambidexterity  
 Great Fortitude Iron Will  
 Improved Initiative  
**Challenge Rating:** 12  
**Alignment:** Lawful Good

## Palace of the Emperor

At some point, the player characters will have to use their papal letter to meet the *Basileus*. They need to find out if there is an empress, and if so how they can best spirit her back to Chios. Constantine XI's official residence, the Blachernae Palace, lies right up against the city walls; actually, the palace district juts out from the walls somewhat. It is a magnificent structure, befitting the ruler of the known world. It is also dark and appears abandoned.

Brief questioning of passersby or of patrons at the House of Joy will reveal that the *Basileus* has withdrawn his small army of servants from the palace to use them in defending the walls, arming those fit for combat and using the

## Koprostes the Eunuch 1st-Level Commoner (Servant)

**Hit Points:** 8  
**Initiative:** 0  
**Speed:** 20 ft.  
**AC:** 9  
**Attacks:** None  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +0  
**Abilities:** Str 6, Dex 6, Con 8, Int 9, Wis 5, Cha 6  
**Skills:** Gather Information Forgery  
 Bluff Swim  
**Feats:** None  
**Challenge Rating:** 0  
**Alignment:** Chaotic Evil

**Special:** Koprostes the Eunuch is a habitual liar. He will weave great tales of his importance, but the *Basileus* and his court all treat him as a base servant. He also suffers from incontinence, and must change his "diaper" at least once per day. This is a great embarrassment to him, and he will insist on privacy for the change.



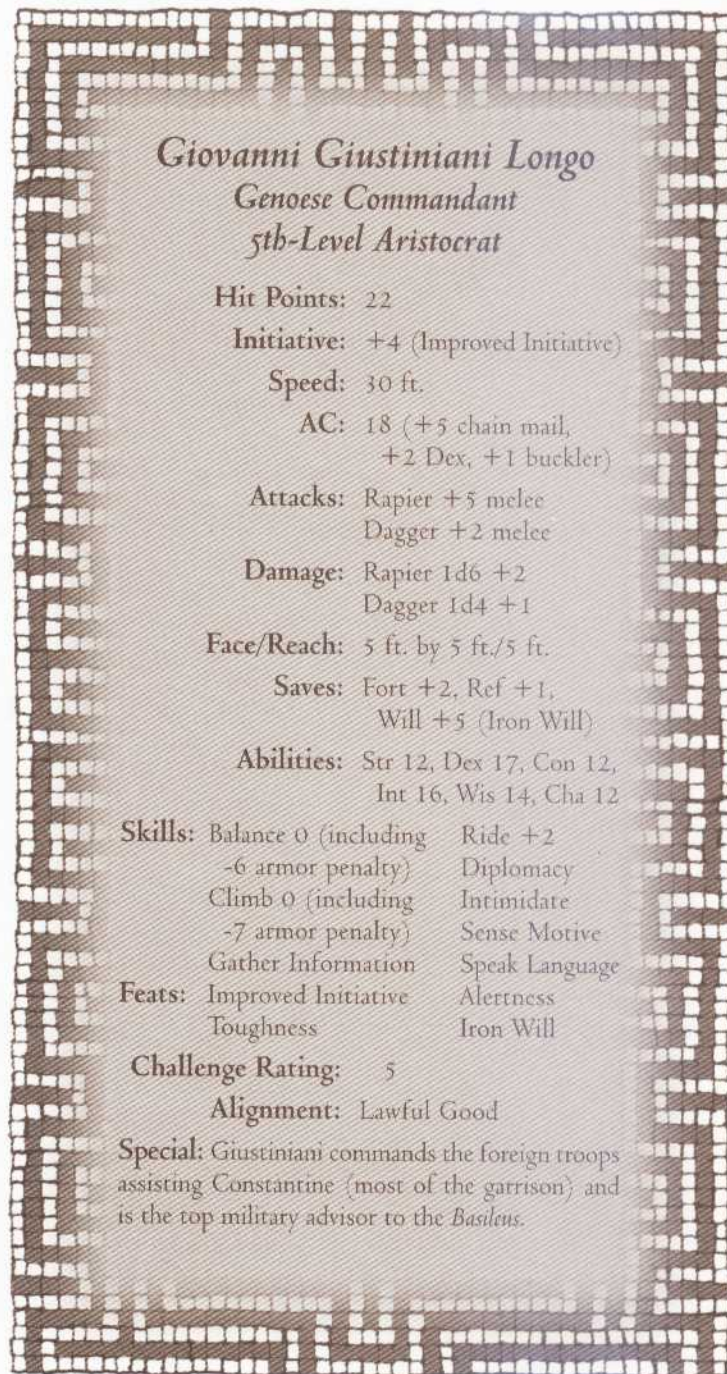
rest for non-combatant tasks (feeding the troops, repairing breaches, tending the wounded).

While the living symbol of the Roman world (such as it is) would normally have no time to waste on a handful of outlanders, these are not normal times. If the party has successfully handed over the pope's shipload of equipment to the Byzantine port officials, then the player characters have already done the emperor a service. Constantine IX is a gracious man and will grant an audience in order to thank them, and is always looking to add a few more experienced swords to his forces. He may already suspect that they also have a mission from Msgr. Marcello, and will want to determine if their success is in his best interest.

Presenting themselves to the guards at the gate (two to six Byzantine soldiers), the party will be asked to hand over all weapons and denied entry should they refuse. Disarmed, they will then be escorted to the *protovestiarium* ("master of the wardrobe," or court chamberlain), an annoying eunuch named Koprostes, quite taken with his own importance. Koprostes is short and softly fat, with but a fringe of scraggly hair framing his bald scalp. If player characters look closely, they may notice that due to his incontinence Koprostes wears a large cloth diaper under his robes. If the party has already been to Gina's, the eunuch will call them by name and use other bits of information gleaned by his minion The Baron to impress them with his omnipotent knowledge.

Koprostes will advise the adventurers briefly on etiquette, and tell them of his own vast influence, how nothing is accomplished in The City without the intervention of Koprostes. The eunuch also claims to serve as court historian, and will tell the party that he knows more of Byzantium's history than anyone else, due to his use of primary sources. If the party wants to influence the *Basileus*, to gain information, to carry out any missions, they should work through Koprostes, he will tell them, and they must pay Koprostes well. If they reject the opportunity to work with the great Koprostes, he will become a bitter enemy. The eunuch may turn the party away and tell them to return later after bathing if he feels they are not clean enough to enter the presence of the Living Symbol of Christianity.

Constantine XI will be seated upon his throne in a small reception room when the chamberlain conducts the party to him. All will be expected to perform the *proskynesis*, flinging themselves full-length upon the floor with arms stretched wide. The Varangians (see below) will eject those who refuse. The living



**Giovanni Giustiniani Longo**  
**Genoese Commandant**  
**5th-Level Aristocrat**

**Hit Points:** 22  
**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)  
**Speed:** 30 ft.  
**AC:** 18 (+5 chain mail, +2 Dex, +1 buckler)  
**Attacks:** Rapier +5 melee  
Dagger +2 melee  
**Damage:** Rapier 1d6 +2  
Dagger 1d4 +1  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +1,  
Will +5 (Iron Will)  
**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 17, Con 12,  
Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 12

**Skills:** Balance 0 (including Ride +2  
-6 armor penalty) Diplomacy  
Climb 0 (including Intimidate  
-7 armor penalty) Sense Motive  
Gather Information Speak Language

**Feats:** Improved Initiative Alertness  
Toughness Iron Will

**Challenge Rating:** 5  
**Alignment:** Lawful Good

**Special:** Giustiniani commands the foreign troops assisting Constantine (most of the garrison) and is the top military advisor to the *Basileus*.

embodiment of the Christian faith, *Basileus* Constantine XI Paleologus is an impressive figure, regal and solemn as the end of a thousand-year empire approaches. The emperor knows he and his city are doomed, but is determined to leave a legacy of resistance. A religious man, he and most of his companions believe that the Armageddon foretold in their holy writings is upon them.

A soldier by training, Constantine never expected to assume the throne. His older brother held the throne before dying unexpectedly, while Constantine was in Greece commanding Byzantine forces against the Turks. He is an inspiring battlefield leader, and a skilled individual fighter. The irony is not lost on the Byzantines that

**George Sphrantzes**  
Secretary to the Basileus  
3rd-Level Aristocrat

Hit Points: 18

Initiative: +4 (Improved Initiative)

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: 16 (+5 chain mail,  
+2 large shield)

Attacks: Longsword +4 melee  
Dagger +1 melee

Damage: Longsword 1d8 +3  
Dagger 1d4 +1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +1,  
Will +3 (Iron Will)

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 11, Con 10,  
Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 14

Skills: Diplomacy Intimidate  
Gather Information Ride  
Speak Language Sense Motive  
Swim

Feats: Improved Initiative Alertness  
Iron Will

Challenge Rating: 3

Alignment: Lawful Good

**Special:** Sphrantzes, like the other Byzantine aristocrats, will not be carrying arms and armor in most situations where he might be encountered. The combat stats reflect him with full equipment (during the final assault, for example).

after centuries of inept leadership, one of their finest emperors has come to them only after the empire is beyond salvation.

At the emperor's side will be a number of advisors and officers. Giovanni Guistiniani Longo leads the Genoese mercenary contingent. He is a fanatic Christian crusader, but thoroughly professional in military matters.

George Sphrantzes is secretary to the *Basileus*, a highly-educated Greek who has been with his master for decades. A Byzantine imperial secretary is far more than a scribe, serving as his master's chief advisor and as head of the professional government staff.

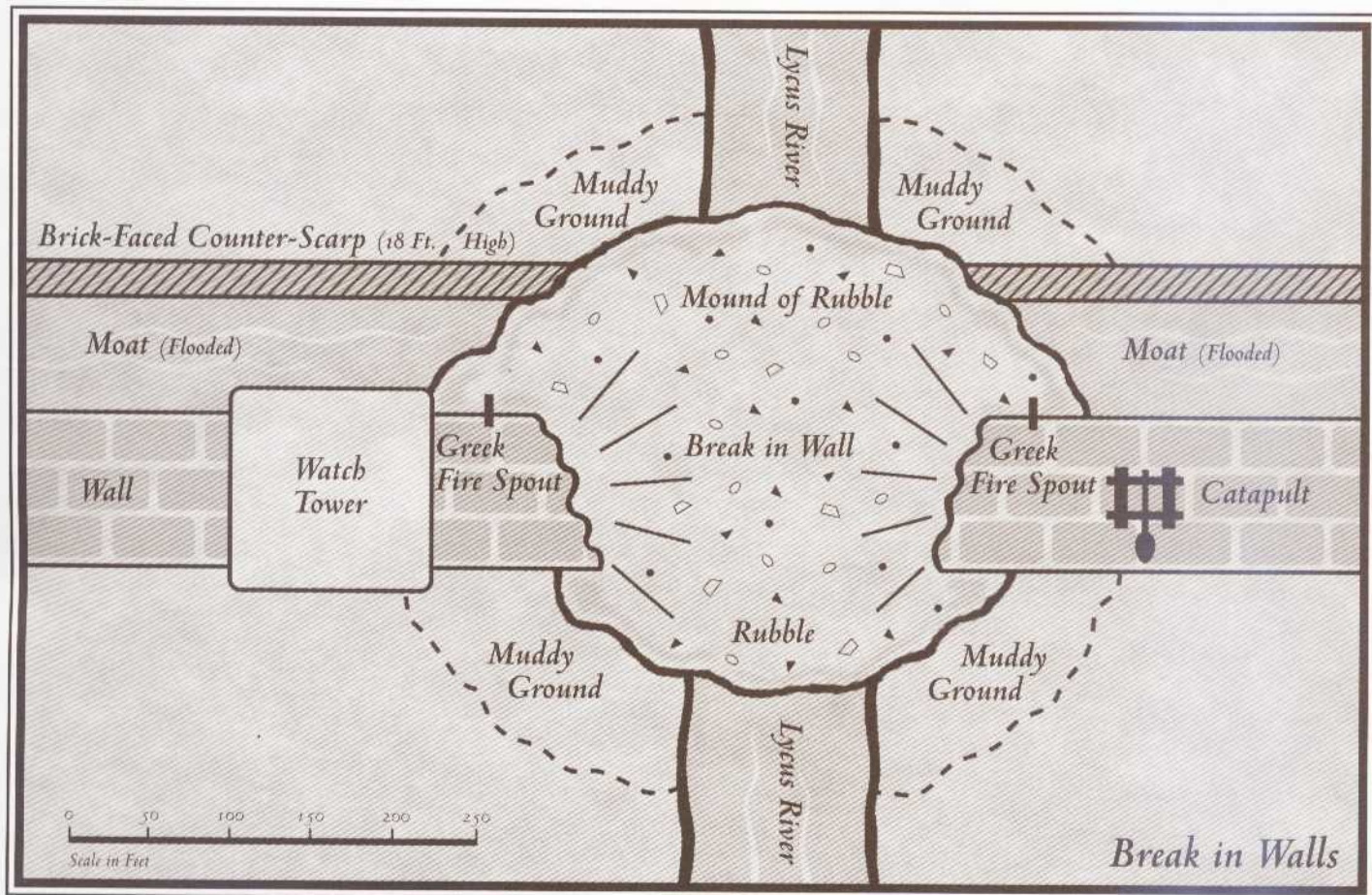
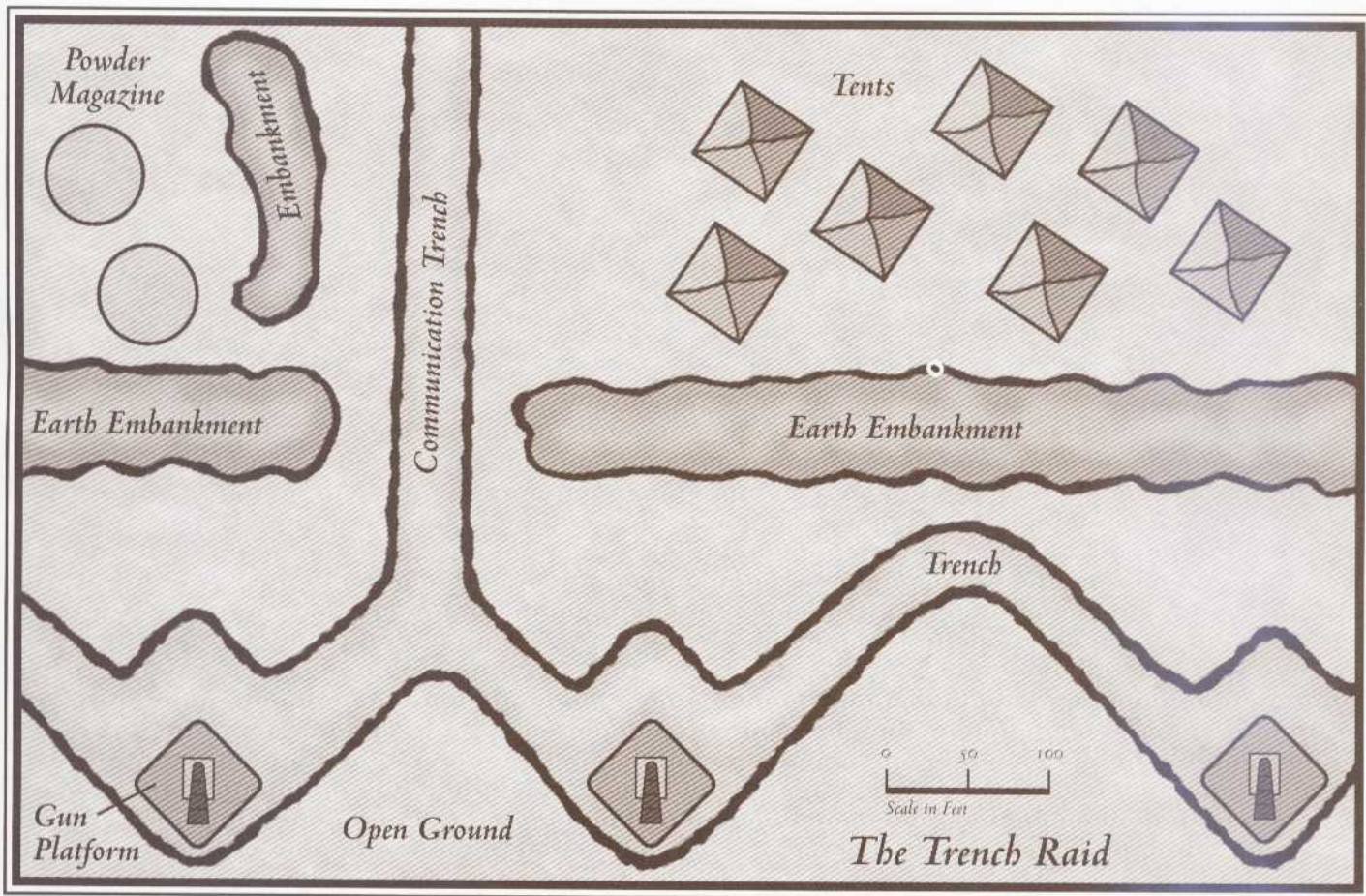
Cardinal Isidore is a Russian, recently appointed to oversee the union of the Roman and Orthodox Catholic churches. He is a determined advocate of papal supremacy, and will choose whatever course he deems best suited to maintaining the pope's shaky authority over Byzantine Christians.

The nominal head of the Orthodox Church, the Patriarch Gregory III, resigned three years ago and was never replaced. In the absence of a formal leader, the conservative anti-Roman elements opposed to Isidore are led by Phocas, an Orthodox bishop. Phocas believes that resistance to the Turks will spell an end to Byzantine civilization, the only real civilization the world knows. Even if the city fends off the assault, it will have done so at the cost of its very soul — placing the Orthodox faith under the heretic pope in Rome, and relying on the military aid of backward, barbaric Westerners.

Phocas is vocal in this opinion, in what is obviously an argument that has been hashed over repeatedly and now bores the *Basileus* and his advisors. He does not wish the party to remain in Constantinople and will urge them to leave while it is still possible to do so.

Constantine will take all of these men very seriously, but spares not a glance for







Palace of Blachernae

Gate of Xylokerkus

State Bank

Golden Horn

Gate of Charisius

Gate of Phanar

Gate of St. Theodosia

Aelius Cistern

Aspar Cistern

St. Hiacre

House of Iov

Gate of Plateia

Walls of Theodosius

Military Gate 5

Gate of St. Romanus

Lycus River

Gate of Drungari

Military Gate 4

Walls of Constantinian

Arsé

Aqueduct of Valens

Gate of Rhegium

Amastrianum

St. Alocius Cistern

Forum of Bovis

Military Gate 3

Gate of the Page

Forum of Arcadius

Forum Tauri & Theodosius

Military Gate 2

Gate of St. Amilianus

Iron Gate

Gate of Psamathia

Golden Gate

Sea of Marmara





Galata

Bosphorus

○ Chrysopolis

Great Chain

Gate of Theodorian

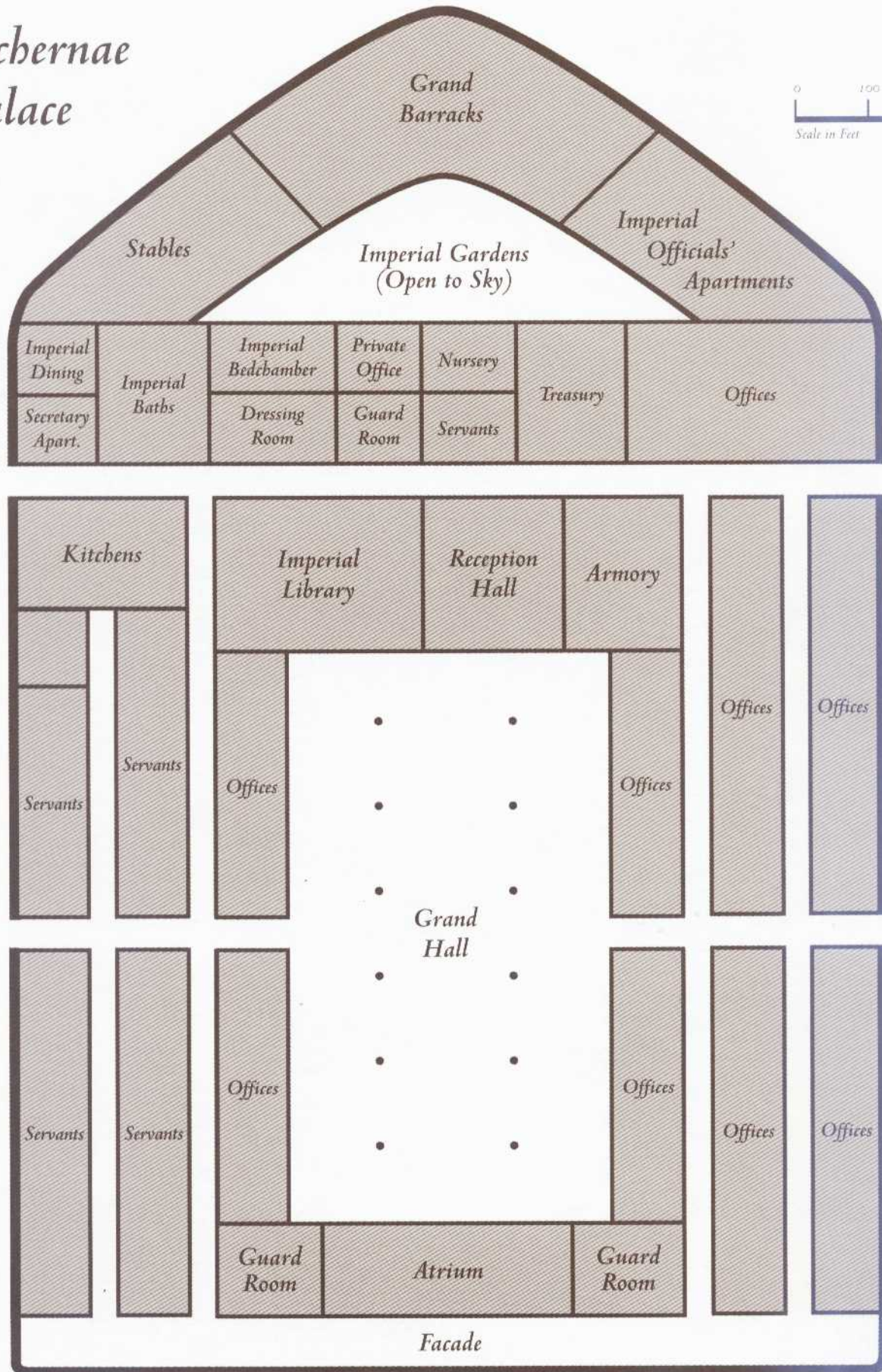
Gate of St. Barbara

Gate of Eugenius  
Old Greek Acropolis

remains of Constantine

Constantinople

# Blachernae Palace



*Note:* The Blachernae was demolished by Sultan Mehmet and few remains survive. This plan is purely conjectural.

Koprostes, and may order him to perform basic servile tasks. Koprostes has a severely inflated sense of his own importance. Any bribes paid are wasted, though Koprostes will attempt to hold the party to any bargain they were foolish enough to enter with him and spew vile lies about them should he feel his massive vanity wounded.

The emperor is constantly attended by six to ten Varangian Guardsmen. Though famed as the elite unit of Viking mercenaries, those days are long gone and most Varangians today are Englishmen. Financial hard times have greatly reduced the number of guardsmen employed by the *Basileus*, though this should not be readily apparent to the party. Constantine XI, an experienced governor and military commander before his brother's death, knows how to put on appearances and display the trappings of power even where they are weak. Should the Varangians ever feel their emperor threatened, they will chop first and ask permission later.

As professional, long-service soldiers, the Varangians have a good eye for fighting men. The number of Varangians attending the *Basileus* will always be sufficient to overwhelm the party of player characters, should they decide to attack Constantine.

There is also a cloud of two to six servants following the *Basileus* about to attend to his needs. These appear to annoy Constantine. A gracious man, he will continually direct them to see to the needs of his guests as well. They will only appear in the palace and during the final battle for Constantinople, when they will be

by his side, uneasy but armed and prepared to die for their master.

There will be no empress in view. If asked directly, the emperor will say that his beloved wife Magdalena died some years previously, and he is quite saddened that she never saw him ascend the throne. If court officials are asked during the course of the dinner, they will answer along the same lines. A political marriage with a daughter of the King of Georgia had been arranged, promising a large contingent of Georgian troops to help hold the city walls, but neither princess nor soldiers arrived before the Turks began their siege works.

**Mariya, Empress of Byzantium**  
1st-Level Aristocrat

Hit Points: 10  
Initiative: +0  
Speed: 20 ft.  
AC: 8  
Attacks: Longsword +1  
Damage: Longsword 1d8  
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2 (Iron Will)  
Abilities: Str 7, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 22  
Skills: Diplomacy  
Ride  
Speak Language  
Feats: Alertness  
Iron Will  
Challenge Rating: 1  
Alignment: Lawful Good

**Special:** Empress Mariya — if, indeed, she even exists — is the daughter of a proud warrior family and as such has been trained in the use of weapons. She does not carry a sword, but is capable of picking one up and using it at need.

**Phocas**  
5th-Level Sorcerer

Hit Points: 18  
Initiative: -2  
Speed: 20 ft.  
AC: 10  
Attacks: None  
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

<b>Spells:</b> Bestow Curse	Cause Fear
Blindness/Deafness	Change Self
Charm Person	Clairaudience
Command	Contagion
Dispel Magic	Displacement
Dominate Person	Fear
Hypnotism	

Saves: Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +6  
Abilities: Str 8, Dex 10, Con 8, Int 19, Wis 18, Cha 12  
Challenge Rating: 5  
Alignment: Chaotic Evil

**William of Hueytown**  
*Varangian Captain*  
*5th-Level Barbarian*

**Hit Points:** 58  
**Initiative:** +6 (Improved Initiative)  
**Speed:** 30 ft.  
**AC:** 24 (+5 chain mail, +2 Dex, +2 large shield)  
**Attacks:** Great axe +8 melee  
Dagger +2 melee  
**Damage:** Great axe 1d12 +7  
Dagger 1d4 +1  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +6 (Iron Will)  
**Abilities:** Str 22, Dex 18, Con 20, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 11  
**Skills:** Balance -1 (including -7 armor penalty)  
Climb 0 (including -7 armor penalty)  
Ride +6  
**Feats:** Improved Initiative    Alertness  
Toughness    Iron Will  
Deflect Arrows    Cleave  
Improved Bull Rush    Power Attack

**Challenge Rating:** 6

**Alignment:** Lawful Good

**Special:** Unless visiting Gina's for well-earned recreation, William will never be found far from Constantine. He is well-educated and fluent in both Italian and Greek as well as his native English. Like his troops, William is able to invoke barbarian rage in spite of his lawful good alignment.

The papal orders were quite specific: to bring out the empress before the Turks take the city. But it appears that there is no empress, and the lack of Georgian troops in Constantinople would seem to confirm this. The players must now decide what is to be done. If they reveal their situation and mistaken quest to Constantine XI and the empress has been kidnapped, he may want the party to

find her, while suspecting them of committing the deed themselves. Otherwise, he will make a stirring pitch to stand beside him upon the walls of Constantinople, appealing to the party's personal honor and desire for glory. He will also push strongly for solidarity among Christians, arguing that a stand here is not futile, no matter what the result. Even a lost cause can be a victory, if it inspires the Christian world to resist the rising tide of Islam.

If the party wavers, Guistiniani will add a fanatic appeal, questioning the party's courage and faith. Isidore will point out that the party has already accepted a commission from the papal government, and as this places them subject to his authority as papal legate he could order them to join the defense but would prefer willing volunteers.

Guistiniani will station the player characters together at the Gate of Charisius. As volunteers/mercenaries, the party will be allowed to take quarters anywhere close to the gate. Most of the garrison is billeted in this manner; only those who are actually on sentry duty remain on the walls.

**Byzantine Serving Wench**  
*1st-Level Commoner*

**Hit Dice:** 1d6  
**Initiative:** 0  
**Speed:** 20 ft.  
**AC:** 10  
**Attacks:** Metal Platter +1 melee  
**Damage:** Metal Platter 1d4  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref 0, Will +2  
**Abilities:** Str 15, Dex 12, Con 9, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 14  
**Skills:** Swim  
**Feats:** Weapon Focus (Metal Platter)  
Improved Bull Rush

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Alignment:** Neutral Good

**Special:** The serving wench deals with harassment promptly and firmly.

## In the Palace

The players may decide to infiltrate the palace for a number of reasons: to see for themselves whether or not the young empress exists, to kidnap her or possibly even Constantine, to burglarize it for its treasure.

Once the grandest building on the planet, the Blachernae has fallen into disrepair and looks rather shabby. It is a massive structure of well-dressed stone, most of it empty and sealed up by wooden partitions. There are very few guards present — a pair of soldiers from the front gate detachment patrols the empty sections on a regular basis, mostly to look for Turkish infiltrators. The sections abutting the city wall have much more activity, as sentries guard the defenses and soldiers have been living in some of these areas.

The guards are not terribly vigilant and the adventurers should be able to slip past them at will. However, if they are spotted (especially if they fight with the guards), they will very likely be recognized and this will greatly complicate their mission. The *Basileus* doesn't really have soldiers to spare to hunt the party, but if they are suspected of being Turkish agents he'll find the resources to mount a search.

Inside, the air is one of steady decay. There are many abandoned rooms, and they show signs of no use for many years. Dust hangs thick and heavy. If the party locates the Treasury, they will find stout lockboxes mounted firmly in the heavy stone walls. Should they manage to get the boxes open, they'll find all of them empty. This was the storage area for the imperial family's personal wealth and their jewels; government funds are held in the State Bank. Constantine has spent what little he found here on repairing the city defenses and hiring soldiers.

The imperial apartments and the reception hall are the only areas of the Blachernae in regular use, other than one of the guards' barracks occupied by the Varangians and some Genoese. There will be Varangians posted wherever the *Basileus* is to be found, and when he is not present a pair of them guard his sleeping chamber with two more outside the anteroom.

If the empress is being held by Constantine, she will be in the imperial apartments under 24-hour guard of three Varangians. If she is in hiding as a servant, she will be part of the staff immediately attending the *Basileus*, but will not be performing any actual servile tasks — she will be part of the background, but may be noticeable for not actually doing any work and for the deference paid her by the other serving women despite her youth.

## Cardinal Isidore Papal Legate 8th-Level Cleric

**Hit Points:** 30  
**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)  
**Speed:** 20 ft.  
**AC:** 10  
**Attacks:** None  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +6, Ref +5,  
Will +8 (Iron Will)  
**Abilities:** Str 11, Dex 11, Con 12,  
Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 17  
**Skills:** Gather Information    Diplomacy  
Intimidate    Ride  
Speak Language    Sense Motive  
**Feats:** Improved Initiative    Alertness  
Iron Will  
**Challenge Rating:** 3  
**Alignment:** Lawful Good

**Special:** Though a cleric, Isidore as a devout Catholic eschews the use of magic. Through his devotion, he has gained a number of abilities that draw on similar powers, though he would argue that these are not magic but instead blessings. He therefore does not cast spells, but can perform the following actions as though he had cast a spell:

Atonement (subject must confess to Isidore)	
Calm Emotions	Bless
Bless Water	Cause Fear
(no silver needed)	Detect Magic
Discern Lies	Dispel Magic
Protection From Evil	Remove Fear
Shield of Faith	Remove Curse
(no parchment needed)	

## Secret Exit

There is also a secret passage out of the Blachernae, leading under the walls and out under the Turkish siege lines. The outer end is buried under about three feet of soil and will need to be excavated to allow exit. The inner end is well-hidden, and is not guarded. Very few are even aware of its existence — Constantine, Phocas, Sphrantzes, William of Hueytown and Koprostes know of it. Gina

## Varangian Guardsman 3rd-Level Barbarian

**Hit Dice:** 3d12+3 (+3 toughness)

**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 20 (+5 chain mail,  
+2 Dex, +2 large  
shield)

**Attacks:** Great axe +6 melee  
Dagger +2 melee

**Damage:** Great axe 1d12 +5  
Dagger 1d4 +1

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +7, Ref +3,  
Will +6 (Iron Will)

**Abilities:** Str 18, Dex 16, Con 20,  
Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 7

**Skills:** Balance -1 (including  
-7 armor penalty)

Climb 0 (including  
-7 armor penalty)

Ride +6

**Feats:** Improved Initiative    Alertness  
Toughness                    Iron Will  
Deflect Arrows            Cleave  
Improved Bull Rush    Power Attack

**Challenge Rating:** 4

**Alignment:** Lawful Good

**Special:** Varangian Guardsmen rarely appear far from the *Basileus* when on duty, and with the city under siege they are always on duty. The players should never be able to get a complete count of them, but there are not many left (less than two dozen in all). While they are human, like all characters in this adventure, they are abnormally large examples of the species. They are fanatically devoted to the *Basileus* and will attack anyone who appears about to harm him. Only officers speak Greek, with most of the rest speaking English (Viking recruits gave way to Englishmen several centuries ago). While the guardsmen are of lawful good alignment, this does not inhibit their ability to rage. Their rage, which like the Vikings they call "berserk," is fueled by their fanaticism.

knows that it exists, thanks to her relationship with the former emperor, but does not know the exact location of the entrance. She is aware of who does know, however.

The passage is not marked on any maps of the Blachernae, and while the player characters may learn of its existence from Gina and attempt to find it without aid, the odds of success are very low. Place the entrance in any first-floor chamber of the Blachernae; it does not necessarily begin in one of those closest to the city walls. The passage is very old, made of dressed stone. It is about six feet high and four feet wide and over 500 yards long; it dates from the earliest stages of the palace's construction.

Sphrantzes will tell the party of the passage if they accept his scheme (see below). Knowledge of the passage is the only useful fact known to Koprostes, which he will only share if he and his minion The Baron are

assured of escape from The City. Koprostes will attempt to bargain with this information, but

the party may not believe him (as he is a habitual and vicious liar). If The Baron is killed by a member of the party, this will not necessarily turn Koprostes against them, as he knows nothing of honor or courage.

Once the exit is cleared, the party will find themselves in the middle of a small copse of trees some 100 yards

behind the Turkish siege lines. There are Turkish tents very close to the trees, and nearby are screened-off latrines and picket lines with horses attached to them. Regular foot and mounted patrols of six to eight troopers will come by before the assault on the city. There will be no patrols once the walls are breached, as even the camp followers will pour into the city to engage in looting and pillage.

Once past the Turkish camps, there will be mounted patrols of six to eight horsemen looking for escapees from the city. The land is chiefly well-managed farmland, though the farms and small villages have been devastated by the Turks. Most of the buildings were either burned by the Byzantines before the Turks arrived or demolished by Turkish engineers seeking building materials for their siege lines.

After an encounter or two with passing patrols, end the adventure as the party has left the city behind. The return to their homes or to report success to Msgr. Marcello on Chios (or failure, if they are very foolish) is beyond the scope of this guide.



## Intrigues

Sphrantzes will come to visit the party at Gina's, if they are staying there, or call them to a private dinner at the House of Joy. Like most powerful government officials, Sphrantzes is a regular customer and well-known here. The secretary will lay out a back-channel plot: Byzantium, the ideal, must not be allowed to perish. The *Basileus* is determined to die with Constantinople, and has refused all entreaties to escape the doomed city.

Sphrantzes loves his ruler, and does not wish to see him die. Nor does he want to die himself, though that would be preferable to letting the *Basileus* meet his death. Sphrantzes is, in his own fashion, a true Byzantine patriot. In southern Greece and a handful of island outposts Byzantine garrisons remain, and from there the *Basileus* can gather Western aid to regain his city.

The player characters will probably recognize the futility of his plan — if the West had any intention of helping Constantinople, there would be more evidence of it already. But Sphrantzes will offer gold on the spot (and continually up the price if the party balks) for the kidnapping of Constantine XI and his safe transport to Greece, with twice as much to be paid on arrival. An imperial warship with a commander loyal to Sphrantzes will be ready for the party's escape.

To snatch the *Basileus*, the party will have to find him (probably in the Blachernae, but he often



## Byzantine Soldier 1st-Level Warrior

**Hit Dice:** 1d10+1

**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**AC:** 16 (+4 scale mail,  
+2 large shield)

**Attacks:** Longsword +5 melee  
Longspear +2 melee

**Damage:** Longsword 1d8 +2  
Longspear 1d8 +1

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +1,  
Will +1

**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 11, Con 11,  
Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 8

**Skills:** Balance -1 (including  
-6 armor penalty)  
Climb 0 (including  
-6 armor penalty)  
Swim

**Feats:** Improved Initiative

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Alignment:** Neutral Good

inspects his troops and stands watches with them), grab him, and then spirit him past the Varangians, who will resist to the utmost. Constantine himself will struggle and seek to escape back to his troops.

Sphrantzes will also imply that there really is a young empress, depending on the option you selected for the empress, and will divulge who she is and assist in her removal as well if the party agrees to his plot to save his master. If you chose the kidnapping option, Sphrantzes may set the party to finding and rescuing her. The secretary does not know Phocas has her, but neither likes nor trusts the cleric and may hint that he is capable of snatching the lady.

Another offer will come soon afterwards from Phocas, who cannot conceal his contempt for the adventurers but needs muscle to achieve his ends. Once again he will come to Gina's, sneering all the while, or command the presence of the party at his office in the Church of

## Albertus Magnus Giant Crocodile

**Hit Points:** 90  
**Initiative:** +1 (Dex)  
**Speed:** 20 ft., swim 40 ft.  
**AC:** 18  
**Attacks:** Bite +14 melee  
Tail slap +12 melee  
Claw +2 melee  
**Damage:** Bite 2d8 +12  
Tail slap 1d12 +12  
Claw 1d6 +2  
**Face/Reach:** 10 ft. by 20 ft./10 ft.  
**Special Attacks:** Improved Grab  
**Saves:** Fort +10, Ref +8,  
Will +4  
**Abilities:** Str 30, Dex 15, Con 22,  
Int 3, Wis 15, Cha 5  
**Skills:** Hide +1  
Listen +6  
Spot +6  
Swim  
**Challenge Rating:** 6  
**Alignment:** Lawful Good

**Special:** Albertus Magnus lives in the cistern under the Church of St. Fiacre. An especially large, ferocious and intelligent example of his species, he is the protector of the legendary sewer crocodiles of Byzantium, but has fallen under the spell of Phocas.

the garrison (if the player characters have not done so already) and open the gates to the Turks at a signal from Phocas. This is such a blatantly treacherous act that Phocas will offer a double bribe: a huge stash of gold, and Empress Mariya herself. She is in his custody, he will announce, and he will gladly turn her over to the party after they have done his bidding. So that the party can collect on these rewards, he will also assure them of escape from The City. To prove that he indeed has the empress, he will hand over a Georgian royal signet ring. Gina will assure the party, if asked, that it is genuine, though she will point out that it could have been obtained in any number of ways which do not prove Phocas' story. Phocas will claim that he has the empress regardless of the option you selected, unless the party has already discovered her (and may do so anyway if no one else has discovered that she has been found).

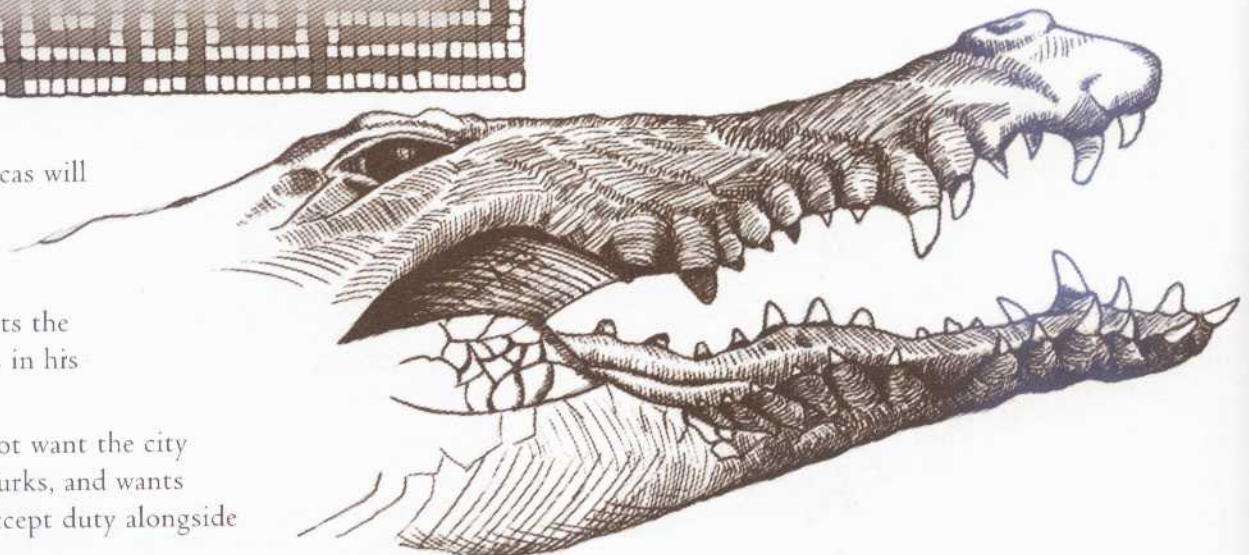
Should outright bribery fail, Phocas will attempt to bend the party to his will, and do his bidding no matter what their moral compunctions. He has the magical powers to attempt this, though he fears discovery by the Byzantine authorities and will try to avoid detection.

Gina will overhear any offer made in her establishment, and she will encourage the party to ignore both offers, and concentrate on getting her out of The City before the Turks break in. Should she fail in this attempt, she will demand to be part of whatever scheme the player characters concoct. She will point out that, though she does not know the *Basileus*, from her time as his brother's mistress she is known to the guards and staff at the Blachernae and knows her way around the grounds.

As either plot puts the party into greater danger — and thus less able to save Gina's lovely neck — she will attempt to sabotage the scheme.

St. Fiacre. Phocas will arrive only if you have chosen the option that puts the young empress in his clutches.

Phocas does not want the city to resist the Turks, and wants the party to accept duty alongside





## The Lair of Phocas

Phocas has installed himself in the small, very old Church of St. Fiacre, right above the Aelios Cistern, one of the city's largest. This is no great secret, and the prostitutes are aware of it as are any other Byzantine NPCs encountered by the party. The church itself reveals little evidence of the bishop, with a small office loaded with nondescript paperwork and religious icons. Behind a carefully hidden door, a narrow staircase in the back of the office leads below into darkness.

At the foot of the stairs is one of the large pillars supporting the streets and buildings above the cistern, with a circular landing about thirty feet across just above water level. Despite the siege, it's obvious that The City's water supply can last for some time to come. Two small rowboats are tied to the landing, and there are fittings to tie up at least one more.

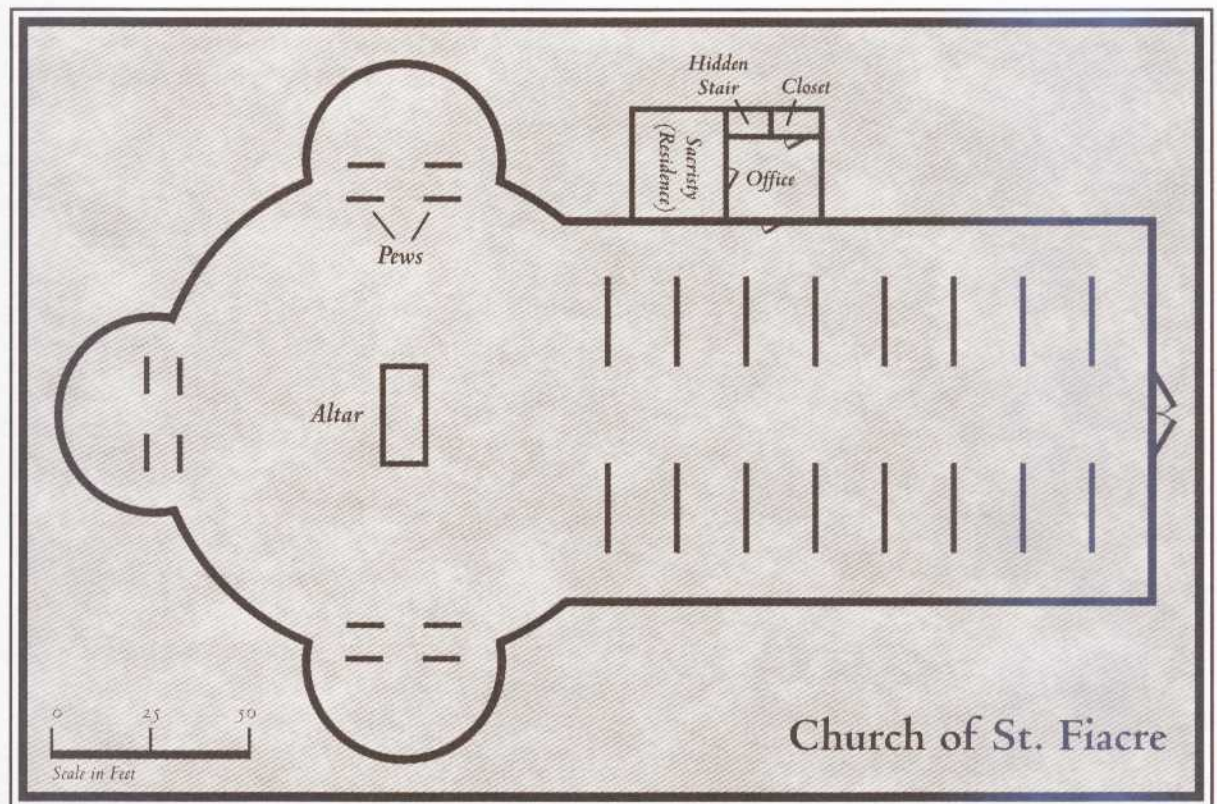
Urban legends of crocodiles living in the

sewers began in Constantinople, and this cistern houses the largest and fiercest of them, known to the water system employees as Albertus Magnus. Albertus is under the thrall of Phocas, and is a mighty beast indeed, but if freed from this compulsion will attempt to avenge himself on the priest. Without Phocas' orders, he would not harm anyone who did not threaten the sewer crocodiles of Constantinople and is rather a friendly animal. He subsists on a diet of rats and other small animals, especially house cats.

If Phocas has indeed captured the young empress, she will be found stranded on a similar landing about 100 yards away from the one under the church. There is a lamp burning on this landing, which will be visible

from that under the church in the otherwise near-total darkness. She is not restrained, but has no boat — were she foolish enough to enter the waters patrolled by Albertus Magnus, and if she could find the right landing, she could escape her prison. Not being a Byzantine, however, she does not swim.

There is a separate landing where Phocas practices his foul arts. If he is not present, there will be no light there to guide the party, though they could find it through persistent searching. The landing includes an altar to the Dark One he worships in secret, as well as a number of incriminating documents attesting to his correspondence



with Sultan Mehmet and his (usually successful) attempts to blackmail a number of Byzantine officials into weakening the government and especially its defenses. Phocas also has a stash of 200 freshly-minted gold Turkish ducats in two sacks thrown carelessly on his writing desk. This landing is present whether Phocas has the empress or not.

**Vlad Tepes, the Impaler**  
**Wallachian Champion**  
**5th-Level Fighter**

**Hit Points:** 40  
**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)  
**Speed:** 30 ft.  
**AC:** 18 (+5 chain mail, +2 Dex, +1 buckler)  
**Attacks:** Battle axe +5 melee  
 Scimitar +4 melee  
 Javelin +3 ranged  
**Damage:** Battle axe 1d8 +4  
 Scimitar 1d6 +2  
 Javelin 1d6 +2  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2 (Iron Will)  
**Abilities:** Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 19, Wis 18, Cha 25  
**Skills:** Balance +2 (including -6 armor penalty)  
 Climb 0 (including -6 armor penalty)  
 Ride +8  
**Feats:** Improved Initiative    Alertness  
 Toughness                      Iron Will  
 Deflect Arrows                Cleave

**Challenge Rating:** 5

**Alignment:** Neutral Evil

**Special:** Vlad, the 22-year-old son of the Prince of Wallachia, will be found either with the Wallachians or the janissaries. A hostage to the Sultan, he has been fighting alongside the janissaries as a champion but is often detached to give orders or to lead his father's troops. He has already found the liking for impaling people that will make him world-famous in a few years, and will as a result attempt to capture live prisoners for his later enjoyment. Should he take prisoners, he will impale them with great skill and cruelty.

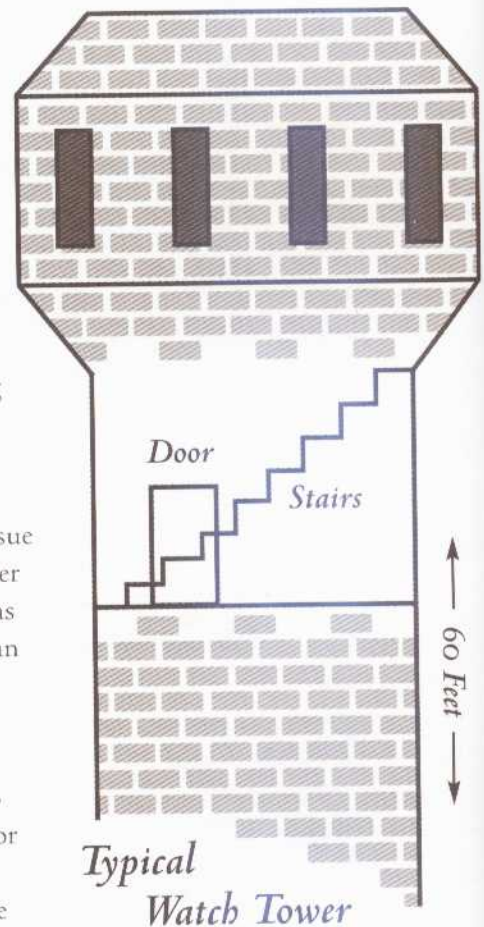
**The Trench Raid**

In the early evening, Giustiniani comes to the group with orders to conduct one of the nightly raids against the Turkish trenches, to sow as much confusion as possible, seize useful items (especially food), and destroy siege equipment. Most importantly, the cannon, which have been doing great destruction to the city walls, and lie beyond the range of any of the defenders' weapons need to be put out of action. Giustiniani's orders also very specifically seek prisoners for questioning.

Use this segment at any point between the party's meeting with the *Basileus* (should they agree to help defend the city) and the final assault. This can be useful to inject some action among the political intrigue; invoke the raid when you feel it necessary to shake up the players and move the story along.

The raiding party will be ordered to take only weapons and armor with them, and Giustiniani will be quite insistent on this point. Other adventuring gear must be left behind. A servant accompanying Giustiniani will issue each player character with as many canvas haversacks as he can carry, to be filled with food seized from the Turkish camp. He will also distribute arrows or crossbow bolts as needed, and, if the players ask for it, will give them a small canister of Greek Fire.

The raid starts from a sally port in the base of the tower at the northeastern edge of the Gate of Charisius. It is a heavy, wooden door, with dead-man's slits on either side and a massive cross-bar behind it. The outside of the door has a stone facade matching the surrounding walls; while not truly a hidden door, it



is not noticeable from any distance. There are two guards at the door, one of them constantly observing the terrain outside through a vision slit over the door. He reports no movement outside. He will move aside for any player characters who want to look over the landscape for themselves.

Once out the door, the party is in no man's land. There is a deep ditch right outside the door; it is sixty feet across, and the steep side facing the would-be raiders is 18 feet high. A Byzantine soldier will accompany the party to the edge of the ditch to act as guide. Shuffling quietly down the ditch, he will point out where previous raiding parties have left a rope up the facing side of the ditch, cleverly hidden among the vines growing there. His duty complete, he will return to the sally port.

Once up the rope and onto the surface, the ground is flat but not as blasted as one might think. All trees and buildings were removed by the Byzantines before the Turks arrived to create a free-fire zone. There is little cover — the weapons of the day do not create shell holes. The party must creep carefully toward the enemy trenches.

Turkish siegecraft is advanced to a level that will not be seen in Western Europe for another 400 years. Professional miners and sappers are pushing trenches forward toward the city walls, deep enough to allow men to stand completely covered from enemy fire. The trenches have earthworks thrown up on either side, with firing steps built up on the trench floor to allow soldiers to fire over the lip of the trench. There may be impaled Byzantine prisoners decorating the top of the earthwork; some of these may still be living and will moan softly.

Turkish patrols are also creeping around no-man's-land, looking for raiders just like the party. There will be one patrol roughly equal in size to the raiding party for every 200 yards of trench. If the player characters are not cautious enough, a patrol will spot them and raise an alarm. An alarm will be answered by several groups of Turkish regulars (akinjis), each roughly equal in size to the raiding party.

If the party is spotted by a patrol of Wallachian levies, these unwilling conscripts may choose not to sound the alarm and allow the party to pass unmolested rather than risk a fight. While the Wallachian princes

**Turkish Janissary**  
**2nd-Level Fighter**

**Hit Dice:** 2d10+3 (+3 toughness)  
**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)  
**Speed:** 20 ft.  
**AC:** 18 (+5 chain mail, +2 Dex, +1 buckler)  
**Attacks:** Composite shortbow +3 ranged  
Battle axe +5 melee  
Scimitar +4 melee  
Javelin +5 ranged  
**Damage:** Composite shortbow 1d6  
Battle axe 1d8 +1  
Scimitar 1d6 +4  
Javelin 1d6 +2  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2 (Iron Will)  
**Abilities:** Str 14, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 9  
**Skills:** Balance (-1 (including -6 armor penalty)  
Climb 0 (including -6 armor penalty)  
Ride +8  
**Feats:** Improved Initiative  
Point Blank Shot  
Toughness  
Iron Will  
Rapid Shot  
**Challenge Rating:** 3  
**Alignment:** Neutral Good

have held to their oaths and provided the numbers demanded by the Sultan, they have kept back their trained professionals. The men manning the siege works alongside the Turks are conscripted peasants, with no military training or experience and most likely a deep dislike of fighting alongside the Turks.

This changes dramatically if the Wallachian Prince Vlad, son of the ruling prince now serving as hostage to Mehmet II,

### *Turkish Akinji* 1st Level Warrior

**Hit Dice:** 1d10  
**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)  
**Speed:** 20 ft.  
**AC:** 15 (+5 chain mail)  
**Attacks:** Scimitar +3 melee  
Longspear +2 melee  
**Damage:** Scimitar 1d6+2  
Longspear 1d8 +1  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +0,  
Will +2 (Iron Will)  
**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12,  
Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 7  
**Skills:** Balance 0 (including  
-5 armor penalty)  
Climb 0 (including  
-5 armor penalty)  
**Feats:** Improved Initiative  
Toughness  
Iron Will

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Alignment:** Neutral Good

is present. Vlad glories in killing for its own sake, and especially enjoys impaling people. Though he usually fights with the Janissaries, he is also found among his father's Wallachian subjects at times. If Vlad is present, the Wallachians will fight with much greater gusto (for fear of being impaled themselves) and Vlad will attempt to take prisoners in order to impale them later. If the player characters attempt to kill impaled victims that Vlad considers his personal toys, this will enrage Vlad greatly and he will make it his mission to seek out and exterminate the adventurers.

The trenches themselves are dug in a zig-zag pattern (to keep intruders from firing arrows or bolts along a great distance of trench). Turkish soldiers are sleeping in dugouts in the back wall of the trench, as well as in tents further back behind an earthen wall. The party will find food and equipment in the dugouts and tents.

Impaled prisoners of war set in the earthworks are most common facing the Blachernae Palace, as the Sultan wishes the *Basileus* to view the rewards of resistance. These include both soldiers taken in battle and civilians rounded up from nearby villages. If any are still alive, they may call out to the party begging for death.

There are 11 cannons in the segment directly across from the Gate of Charisius about 100 feet apart. The cannon in the center is the Great Cannon. Each cannon occupies a wooden platform, protected by earthworks and usually guarded by several sentries. Massive clockworks raise the gun platform above the earthworks to fire, then lower it back out of sight to re-load unmolested by Byzantine fire. All the guns are huge, some weighing hundreds of tons; should the platform and clockworks burn, it will be many days before the cannon can fire again, assuming the heat of the blaze does not ruin the barrel.

The guns continue to fire all night — to rob the defenders of sleep, and as they can't be aimed very well anyway, they are no less effective in low visibility. In addition to the

### *Turkish Bashi-Bazouk* 1st Level Commoner (Fanatic Volunteer)

**Hit Dice:** 1d8

**Initiative:** 0

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**AC:** 12 (+2 leather)

**Attacks:** Scimitar +1 melee  
Composite shortbow  
+1 ranged

**Damage:** Scimitar 1d6  
Composite shortbow 1d6

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +2

**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 10, Con 11,  
Int 8, Wis 6, Cha 9

**Skills:** Ride

**Feats:** Mounted Archery  
Mounted Combat

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Alignment:** Chaotic Neutral

sentries, the gun crews (topijis) are very large, 10 to 20 men per cannon. The gunners are experts, often Christian mercenaries, and very difficult to replace should they be killed. The Turks will fight desperately to protect the guns from destruction. A squad of 12 Turkish arquebusiers will also answer the alarm if a gun emplacement attacked. Once the work of destruction is complete, or the fight gets out of hand, the party will have to cross no-man's-land once again and return to the sally port. The player characters must be extra vigilant to make sure the Turks do not track them back to this secret exit.

If the party has managed to bring back prisoners, Giustiniani will have any Turkish officers removed for questioning. If there are any lower-ranking prisoners, the party will receive a direct order to take them to the top of the walls and, as soon as the full morning light has arrived, put them to the sword in full view of the Turkish besiegers. This could well cause a player character to gain glory, but lose honor.

### *In the Mine*

As with the trench raid, this segment will help you keep the players hacking madly and on their toes. Insert it at any point after the party accepts service under Constantine, but before the final assault.

Giustiniani will once again bring the party the assignment, which takes them to a stone-lined gallery deep under the Gate of Charisius. There are a number of Byzantines working hard down here, though the walls are dank and there is a musty odor about. One wall has



had much of its stone facing removed, and the Byzantines are energetically

## *Turkish Arquebusier* *1st-Level Fighter*

**Hit Dice:** 1d10

**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**AC:** 12 (+2 leather)

**Attacks:** Arquebuse +2 ranged  
Scimitar +2 melee

**Damage:** Arquebuse 1d12  
Scimitar 1d6

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +0,  
Will +2 (Iron Will)

**Abilities:** Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12,  
Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 8

**Skills:** Spot

**Feats:** Improved Initiative  
Exotic Weapon  
Proficiency (firearms)  
Point Blank Shot  
Toughness  
Iron Will

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Alignment:** Neutral Good

boring a tunnel into the earth beyond. Men with picks advance the cut, while servants — from their livery, mostly palace staff — shuttle the loose dirt out in reed baskets.

Giustiniani will explain that the garrison believes the Turks are attempting to push a tunnel of their own under the walls. Their goal is probably to excavate a cavern under the walls, pack it with gunpowder, and atomize a stretch of walls plus any defenders atop them. A player character with especially keen hearing or other earth-working skills may be able to confirm this supposition.

Procedure in these cases is to dig a counter-mine to reach the tunnellers before they can get to the walls. After killing the miners at the head of the tunnel, the task is to secure as much of the tunnel as possible, destroy its supports, and cave it in. The counter-mine

**Wallachian Levy**  
1st Level Commoner  
(Peasant Conscript)

Hit Dice: 1d8  
Initiative: 0  
Speed: 20 ft.  
AC: 12 (+2 leather)  
Attacks: Longsword +0 melee  
Damage: Longsword 1d8  
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +0, Will -1  
Abilities: Str 12, Dex 8, Con 11,  
Int 8, Wis 4, Cha 7  
Skills: None  
Feats: None  
Challenge Rating: 0  
Alignment: Neutral

For maximum underground hacking and confusion, you may wish to declare the tunnel full-sized — six feet tall, about 10 feet across. It is also likely that the Turks will suspend their usual practice and dig a larger tunnel, for the explosion needed to damage The City's walls (and thus the amount of gunpowder that must be dragged down the tunnel) will be larger than anything they've attempted before.

While the assault party is planning to catch the Turkish miners unawares and wipe them out in a surprise attack, this can go both ways. The Turks are better than the Byzantines at earth-moving skills (though they are only human in this regard). It is possible that the Turks have heard the counter-mine, and rather than surprised miners the party will find alert Turkish soldiers ready for an ambush of their own. This counter-attacking party will be roughly equal in numbers to the assault party.

This segment ends when the tunnel is destroyed, either by burning the supports, pulling them down or tossing a canister of Greek Fire down the tunnel. Note that an underground explosion of a Greek Fire canister will

will begin from a gallery deep under the walls (provided for just such a use). Once the counter-mine has progressed close to the Turkish tunnel, an assault force will gather at its head, then break into the enemy tunnel.

This is the most horrifying combat known to this age. Fought in total darkness, with no quarter asked or given, and friend slain as often as foe. Magic-using characters will be able to wield their spells without fear of witnesses to carry tales to the Byzantines; if Turkish survivors manage to spread word of strange happenings below the earth, so much the better.

Turkish procedure is to dig the tunnels as small as possible — one man sits cross-legged at the point and digs, passing earth back behind him, and is relieved as soon as he tires. This cuts down on the sound and the amount of timber supports needed, and is thought to be much faster than digging a full-sized tunnel with a full-sized crew. Hauling tons of gunpowder up such a tunnel in casks is an enormous chore, however.

**Turkish Miner**  
2nd Level Expert (Miner)

Hit Dice: 2d8  
Initiative: 0  
Speed: 20 ft.  
AC: 10  
Attacks: Shovel +0 melee  
Damage: Shovel 1d6  
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +0,  
Will +1  
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 15, Con 18,  
Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 3  
Skills: Profession  
Feats: Endurance  
Challenge Rating: 1  
Alignment: Neutral

likely suffocate anyone nearby, even if untouched by the flames. If the party is driven back into the Byzantine chamber, Giustiniani will summon reinforcements to drive the Turks back into the tunnel and the party will lose much honor and glory. If the party succeeds in destroying the tunnel, the reward should be equally great, because a potentially deadly Turkish plot has been foiled.

### The Turkish Camp

The player characters may have cause to visit the camp of Sultan Mehmet for a variety of reasons: to defect to the Turkish side, as prisoners of the Turks, to rescue prisoners of the Turks, or in an effort to pillage the riches to be found here or to assassinate the Sultan. Mehmet also has items of great personal importance — his concubines and his camels — and their loss would be a great dishonor to him and discourage his troops.

The Sultan's camp is opposite the Blachernae Palace, several hundred yards behind the siege lines. It is fairly easy to find, for the ground between the camp and the siege lines has been beaten flat by the passage of tens of thousands of feet, and the camp itself is very brightly colored.

The camp is centered on a massive peaked tent, similar to a circus tent. It has fine golden tassels along the edge of its roof, and is made of red and white silk. A ring of Janissaries guards the tent. Inside, the tent is divided into several compartments. In one of them sleeps the Sultan, attended by eunuch slaves and constantly guarded by several Janissaries. The largest compartment is used for receiving supplicants, badgering prisoners and entertaining guests.

## Halil Pasha

### 6th-level Aristocrat (Grand Vizier)

**Hit Points:** 24

**Initiative:** 0

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**AC:** 16 (+5 chain mail, +1 buckler)

**Attacks:** Scimitar +1 melee

**Damage:** Scimitar 1d6 +2

**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref 0, Will +1

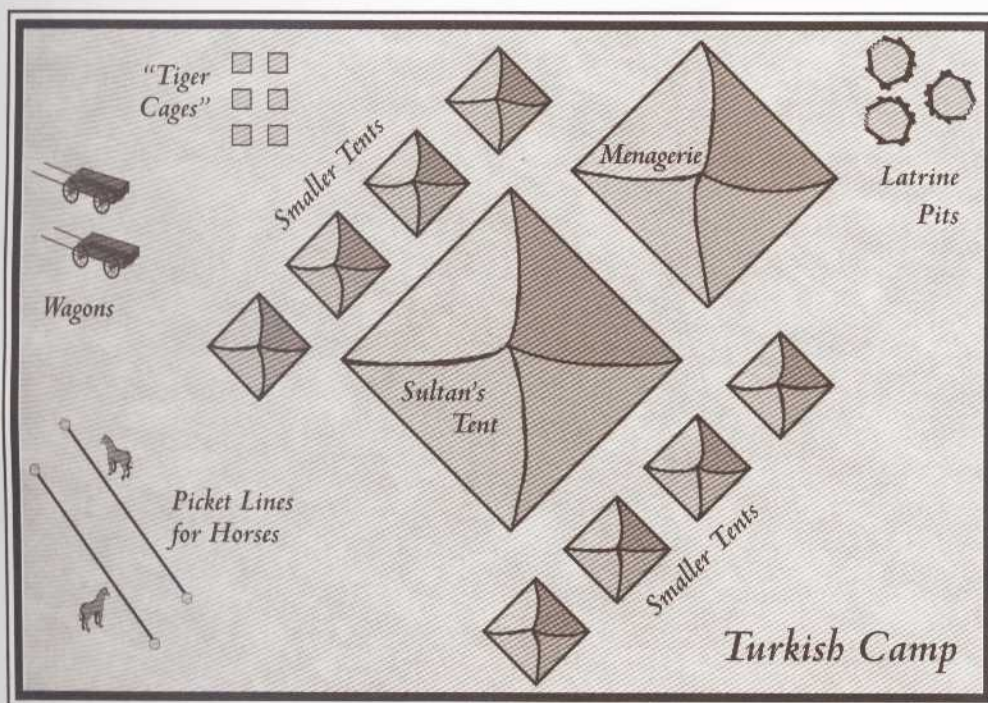
**Abilities:** Str 9, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 14

**Skills:** Ride +2  
Diplomacy  
Gather Information  
Intimidate  
Sense Motive  
Speak Language

**Feats:** Improved Initiative  
Alertness

**Challenge Rating:** 5

**Alignment:** Neutral



A smaller compartment houses the Sultan's personal treasures: a number of chests containing jewels, the war chest filled with gold pieces, and a fair number of ornate, gold- and jewel-encrusted ceremonial weapons. The "war chest" officially is but one container, but in practice there are 12 such iron-bound wooden chests, each weighing 500 pounds and filled with gold coins. War is expensive.

Around the Sultan's tent are smaller canopies housing his household servants, his traveling menagerie of strange animals

## Mehmet II Fatikh 8th-Level Aristocrat (Sultan)

**Hit Points:** 40

**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**AC:** 18 (+4 scale mail, +1 buckler)

**Attacks:** Scimitar +3 melee

**Damage:** Scimitar 1d6 +4

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +6 (+2 Great Fortitude), Ref +1, Will +2 (Iron Will)

**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 18

**Skills:** Diplomacy Ride  
Gather Information Intimidate  
Speak Language Sense Motive

**Feats:** Great Fortitude Alertness  
Improved Initiative Iron Will

**Challenge Rating:** 9

**Alignment:** Lawful Good

(including several racing camels), several hundred Janissaries and of course his personal kitchen. The menagerie is especially important to the sultan, and the racing camels are a symbol of his wealth and power. The kitchen is staffed by many slaves, who are utterly devoted to their master.

Prisoners are kept about 200 yards behind the Sultan's camp (to the north, away from the city walls) in what a later age would call "tiger cages." These are straight-sided pits, roughly eight feet deep and dug as squares two feet across. This only allows the prisoner to stand. An iron grate is placed across the top, weighted down by heavy stones. If any members of the party are taken prisoner by the Turks, they will be hurled into these cages individually, and dragged out singly for questioning and to be insulted and beaten by the Janissaries. After the Sultan and his officers believe a

prisoner to have no more useful information, and the Janissaries tire of their play, they will be beheaded if the Janissaries are feeling generous or impaled on the earthworks facing Constantinople if they are in a bad mood.

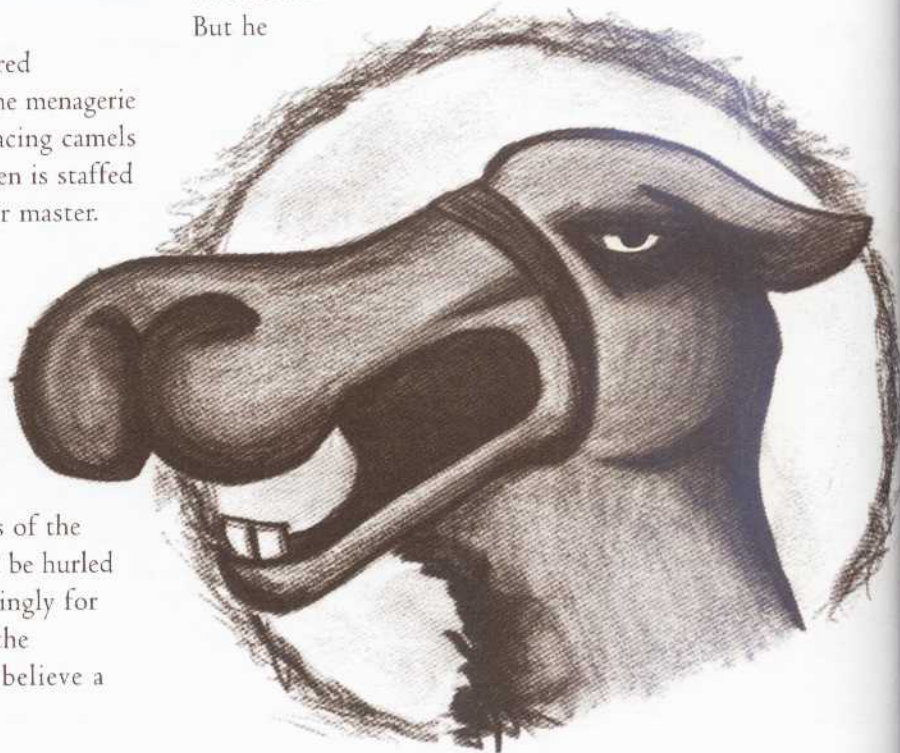
The prisoners are rarely fed, and guarded by Janissaries walking over the grates. Periodically the Janissaries spit or urinate on the prisoners, and generally insult them. If the party has lost members during the voyage to Constantinople or the trench raid, this is where they will be found.

If the player characters come before the Sultan as prisoners, they will be bound and guarded by at least six Janissaries in addition to those surrounding the Sultan. Sultan Mehmet is a young man, but highly confident and well-educated. His dashing good looks and great personal courage have made him a favorite of his soldiers, who believe him blessed by God with the task of conquering the world's greatest city. Mehmet agrees that he has a divine mission to capture Constantinople, and will tolerate no resistance.

Turkish practice relies heavily on spies and paid informants, and a number of Byzantine non-player characters — including Phocas and Koprostes the Eunuch — believe that there are riches to be made by assisting the Turks. Mehmet is an exception to this tradition. He values loyalty highly, and respects foes who hold to their oaths and refuse to betray Constantine. He will reward such loyalty, perhaps even releasing the prisoner if he is sufficiently impressed with their honor and courage.

For traitors, he has far less patience. He is not above accepting their aid, taking information and assistance from them.

But he





refuses to reward what he considers dishonorable behavior, and will kill Byzantine traitors himself if he is sufficiently enraged or order them impaled if he has time to consider a more painful punishment.

When visitors come before him freely, Mehmet is a most gracious host if he does not scent treason upon them. He will invite outlanders to eat with him, sitting together on the floor of the tent to sample fine foods — lamb, fish, cardamom-scented rice and other Turkish delicacies. The Sultan will question his guests politely, probing for information about Constantinople's defenses.

Constantly hovering over Mehmet is his Grand Vizier, Halil Pasha. The vizier is in his fifties, a holdover from earlier times and greatly disliked by Mehmet. Halil constantly makes critical remarks about Mehmet's behavior, and treats him much like a child. He has also been the recipient of Byzantine bribes, and has been funneling information to Constantine in exchange for gold. Halil and Phocas have been communicating as well, and it is through this connection that Phocas hopes to survive the siege. Halil wants to delay the

### *Turkish Eunuch* 1st-Level Commoner (Servant)

**Hit Dice:** 1d8  
**Initiative:** 0  
**Speed:** 20 ft.  
**AC:** 9  
**Attacks:** None  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +1  
**Abilities:** Str 8, Dex 9, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8  
**Skills:** None  
**Feats:** None  
**Challenge Rating:** 0  
**Alignment:** Neutral

### *Racing Camel* Beloved Beast

**Hit Dice:** 4d8  
**Initiative:** +3 Dex  
**Speed:** 80 ft.  
**AC:** 14  
**Attacks:** Bite +1 melee  
Blinding Spit  
**Damage:** Bite 1d6 +2  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +3  
**Abilities:** Str 20, Dex 19, Con 20, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 5  
**Skills:** None  
**Feats:** None  
**Challenge Rating:** 1  
**Alignment:** Neutral

**Special:** A racing camel may make a blinding spit attack against one opponent. Roll one d20; on a result of 18 or more the target is blinded for four rounds by disgusting camel spit.

assault on the city as long as possible, arguing that starvation will do the work for Mehmet and spare the lives of many men. The sultan already suspects that this advice actually masks Halil's desire to collect Byzantine gold a while longer.

If the party has already been in the city and met with Phocas, he may send them to Halil with additional bribes and a promise to open the gates of Constantinople to the Turks.

Also at the Sultan's side will be Zaganos Pasha, the leading Turkish general. An Albanian Christian by birth, Zaganos converted willingly to Islam and fights for his faith and his lord with all the fanatic enthusiasm of a convert. He is a large man, with a shaved head under his turban and a powerful build. Zaganos prefers direct action, and will encourage Mehmet to impale

## Zaganos Pasha

### 8th-level Fighter (General)

**Hit Points:** 48  
**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)  
**Speed:** 30 ft.  
**AC:** 20 (+5 chain mail, +2 Dex, +1 buckler)  
**Attacks:** Battle axe +3 melee  
Scimitar +3 melee  
**Damage:** Battle axe 1d8 +2  
Scimitar 1d6 +2  
**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +3 (Iron Will)  
**Abilities:** Str 13, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 19, Wis 18, Cha 10  
**Skills:** Balance 0 (including -6 armor penalty)  
Climb 0 (including -6 armor penalty)  
Ride +2  
**Feats:** Improved Initiative  
Alertness  
Toughness  
Iron Will  
Cleave  
Improved Bull Rush  
**Challenge Rating:** 6  
**Alignment:** Lawful Good

Christian captives whether or not they have any other uses. With their superior artillery to smash the city walls and the greater courage of their troops, Zaganos argues, the Turks have no need of dishonorable intrigue. Zaganos has tangled with Msgr. Marcello and his agents before, and has a bitter hatred for this long-time foe. He will act ruthlessly if he suspects the player characters are in any way connected with the papal spymaster.

All of the servants attending Mehmet are ornately dressed men, so much so that it will be difficult for player characters to spot them by their costume unless they have experience dealing with the Turks. However, all of them are eunuchs, recognizable as such by the lack of facial hair. When not

armored for battle, all the Turks prefer long, ankle-length robes with intricate decoration. All wear turbans.

One of the tents adjoining the Sultan's houses Mehmet's concubines, three beautiful young women and a pair of young boys. They are constantly guarded by at least six eunuchs. The boys have been raised to serve and will cry out in alarm if they spot the player characters; the women are Christian slaves with a bitter hatred for the Turks and will welcome the chance to escape.

If the player characters raid the Sultan's camp, escape will be difficult. Thousands of Turkish soldiers will answer any alarm given, though the utter confusion this will cause may itself allow escape.

### The Assault

Within five days' game time of the player characters' arrival in Constantinople, or earlier if the game appears to be dragging, the final Turkish assault will begin. A messenger from Giustiniani will arrive at the party's bivouac and report that the Turks have blown a wide gap in the walls and are expected to attack it momentarily. He will then move on to inform more of the defenders.

If the players have chosen to fight alongside the garrison, they will be assigned together to fight alongside Constantine at the Lycus arch, where the Turkish cannon have breached the walls. When the Turks are ready, their musicians will commence an inspiring (to them, anyway) blast of trumpets and drums audible throughout The City.

As night falls, Constantine will ride one last time along the walls, personally thanking his soldiers one by one and releasing them from their oaths. He will ask that they stay until the Turks penetrate the city, but will not force them to do so. None of the NPC troops will take the offer.

Assuming that the players did not accept Sphrantzes' mad scheme to rescue the *Basileus*, the secretary will remain with them after Constantine moves on to the next group and beg them to reconsider.

If the group again rejects the plot, the Turkish assault will commence shortly after midnight. After weeks of steady pounding, the great walls have finally fallen into the Lycus. A wide breach stands in place of the walls. The siege guns will cease fire and the first assault troops will come forward on foot in a wave.

Wallachians will make the first assault, backed by Turkish irregulars known as bashi-bazouks (literally, "crazy heads"). The Wallachians are reluctant to advance, and the bashi-bazouks will drive them forward at spear-point

if necessary. The Byzantines will place lit torches along the walls to help light the battlefield, and set piles of brushwood in no-man's-land ablaze to help backlight the advancing enemy as they pass. On the walls, Genoese crossbowmen are firing madly, mowing down the Wallachians in heaps. They will make it to the breach anyway.

Giustiniani will order his reserves into hand-to-hand combat, including the player characters. Send Wallachians at the party in small numbers, allowing the player characters to fight at an advantage. Crossbowmen on the intact part of the walls will continue to pick off Wallachians and bashi-bazouks.

After intense combat, the Wallachians will fall back. The Turks will pause long enough to allow the shattered remnants of the Wallachian levies to pass through the trenches and back to the camps. Then the next wave will form up in front of the earthworks and move forward, this time in perfect double-time step. These are Turkish regulars, and as they come their chant of "Allahu Akbar!" will echo off Constantinople's walls.

This will only enrage the Byzantines, who reply with their own "The Cross will conquer!" and this time surge out of the breach to attack the Turks hand-to-hand in the open. Once again, send enemies at the party in numbers they can handle.

Should anyone attempt to desert, the crossbowmen on the walls are ready to shoot them down. You may want to let the party see this happen to an NPC soldier to get the idea across. No one leaves his post while the walls remain in Byzantine hands.

This time the Byzantines will be driven back through the breach into the open ground behind the walls, and only heroic efforts — hopefully spearheaded by the player characters — will restore the lines. After another hour of furious combat, the Turks will withdraw and pull back through the siege lines. The Byzantines and Genoese are exhausted, and Byzantine priests do their best to comfort the wounded and drag them out of the breach. Armed men do not participate in these mundane tasks; they are well aware

## Genoese Crossbowman

### 1st-Level Warrior

**Hit Dice:** 1d10+1

**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**AC:** 14 (+4 scale mail)

**Attacks:** Crossbow +6 ranged  
Longsword +2 melee

**Damage:** Crossbow 1d10 +4  
Longsword 1d8 +2

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +1,  
Will +1

**Abilities:** Str 14, Dex 12, Con 11,  
Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 9

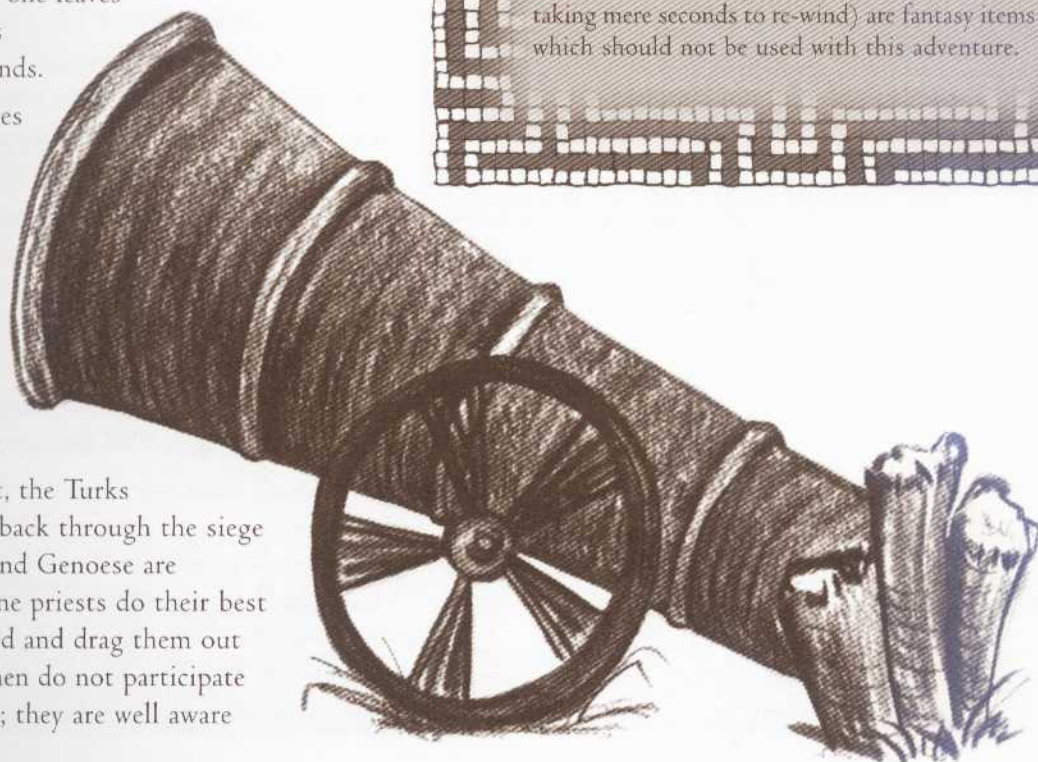
**Skills:** Balance 0 (including  
-4 armor penalty)  
Climb 0 (including  
-4 armor penalty)

**Feats:** Improved Initiative

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Alignment:** Neutral

**Special:** The Genoese crossbow is a powerful, armor-piercing weapon with a range of 400 feet. It weighs 12 pounds and may not be fired one-handed. It takes five (yes, five) full rounds to re-load. Hand and repeating crossbows (and those taking mere seconds to re-wind) are fantasy items which should not be used with this adventure.



## Hassan, Turkish Champion 5th-Level Fighter

**Hit Points:** 58  
**Initiative:** +4 (Improved Initiative)  
**Speed:** 30 ft.  
**AC:** 22 (+5 chain mail,  
+2 Dex, +1 buckler)  
**Attacks:** Battle axe +8 melee  
Scimitar +10 melee  
Javelin +8 ranged  
**Damage:** Battle axe 1d8 +6  
Scimitar 1d6 +5  
Javelin 1d6 +4  
**Face/Reach:** 10 ft. by 10 ft./10 ft.  
**Saves:** Fort +6, Ref +3,  
Will +2 (Iron Will)  
**Abilities:** Str 26, Dex 22, Con 25,  
Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 5  
**Skills:** Balance +2 (including  
-6 armor penalty)  
Climb 0 (including  
-6 armor penalty)  
Ride +8  
**Feats:** Improved Initiative    Alertness  
Toughness                      Cleave  
Deflect Arrows                Iron Will  
Improved Bull Rush        Power Attack

**Challenge Rating:** 5  
**Alignment:** Neutral Good

**Special:** Hassan will always accompany the 1st Orta (regiment) of Janissaries into battle, and seek single combat with an enemy champion.

that the Turks are trying to wear them down. During these lulls unarmed parties of workers, mostly women and old men, will work madly to repair the breach, throwing up a wooden barricade as quickly as they can, but the gap is simply too wide for them. Others hack at the bodies of slain Turks, recovering crossbow bolts and arrows for re-use.

Soon the next wave will be ready. These are the cream of the Sultan's army, the Janissaries. They are fresh and rested, and come at the breach again at the double.

Crossbow and cannon fire do not faze them, and even as their comrades are incinerated by Greek Fire they do not slow their advance. In the second and third lines are arquebusiers, who will not stop to fire until the formation has halted outside the breach.

Quickly, Constantine and Giustiniani form the remaining troopers into a shield wall across the breach. A bolt from a ballista takes Giustiniani in the shoulder, and he falls screaming to the ground. Seeing their leader go down, the Genoese start to melt away, abandoning their posts to lift their stricken leader and head for the harbor despite the pleas of the *Basileus*.

The Byzantines form their line, and Constantine strides behind it, speaking to each man in turn as the Turks draw ever nearer, thanking them for their devotion. The priests and the women from the work parties pick up shields and spears from the dead, taking places in the line alongside the soldiers.

As the Janissaries draw up to the breach, they stop in perfect unison, coming to attention. A Greek-speaking imam steps in front of them, and announces that the Byzantines have one final chance to surrender and convert to Islam, if they will lay down their weapons. The Byzantines will quietly refuse. Another man comes forward from the Turkish ranks, their champion, Hassan. Nearby Byzantines will tell the party that Hassan is the most fearsome fighter of the age. Even through their exhaustion and fanatic energy, fear is evident in their voices. Hassan is a giant of a man, with a shaved head and massive muscles. He stands well over seven feet tall, and must weigh in at 350 pounds or more. In broken Greek, he bellows a challenge for any man with the courage to face him to come forward for single combat.

If none of the player characters accept the challenge, William of Hueytown, captain of the Varangians, will meet Hassan in a fight to the death. The penalties to the player characters' glory should be considerable if they quail at this opportunity. When one side's champion falls, the Janissaries will hurl themselves on the Byzantine shield wall with a mad shout, their arquebusiers will fire a volley, and the final struggle for The City will begin. Vlad the Impaler will be among them. Each player character should be faced with at least one Janissary opponent (keep the odds from becoming too overwhelming for injured or weaker characters, but this should be their supreme combat challenge). As bloodlust overcomes both Turk and Byzantine, no quarter will be asked or granted. The wounded are hacked to bits as soon as they fall, and even the unarmored female volunteers

throw themselves onto the Janissaries with crazed abandon. At the feet of the combatants, the mortally wounded continue to claw and bite each other in their death throes. If the player characters somehow manage to slay dozens, hundreds or even thousands of enemies, keep them coming. Sultan Mehmet has 100,000 men outside the walls and believes that they are there to be used.

Eventually Constantine and a handful of companions will be surrounded by Janissaries, and the *Basileus* will cast off his imperial stole and hurl himself into the fighting like a common soldier. If the party does not pull him out, he will be killed in the fighting, his body lost under the heaps of dead and dying. Any surviving Varangians will at this point be utterly berserk and throw themselves into the fighting alongside him.

With the shield wall broken and ever more Turks streaming through the gap, the defense of the city is over. If the party does not choose to fight to the death — assuming that any are left alive — they will have to make their way through a city now resembling the depths of hell itself. If Constantine is with them, he will be badly wounded and will tell them to leave him and save themselves.

### The End

As Turkish troops pour into the city itself, they are overcome by immense blood-lust. Groups of Turks gather about as women are raped, and those deemed unsuited for sale as slaves — small children, the elderly, those women thought not attractive — are carefully impaled on Turkish spears.

Once the Turks are through the breach, the party's duty on the walls is concluded. If there are any survivors of the party, they may have pledged to take Gina, Tamara or other Byzantine NPCs with them when they escape. Now is the time to fulfill that promise.

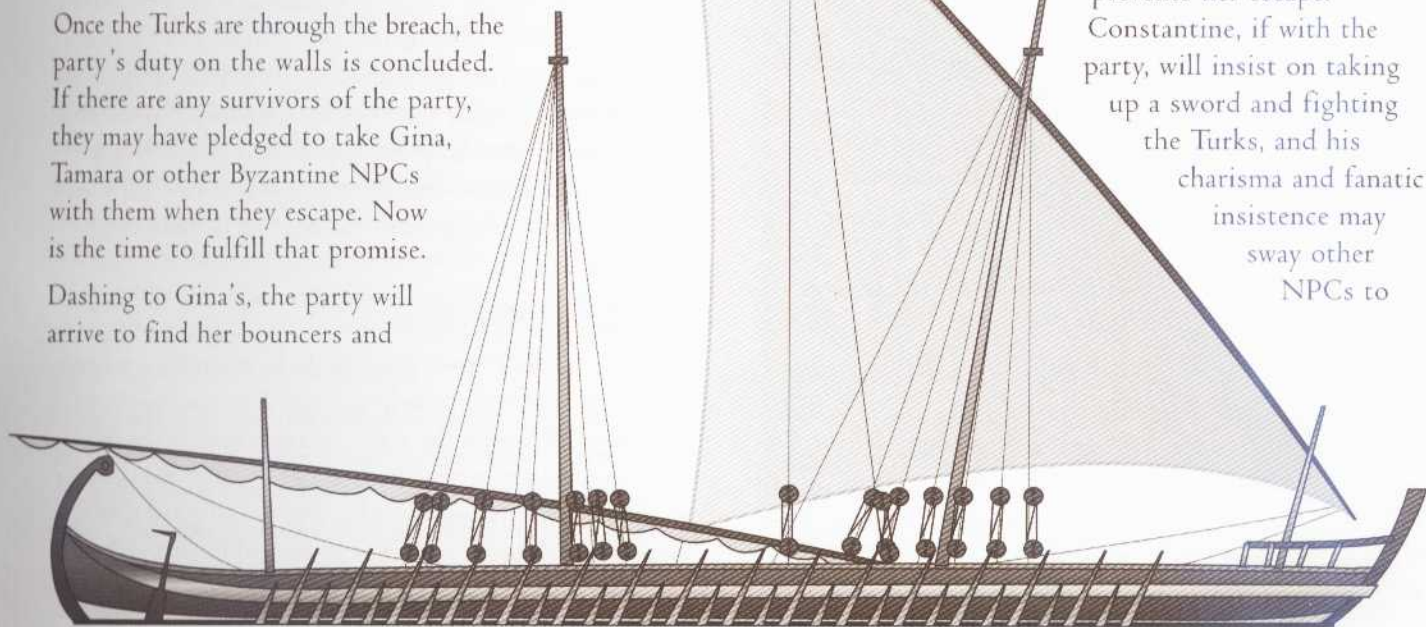
Dashing to Gina's, the party will arrive to find her bouncers and

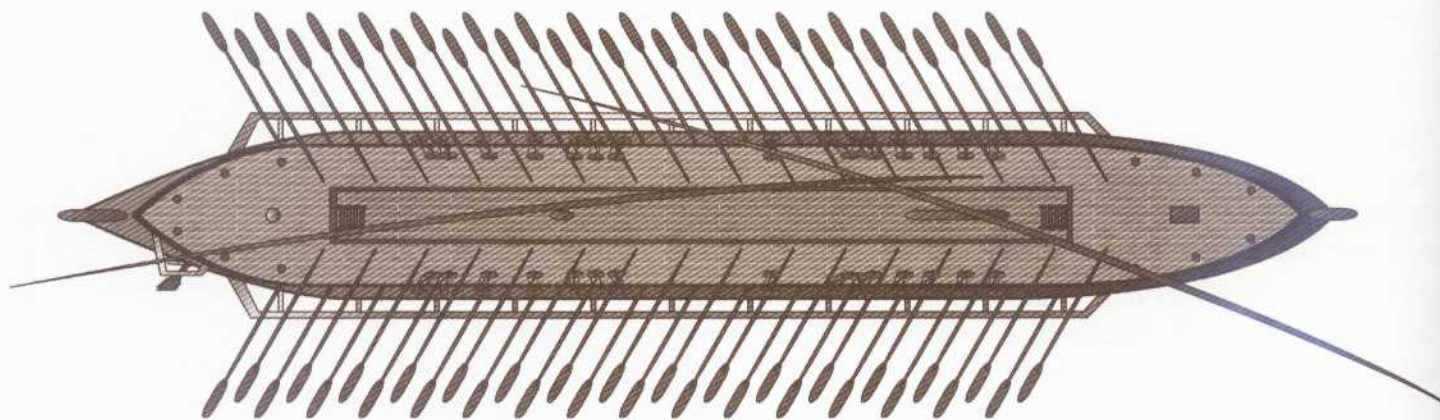
Manuel fighting madly against several bashi-bazouks, a number of whom have already penetrated into the building. If Tamara has not already joined the party (or been killed), the player characters will find her pinned to the ground in the courtyard garden by several bashi-bazouks, who are enthusiastically preparing to impale her. Gina (if not already dead or with the party) will be found in the kitchens, exhorting her slaves to fight off the attackers.

Should the party rescue or already include Gina, she will point out that gold opens all doors, and collect a large sack of it from a hiding place in her private quarters. She will then insist on heading toward the harbor.

In the harbor stand several dozen ships, chiefly Venetian and Genoese galleys and imperial warships. They are busily packing aboard as many refugees as they can hold. Arrighi's Genoese galley will be present, and true to his word he has held places for the party — if they paid in advance. If the party attempts to board this or another ship, present them with one final moral choice: dozens of young women carrying their children are trying to surge aboard the vessels. They have no money; their husbands are probably lying dead in the breach. The player characters have already witnessed the fate awaiting them if they stay behind: they can expect to be raped repeatedly and then impaled or sold as slaves. Will they give up their places, and stay behind to face certain death, or shove them aside, saving themselves?

Gina will have no desire to stand aside for a lesser being, and will try to kill anyone who prevents her escape. Constantine, if with the party, will insist on taking up a sword and fighting the Turks, and his charisma and fanatic insistence may sway other NPCs to





join him in a last stand. The Empress Mariya would rather die than take the place of an innocent, and will hurl abuse at anyone who tries to put their own survival ahead of the needs of the helpless refugees. Tamara will probably have little understanding of what is happening, except that it is bad.

Fleeing by sea is not the only option, and the player characters may try to hide and wait out the Turkish bloodlust. This is a viable choice, as much of Constantinople is already a ghost town. There are many places in empty buildings to hide, plus the cisterns and underground chambers. They may also try to find the passage out of the Blachernae, but the palace will quickly be occupied by Mehmet's Janissaries.

Leaving Constantinople by land will require sneaking through the Turkish siege lines. Once past the Turkish camps, there will be roving bands of mounted bashibazouks, but not many of them. Adventures outside the city walls, however, are beyond the scope of this campaign book.

Most Byzantine NPCs other than the self-serving Gina will seek religious comfort in their civilization's final moments, and head for the Hagia Sophia, greatest church of the Orthodox faith. If the player characters follow, they will find Isidore and his Roman Catholic priests at the altar alongside several of the most conservative Orthodox clerics, their bitter ideological foes only hours earlier. Together they celebrate mass, blessing the host and distributing it among their flock.

The Byzantines will bar the cathedral's heavy doors, but otherwise will offer no resistance to the tide of battle-crazed Turks. The Turks will tear heavy beams from nearby buildings to batter the doors, and eventually they will burst into splinters. Some will wade into the assembled worshippers and slaughter them, but the Byzantines will beg the player characters not to raise a

weapon in the cathedral. At the altar, the Turks will cut down the priests in the midst of the liturgy until finally one young priest will gather up the chalice and host in his arms and, accompanied by several others both Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox, turn to the stone wall behind them and calmly disappear into it.

Sultan Mehmet will arrive soon afterwards and order a halt to the violence, at which time the survivors will be led off for sale. The Byzantine Empire is at its end.

## *Historical Notes*

### *Varangian Guards*

The historical record for the famed Varangians ends in the early 15th century, about 30 years before the events on which this adventure is based. While there is no proof that Constantine XI employed Varangians, neither is there conclusive proof that he did not. Byzantine emperors maintained several different types of guards, though as the Byzantine treasury collapsed in the empire's last decades the emperor's ability to pay and maintain these mercenaries declined as well. There is no clear account of what guard formations may have been involved in the final struggle for the city, but certainly the emperor continued to maintain at least some personal protection. There probably were not many of them — no Varangian would have permitted his emperor to plunge into the heat of battle alone.

### *The Papal Mission*

Pope Nicholas V worked tirelessly to assemble a western European coalition to help defend Constantinople, to little avail. Though the papal treasury held little cash at the time, he spent what he had to hire 200 Neapolitan archers in the spring of 1453, and on 20 April three Genoese galleys hired by the pope and loaded with supplies plus one more grain transport sent by the King

of Naples ran the Turkish blockade and reached the city. This last-minute reinforcement is the historical basis for the *Last Days of Constantinople* adventure.

The Turks did not try to block the Dardanelles, the straits leading to Constantinople, for reasons not understood today. Springtime winds are not favorable for a passage up the Dardanelles, but an oared galley like those used by both the Turks and their enemies could make the trip with some strain.

### **Locations**

Most of the locations actually existed. The House of Joy is an invention, though based on similar locales. The Church of St. Fiace is also fictional, and is named for the patron saint of hemorrhoids and box makers (no doubt because these give one pains in the same region). This seventh-century Irish hermit is also the patron saint of venereal disease.

### **Characters**

Most of the non-player characters encountered in this adventure are based on historical figures. Gina is an invention, though based on actual Byzantine figures, while Phocas is a composite of the conservative opponents of Constantine's religious policies (none of whom are known to be magic-users) as is Koprostes a composite of the power-crazed but ineffectual court eunuchs.

Constantine XI met his end during the final battle, casting off his imperial garments and perishing in the fighting, sword in hand. Rumors that he had been spirited away at the last moment persisted for years, but it seems fairly certain that he died in battle and his corpse was burned along with those of hundreds of other common soldiers.

Vlad the Impaler really did serve as a Turkish Janissary, and appears to have learned a number of torture techniques from them and acquired his love of impaling people during the campaign. Soon afterwards he returned to Wallachia to begin his famous reign of terror. Vlad's compulsion to impale is hard to exaggerate; imprisoned by the Hungarians in later life, he amused himself by capturing rats and impaling them in his cell.

Hassan the Turkish champion was an actual person, cut down in single combat with an unidentified Byzantine during the final battle among the wreckage of the outer walls. The most fearsome individual fighter of his age, Hassan probably stood over seven feet tall and had a well-earned, world-wide reputation for ferocity. Turkish

champions seeking single combat remained a feature of Ottoman armies well into the modern age; as late as the First World War, individual Turkish soldiers were known to stage Western-style gunfights in no-man's-land with equally crazed Australian challengers. Hassan's Byzantine equivalent, William of Hueytown, is a fictional character.

### **The End**

The final miracle of the Hagia Sophia is well-attested by both Turkish and Greek sources. Isidore survived the massacre of the priests, but few others did. Mehmet had the cathedral converted into a mosque, and with added minarets it has served Islam for the past five and a half centuries. Legend holds that on the day Hagia Sophia is again consecrated as a Christian house of worship, the priests will return at the spot the liturgy was interrupted and resume its celebration.

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# Rome's Last Stand!



Illustration by Pedro

*April, 1453. For a thousand years, the Byzantine Empire has been civilization's guardian, carrying on Rome's legacy. Now 100,000 battle-hardened Turkish warriors have surrounded the great city and are making ready to storm its mighty walls.*

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ISBN 0-9707961-0-2



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Avalanche Press LTD, Virginia Beach, VA.

1-800-564-9008 / [www.AvalanchePress.com](http://www.AvalanchePress.com)

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SRP \$9.95 (U.S.)

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