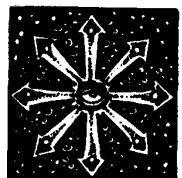


THE FATE OF FOOLS

TWO TESTS OF WITS AND WILES IN **THE YOUNG KINGDOMS**





MICHAEL MOORCOCK

"EVEN WITHOUT THE DEAD GODS, CHAOS
THREATENS TO CONQUER THE PLANET, BUT
WITH THEM IT WOULD BE UTTERLY INVINC-
IBLE, ITS EFFECT IMMEDIATE. EVIL WOULD SWEEP
THE WORLD. CHAOS WOULD PLUNGE THIS
EARTH INTO A STINKING INFERNO OF TERROR
AND DESTRUCTION."

—STORMBRINGER I.4.

THE FATE OF FOOLS

THE BOOK OF BRILLIANT THINGS
THE FOUR SEASONS

TWO ADVENTURES FOR ELRIC

BY

LAWRENCE WHITAKER

AND

STEFAN BJØRLING

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CHAOSIUM INC.

1994

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WHEN IS FATE OF FOOLS SET?

THE EVENTS of this book are set one year before the situations described in the novel *Elric of Melniboné* by Michael Moorcock. The Chaosium publications *Sorcerers of Pan Tang*, *Melniboné*, *Perils*

of the Young Kingdoms, and *Sea Kings of the Purple Towns* feature backgrounds and adventures set within this prologue period. Look for *The Bronze Grimoire* to be released soon.

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Michael Moorcock's works *Elric of Melniboné*, *The Sailor on the Seas of Fate*, *The Weird of the White Wolf*, *The Vanishing Tower*, *The Bane of the Black Sword*, *Stormbringer*, *The Fortress of the Pearl*, *Elric at the End of Time*, and *The Revenge of the Rose* are respectively copyright © 1963, 1964, 1965, 1967, 1970, 1972, 1976, 1977, 1984, 1989, 1991 by Michael Moorcock. Quotes have been made for purposes of illustration.

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ISBN 1-56882-024-0

Chaosium Publication 2904. Published in July, 1994. For ages 14 and up.

Printed in the United States of America

TO BEGIN...

THE BOOK OF BRILLIANT THINGS

Strange apparitions haunt the city of Raschil. An unusual source commissions the adventurers to stop them. They journey to Cadsandria, to the famous university, and there attempt to gain possession of a Melnibonean rarity. Only the Book of Brilliant Things can staunch the flow of inexplicable events and restore a friend to his own.

THE FOUR SEASONS

A lovesick young nobleman finances a search across Ilmiora, the Sighing Desert, and the Weeping Waste in search of that which can heal his true love. The adventurers return with him to an unpredictable conclusion. Including many incidents and characters, this adventure makes a convenient introduction to the Northern Continent.

MAPS INCLUDE THE

Young Kingdoms portion of the Northern Continent, a summary plan of the University of Cadsandria, details of the library, and city maps of Ilmar on the Pale Sea, Raschil, and Cadsandria. There are also many illustrations and statistics, several new spells, and other source materials.



THE BOOK OF BRILLIANT THINGS

WHEREIN THE ADVENTURERS BECOME PAWNS IN A COSMIC GAME, RUB SHOULDERS WITH DRUNKARDS, GAMBLERS, INTELLECTUALS, AND OTHER FOOLS, YET FIND SOMETHING FOR THEMSELVES.

MALUK AND DARNIZHAAN are rival gods. In this scenario, the adventurers become embroiled in a contest between the unholy pair. In order to help Ranyart Finn, a storyteller whose stories are coming to life, the adventurers seek a Melnibonéan artifact called the Book of Brilliant Things. They must venture to Cadsandria, outwit a ruthless mercenary who has the same goal, and bring back the book.

The adventure can start in any major city of the Young Kingdoms; the text uses Raschil, the capital of Filkhar. How the adventurers enter depends upon individual gamemasters and perhaps how this scenario fits into an ongoing campaign.

RANYART FINN

HE IS THE BEST and the most charismatic teller of tales in Raschil, and one of the world's finest. His vivid stories are filled with startling imagery and wild romance. Inn or tavern, Ranyart Finn's aptitude for the theatrical never fails to draw a full house. But he has two problems.

First, Finn is a drunkard. He says that his drinking helps him in his work, and it cannot be denied that, when he has had a few drinks, his stories seem to flow even more fluently. Then he keeps on drinking. His binges have become as legendary as his stories.

His second problem is more extraordinary. One year ago, Finn sat drinking with a one-eyed stranger. Deep in his cups, Finn expressed his wish to become the greatest storyteller in Filkhar. The stranger



RANYART FINN

said that such things are possible, and filled Finn's glass from a bottle he kept his cloak. The stranger bid Finn drink to the health of the Lords of Disorder, and ask that they grant his request. Finn did so, and as he quaffed the heady wine, the stranger promised him "Your stories will be so real they will seem to come alive!"

The one-eyed stranger was the avatar of Maluk, the Silent Watcher of Chaos, Lord of Dark Knowledge. The wine wove its magic, and Finn indeed became great. However, he could thereafter only remember his stories when drunk. Thus, his talent never makes him rich, because he quickly drinks whatever he earns, and is too unreliable to win a rich patron.

Now Maluk has decided to claim his debt, and lays a bizarre curse on Finn. From the audience, Maluk's avatar requests a story: after Finn has told the tale, it takes on a life of its own and soon rampages through the town. On the evening the adventurers become aware of supernatural events on the streets of Raschil, Finn has told several such stories.

DARNIZHAAN AND MALUK

THEY ARE INVOLVED in a game with repercussions across the multiverse. Darnizhaan is known as one of the Dead Gods, and is attempting to reassert influence on the plane of the Young Kingdoms. The Dukes of Hell rule this plane; Maluk, their representative, is attempting to stop the Dead God.

Darnizhaan and his kin dominated the Earth centuries before the Bright Empire. They are not dead in human terms; they were driven out by a race of semi-immortals—the race that forged Stormbringer and Mournblade, the only weapons that can slay the Dead Gods.

For thousands of years the Dead Gods hung in the stuff of limbo, watching the changes of the Million Spheres. With the birth of Elric, shifts in the fabric of the multiverse have paved the way for their return to the Earth. To ensure that none stand against them in this, they must ensure that the two black swords are found and destroyed. This could take centuries. The Dead Gods are patient, however, and willing to be subtle.

The Lords of Chaos have their own plans for the runeswords, and strive to delay such searches. Although they can outwit Darnizhaan, Maluk and his fellow Dukes of Hell are unable to destroy him. Gods cannot kill gods; that is the province of mortals.

Since they cannot interfere directly in human affairs, the Lords of Chaos try to thwart the Dead Gods' by recruiting pawns to act in their stead. The Dead Gods also recruit agents to act in their interests, and so humans are manipulated at every turn, to fulfill the desires of the Higher Worlds.

The Dead Gods believe that the *Book of Brilliant Things* tells where Stormbringer and Mournblade can be found. The Lords of Chaos seek to keep the tome from Darnizhaan's hands. Both sides are preparing moves in this cosmic chess game.

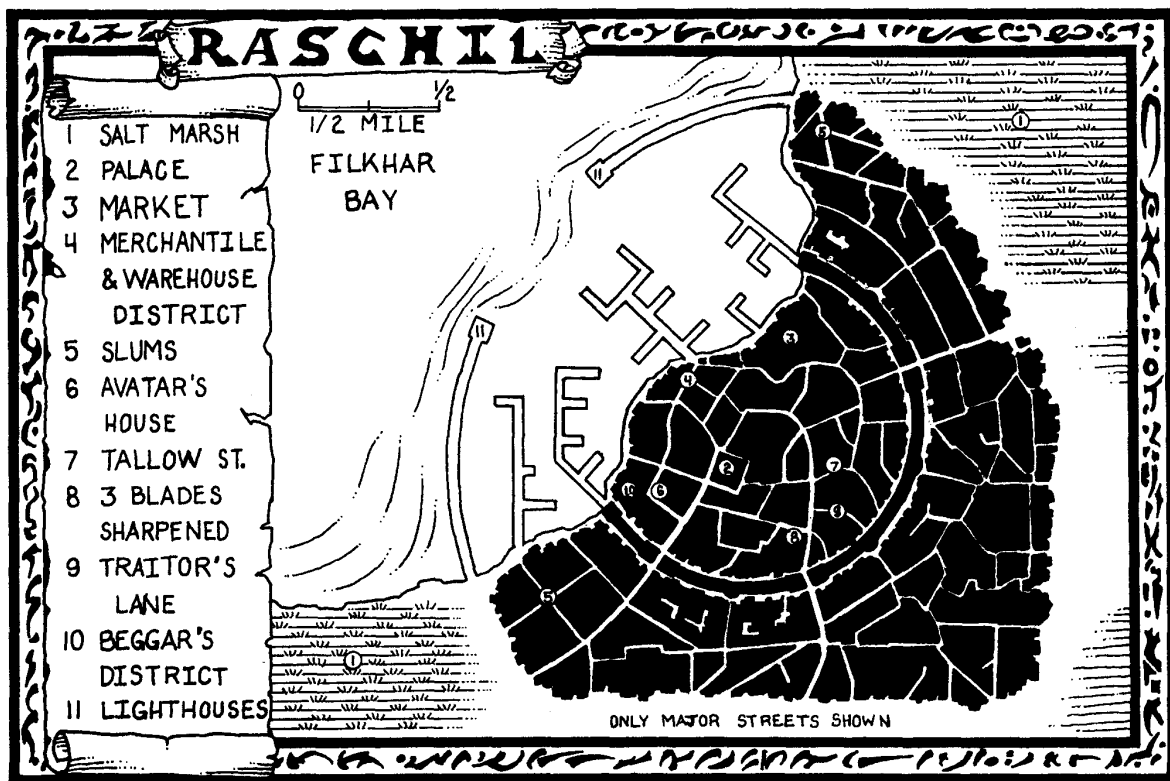
RASCHIL

RASCHIL IS THE CAPITAL of Filkhar. It is a low, sprawling, coastal city, one of the largest on the Southern Continent. Marshes rich in waterfowl and shellfish surround it. When the wind blows from the landward side, the warm stink of salty mud and rotting vegetation fills the air.

Like many southern cities, Raschil has long since outgrown the protective ramparts built in the heady days of the Lormyrian Empire. The great harbor, with its marina and piers, breakwaters and lighthouses, remains well fortified. Raschil's fishing fleet is the largest in the Young Kingdoms. Its merchants do much trade with the Purple Towns.

Raschil's cobbled streets are narrow and winding. The houses squeeze together conspiratorially, chimney pots a-lean. Most buildings are of wood, three-storied, with stories overhanging the streets, often with lines of washing suspended between balconies. Throughout Raschil are uncountable taverns, restaurants, inns, and street-side vendors, selling the finest food available in the Young Kingdoms. The aromas of their specialities are tantalizing and appetizing.

The vast Raschil market is busy day and night. Here are shellfish, fresh fish, salted fish, dried fish, smoked fish, and pickled fish; here is glassware from the Dreaming City, furs from Dorel, fruits from Oin and Yu, and songbirds and lowing cattle from the interior. Every second merchant sells fabrics and clothing; silk, linen, soft wool, fine dresses sewn with seed pearls, stiffly embroidered tunics, hats ablaze with peacock feathers, and shoes with bells on their elaborately long toes. Filkharians pride themselves on their sense of fashion, and in Raschil they take fashion seriously. The crowded streets swarm with stylishly dressed, arrogant Filkharians, their noses in the air, but not so elevated that they fail to notice the latest



accouterments. From his palace of white marble, closeted behind gates of lace-like wrought iron, young King Jerned sets the style for Filkhar's fashionable citizens, his fickle tastes as changeable as the wind.

Encouraged by the wealth and number of the city's visitors from abroad, all the hostelrys strive for custom by constantly improving their service and entertainment. Nowhere in Raschil is a better storyteller than Ranyart Finn, the acknowledged master. His gift is unique: no one has the same skill with words and verbal pictures. Even when he has overindulged in alcohol, his tales remain spellbinding in their intensity and imagination.

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS

THE ADVENTURERS ARE in Raschil. Perhaps they have just completed a job, and are looking for another. Taverns are the best place to hear such news, for even if nothing promising comes that night, there is ample consolation in the wine and company.

"The Three Blades Sharpened" is favored by Filkhar's warriors. The red wine is excellent, and this evening a master storyteller is in attendance. His name is Ranyart Finn, a tall and haggard man, who wields words as if they were rapiers, and he an expert fencer. Tonight an old woman croaks a request for a story about Caden, an ancient Filkharian hero. Finn complies with the story of Sad Hill, when Caden and his unit were ambushed in a canyon near the Lormyrian border, betrayed by their own general. The soldiers and mercenaries in the audience hiss and boo at the tale of treachery, but they enjoy the tale, and reward the teller. He thanks his audience, and staggers out into the night.

Sooner or later, the adventurers too must depart, for "The Three Blades Sharpened" is full this night, booked out by a mercenary company. A strange thing happens outside, in Tallow Street.

In the distance the baying of a pack of hounds can be heard. It grows nearer. The street is long and poorly lit, and a Search roll spies a figure as it breaks from between two candle makers' shops, running fast. It is a young woman, her pretty face locked in an expression of terror. She casts an anguished look over her shoulder, and dashes into a narrow alley on the other side of the street.

The baying grows louder, and hard on the heels of the girl, a pack of about twenty dogs emerge; large, snarling bloodhounds, bred for the kill. They follow her into the alleyway opposite. Warriors run close behind the hounds, rough-looking types dressed in an unfamiliar style of leather armor. (A successful Young Kingdoms roll establishes this armor as that worn several hundred years before.) They carry spears and whips. They follow the pack down the alley, and terrible sounds ensue. The hounds bellow and snarl, the men whoop and cry as they spur their dogs on for the kill, and above all rings the tortured screams of the girl.

The adventurers may rush to the alley. It is a dead end. Shadows obscure most of the detail, but Search rolls determine that the hounds are tearing the girl to pieces. Meanwhile the warriors jeer and laugh at this most unholy of sports. If attacked, the warriors defend themselves with their barbed spears; the hounds are too involved in their carnage to react to any disturbance. Whenever the hounds are driven

away or finish with her, she is dead, now an unrecognizable and bloody heap.

HUNTER-WARRIORS

The six warriors' style of leather armor was worn in Filkhar during the reign of long-dead Gismerle the Arrogant, Filkhar's despotic ruler and the despised regent of the Lormyrian Empire. Three centuries ago, after Melniboné's departure, Gismerle gripped the country in tyranny.

These warriors fight to the death, but do so with an odd lack of emotion. Further, when one dies, the corpse shimmers with a strange green light before being devoured in crackling trails of blue-white energy. This blinding light subsiding, there is no trace left of the body. When three of the warriors have been killed, the remaining warriors also disappear in this manner.

Adventurers wounded or killed in the fight with the warriors or with the Gátha (see further below) regain full health the next morning. For some days after, they have peculiar aches in the places they were wounded, but otherwise suffer no ill effects.

The snarling hounds occupy themselves only with their quarry, and never attack the adventurers, though they can be driven off or be slain. The hounds also vanish, either when they have finished with the girl, or three rounds after the fight with the guards concludes.

If the warriors are not disturbed in their foul hunt, they eventually call their hounds off the corpse and leave the alley. They ignore adventurers as if they were not there, and then fade and disappear as they step into the empty street beyond. The girl's body remains for a few more rounds, but then is absorbed by shimmering green light and trails of blue-white energy, and she too disappears.

SIX ANCIENT HUNTER-WARRIORS

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
STR	16	14	13	13	17	11
CON	13	12	13	14	15	11
SIZ	10	12	15	15	16	13
INT	11	12	10	14	10	09
POW	13	10	14	11	12	11
DEX	15	15	14	14	13	13
HP	12	12	14	15	16	12
DB	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	+1D6	—

Weapons: Shortsword 110%, damage 1D6+1+db

Dagger 105%, damage 1D4+2+db

Overseer's Knout 85%, damage 1D3, medium length

Long 2H Spear 75%, damage 1D10+1+1D4

Thrown Long 2H Spear 60%, damage 1D6+1+1D2, 15 yards base range

Shields: none.

Armor: 1D6+1 (helm on), lacquered leather.

Skills: Act Arrogantly 80%, Dodge 75%, Jump 60%, Listen 45%, Move Quietly 60%, Search 55%.

As corpses and gore vanish, there is a new noise, hoof beats on the cobbles and the snort of a horse in the cold, night air. Down Tallow Street rides a tall man clad in ancient robes and bronze armor. He is astride a fine white mare. His head is bowed, and a look of utter sorrow has fixed on his cruel, ruddy features. The vision remains for a few seconds, then both rider and mount fade away into the chill darkness.

The adventurers might return to "The Three Blades Sharpened" and report what they have just witnessed. The mercenaries eagerly come out to look, but their interest soon turns to scorn when there is no evidence to be found.

One of the mercenaries recalls an old Filkharian folktale, very popular in Raschil's taverns, concerns Gismerle the Arrogant, Filkhar's mad tyrant, and his love for Ashlyn, a peasant girl; that love eventually drove him to order her murder. She fled, but was hunted down and killed. The mercenary heard Ranyart Finn tell this story just last night, in response to a request from the audience, at a rather raucous gathering in the "Oh Ye of Little Faith" tavern down on the dock-side.

Idea rolls remind the adventurers of the archaic style of armor worn by the hunters. Perhaps Finn, who seems an expert in Filkharian history, might be able to tell them more of the ghosts they have witnessed.

The storyteller himself cannot be found. Finn, as drunk as a Shazarian sailor, has passed out in a stable and won't stir until dawn. Then he picks himself up, shakes off the straw and donkey dung, and staggers out for breakfast. Later he returns to his humble one-room shack. He is described below, in the section headed Ranyart Finn.

AS THE DAY PASSES

THE ENACTMENT OF "Gismerle and Ashlyn" is not the only strange thing that happens in Raschil's streets. Several other stories also re-enact themselves before a bewildered populace. All were told by Ranyart Finn during the last few evenings. The adventurers may hear of these happenings, or encounter each in turn while searching for Finn, as the gamemaster wishes.

MASHABAK'S NINE

In the market square, beside the fountain, nine old women appear, clad in nothing but their own long hair wrapped cloak-like around their bodies. All are busy knitting, with needles four feet long. The women chant as they knit, and the droning is terrible to hear.

These women do not knit with wool. In the center of their group are piled human corpses, the flesh of which provides the skeins from which the old women fashion a coat for Mashabak, Lord of Chaos.

If approached or challenged, the nine gray maidens turn toward the intruder and change the pitch of their song. Those who hear the dreadful wailing that follows must match POW against the song's POW 15. Failure means that the intruder immediately turns into stone and remains a statue without thought or feeling until the first rays of tomorrow's dawn strike it, when flesh and blood is restored. The victim has no memories of the nine maidens and only recalls a terrible wailing sound followed by piercing cold.

If the target resists the POW:POW struggle, the nine old women scream in unison and throw their knitting needles to the ground. As their wailing echoes from nearby buildings, they freeze and turn into statues. The statues disappear the next dawn, in shimmering green light and blazes of energy as the sun rises.

The nine gray maidens (or Mashabak's Nine) appear in several folktales popular across the Southern Continent. The nine are witches, employed by Mashabak to accomplish various tasks. In the stories, they are said to be all-powerful sorcerers, but the three most widely-told tales of the Nine all feature their defeats.



HUNTER-WARRIORS AND PREY

In the last of the tales, Mashabak's Nine are to knit for their lord a coat of human flesh. It will grant him dominance over every human weakness. To safeguard their effort, Mashabak teaches them the power to render into stone all who anger them.

One day they are challenged. A champion (named Orik) has arisen in the village from which the Nine took their human victims. In return for the gift of courage, the hero has traded his ability to hear, unwittingly becoming immune to the song of the Nine. In making strength from weakness, he confounds Mashabak.

When their wail attack turns the witches into nine different kinds of stone, Orik must then find nine different helpers from among the natural animals to help him reduce each statue to dust before the next sun rises. He does, incidentally allying himself with the bee, the goshawk, the dog, the bull, and other animals of service to man.

A ring of standing stones high in the Dead Hills of Dorel, far to Filkhar's south, is alleged to be the remains of Mashabak's Nine.

THE TRAGEDY OF SAD HILL

In Traitors' Lane, a wide street running toward the harbor, a company of warriors dressed in the style of Filkharian scouts of a hundred years before, materializes and begins to cautiously advance down the cobbled street. Suddenly arrows



THE ENEMY OF CATS

rain down upon them. Then boiling oil, poured from the roofs of the buildings on either side of the lane, cascades down.

The company is caught in the attack: the carnage is terrible to behold as the warriors have nowhere to take shelter from the onslaught. After fifteen minutes, only six of the ninety or so men survive and one of them, a tall, lean scout, dressed in the armored coat popular in that era, screams vengeance on those who have betrayed his men. As his cries echo around the buildings, the scene is bathed in the usual colors of light and then disappears, leaving Traitors' Lane untouched.

For many years this incident has been part of Filkharian military folklore, and it was the one related by Finn in "The Three Blades Sharpened." The ambush took place in a canyon close to Sad Hill during a border conflict with Lormyr. Betrayed by their own general, the company of Filkharian soldiers was ambushed and all but destroyed. A survivor, Caden, dedicated his life to finding the traitor and extracting vengeance. Many tales chronicle Caden's exploits. These stories are extremely popular among mercenaries and soldiers of Filkhar.

THE GÁTHA

A huge triple-headed rat appears in the slums of Raschil and rampages through the filthy alleys, devouring all life in its path that is too drunk, too crippled, or too slow to get out of the way. Crippled beggars are not the Gátha's main targets: cats congregate in this area, and the monster hunts them. Every cat that emerges from piles of rubbish or the dark corners of buildings either is eaten or is incinerated by the rat-demon's flaming breath.

The rat-demon Gátha is a servant of Teer, a boar-headed god who appears in some South Continent tales. Its preoccupation is to destroy cats, although it cavils at nothing else which gets in its way. When killed, the monster vanishes in the same way as the other apparitions, and wounded or dead adventurers recover with the dawn. Though Gátha is commonly spoken of as a demon, it is a fictitious thing, and has probably never existed on any plane.

In the listed head attacks, the left head is as seen from the creature's point of view.

The center head of the thing breathes fire. The cone of the flame can be focused, but not at distances greater than ten yards. Once the initial round's damage has been done, clothing, fur, hair, etc., continues to burn for 1D6 points of damage per round until put out.

The thing can launch two attacks per round, in any combination.

THE GÁTHA, Demon-Like Dire Enemy of Cats

STR 20 CON 18 SIZ 26 INT 05 POW 19
DEX 16 Move 9 HP 22

Damage Bonus: +2D8.

Weapons: Bite (Left Head) 58%, damage 4D8+2+2D8

Fire Breath (Center Head) 70%, damage 10+1D8, base range 5 yards

Bite (Right Head) 88%, damage 4D8+2+2D8

Left Foreclaw 70%, damage 1D8+2D8

Right Foreclaw 70%, damage 1D8+2D8

Armor: 1D8 matted fur and fat.

Skills: Climb 25%, Dodge 30%, Jump 15%, Listen 80%, Scent/Taste 299%, Sense Cats 90%, Spot Hidden 140%, Track 160%.

The Gátha appears in a story that may or may not have happened at some time in the Young Kingdoms' history. A sor-

cerer loyal to Teer was destroyed by a thousand cats summoned by a Melnibonéan warrior who enjoyed a pact with the Beast Lord Meerclaw. Angered at the death of his beloved sorcerer, Teer sent the Gátha to slaughter all the cats it could find. The rat-demon was eventually destroyed when Meerclaw herself intervened. From then on, Teer's influence on the Earth diminished.

RANYART FINN

THE QUICKEST WAY to find Finn is to ask the innkeeps and drunks of Filkhar. Allow a Luck roll after one morning's round of enquiries. Finn lives in a dingy, one-room shack near the main market. It has one door, and one shuttered window. Persistent banging wakes Finn up, and he blearily greets his visitors.

Ranyart Finn is tall, lean, and dark-haired. His handsome face is lined, haggard, and blotched; he looks older than his thirty-two years. His voice is soft, but when telling stories he is as loud as a town-crier. His dark brown eyes have a mischievous twinkle that he employs to impress the ladies. Finn is rarely completely sober. He argues that his drinking fuels the passion in his stories, and few find it hard to disagree with him. He has the soul of a poet and the alcohol capacity of a mastodon: his ability to trade a witty anecdote for a pint of ale is legendary. He is well liked by almost all who meet him, and it is hard to believe that anyone wishes him harm.

Finn is happy to talk to the adventurers. He remembers them from "The Three Blades Sharpened," and figures that they wish to hear more stories of Caden. They might even stand him for a few drinks. The day is off to a fine start.

Finn has not yet heard the gossip about the previous night's happenings. News of it sours his mood. At first he dismisses claims that his stories have taken life, but then he becomes fearful.

If he is only tipsy or hung-over, Finn recollects that "Five or six nights ago, when I was talking at the Tarkeshite's Head on Cutter's Way—there was that old crone with the eye-patch. She asked me to tell the Mashabak story. Two nights later, she was at the Gallows Post Tavern—she requested the Gátha story at that one..." An Insight roll notes that Finn holds particular horror over the fact that the woman was one-eyed.

If very drunk, Ranyart is unable to remember the old woman who requested the tales that subsequently came to life. The adventurers, via a successful Insight or Idea roll, might recall the old woman from "The Three Blades Sharpened" who asked him for the tale of the tragedy of Sad Hill.

The old woman with the eye patch offers a starting place. If the adventurers spend any time scouring the streets of Raschil for her, they learn nothing: not even the Guild of Subtle Manipulation (an association of street performers and cutpurses) has heard or seen of such a woman. Little in the city escapes their attention.

It is Finn, in a less sober moment, who suggests the obvious plan. He has been asked to speak at the "The Three Blades Sharpened" that evening. If the adventurers will accompany him, they can seize and question the woman if she appears, or else follow her to find out who she is.

The adventurers make the connections only if they discuss the matter with Finn, whose conscious memory recalls little that happened before his most recent drinking bout. The questions and links are made with a successful Insight or Idea roll when trying to analyze elements common to each story.

A DRUNKARD'S INDEX

DRINKING STARTS soon after waking, usually by early afternoon, and doesn't finish until he is either too tired or too drunk to stand, usually around dawn. Finn drinks slowly but steadily, and is rarely more than an arm's length from a mug of ale. The following table can be used to randomly decide his condition. Subtract 25 percentiles from the roll before midday, and add 25 percentiles after sundown.

roll D100

- 01-05 completely sober.
- 06-31 has just poured his first drink of the day; grouchy and hung-over.
- 32-50 is on his second drink, and feeling better.
- 51-85 slightly tipsy, coherent and amusing, and in fine story-telling fettle.
- 86-95 drunken, but mobile and agreeable.
- 96-00 still at the staggering stage; hasn't yet recovered from the night before. Slurs his words and believes that almost everyone is his best friend. Liable to become over-emotional and regale anyone within ear-shot with tales of his failed love-life.

That old woman who asked for each story is an avatar of Maluk. She has attended four of Finn's evenings and on each visit requested four stories, all popular ones amongst the locals, which he then happily told.

RANYART FINN, Age 32, Drunken Storyteller

Chaos 77, Balance 66, Law 17

STR 13 CON 09 SIZ 14 INT 16 POW 16
DEX 12 APP 17 HP 12

Damage Bonus: +1D4.

Weapons: Brawl 64%, damage 1D3+1D4

Dagger 47%, damage 1D4+2+1D4

Armor: none.

Skills: Art (Improvisational Performance) 170%, Bargain 80%, Dodge 32%, Evaluate Ale 120%, Fast Talk 77%, Insight 90%, Listen 40%, Mimic Audience Members 76%, Oratory 130%, Search 46%, Tales of the South Continent 141%, Young Kingdoms 51%.

THE THREE BLADES SHARPENED

IT'S A GOOD CROWD at the Three Blades; drinking a great deal and in good humor, they applaud enthusiastically as Ranyart Finn takes his customary position beside the fire. A few people from the audience call out, asking him to tell stories about them becoming immensely wealthy, powerful, and sexually irresistible, in the hope that such dreams may become reality. Ranyart ignores the jibes, sips at his umpteenth pint of ale for the day, and launches into a gentle story, involving no monsters and no tragedy. It tells of a young charcoal burner's love for a miller's daughter, and of their efforts to meet without attracting the attention of the doughty old miller and his wife. Some of the situations are hilarious, and the listeners roar in appreciation and thump the tables. All is resolved, and the tale has a happy ending.

Half way through the tale, the adventurers may spot (Search rolls) a small, hunched figure pushing its way through the crowded inn toward the hearth where Ranyart sits, oblivious to anything except the telling of his story. The audience is captivated by the storyteller's skill and parts readily for the little old woman who scurries rat-like between them.

She is hunched and dressed in motley rags, her left eye covered by a patch made of black leather. Ranyart finishes his story, and as he takes a deep pull from his omnipresent mug of ale, she cries out in a high-pitched voice, startlingly loud for one so small and frail-looking.

"The End of Time, Ranyart!" she screeches, "tell the story of The End of Time!"

At the mere notion, Finn sprays his brew across the first few rows of the audience, and his face falls ashen. He looks to the adventurers and then to the old woman, showing her position in the audience, and then regains a little of his composure.

"Madam," he slurs, "That involves the end of the world! I couldn't possibly inflict that on Raschil."

At this point the old woman casts her good eye around the tavern, her gaze resting momentarily on each adventurer: then she smiles grimly and turns nimbly on her heel and moves through the crowd, pushing aside the revelers as she makes for the exit. To stop her, match DEX against her's of 17 on the Resistance Table. If unhindered, she makes for the adventurer with the highest POW and whispers as she pushes past, "Meet me at midnight, at the house at the corner of Westgate and Silver Street. Bring your friends and the storyteller if you wish."

If stopped in her flight, she smiles at her captor, a twinkle forming in her good eye. Match her POW of 28 against the adventurer's. If overcome, the adventurer feels compelled stand aside and let her pass; she whispers the above invitation before leaving the tavern. Those who try to follow her once she is outside find that she has already disappeared, probably having ducked into one of this quarter's many alleys.

MALUK'S AVATAR

WHILE SHE IS NOT a true manifestation of the Silent Watcher of Chaos, the One-Eyed Woman represents his person and will. In a bid to recruit agents to help in the final stage of the game with Darnizhaan, Maluk has sent his avatar to involve Finn in his plan to retrieve the *Book of Brilliant Things*. Maluk knows that Finn has friends who might help him in times of crisis. He also knows that Finn understands the importance of books and will be only too eager to encourage his friends to find a particular book that may remove the curse on his stories.

Except for her unworldly air, the old woman might be someone's grandmother. A little over five feet, white-haired, and considerably lined of face, she has a soft voice and the kind of rosiness to her cheeks that only wise women manage to cultivate. Her left eye is hidden by a leather patch for beneath it her eye has been plucked out in reverence to Maluk. She is surprisingly strong and fast, and she has a large store of magic. Though painful to him, Maluk can channel his own awesome energies through her, as he has in bringing Finn's stories to life.

She does not claim her connection to Maluk, nor mention her lord's name in conversation. Insight rolls or Witch Sight might show that this woman is more than she appears.

If attacked, the old woman tries to distract her opponents by casting Muddle before using her Liken Shape spell to transform herself into a hideous, seething mass of tentacles and teeth. Should such appearance fail to intimidate her attackers, she casts Make Fast to weld her attackers' swords into their scabbards.

It is her lord Maluk's pleasure that his avatar can simultaneously cast up to four different or identical spells in the same round, and that her magic points never diminish.

THE ONE-EYED WOMAN, Avatar of Maluk

STR 17	CON 12	SIZ 6	INT 24	POW 28
DEX 17	APP 9			HP 9

Damage Bonus: none.

Weapons: none.

Armor: none, but she is immune to the effects of wounds and injuries, and if killed reforms at the next dawn or sunset, whichever is nearer, unless it please Maluk that she dies.

Spells, Summonings: Bonds Unbreakable (3), Curse of Chaos (4), Hell's Armor (1-4), Liken Shape (4), Make Fast (1), Muddle (1), Pox (1), Refutation (1-4), Undo Magic (1-4). Can cast up to four spells or four identical spells simultaneously in the



THE ONE-EYED WOMAN

same round; her magic points never diminish.

Skills: Bargain 150%, Dodge 120%, Evaluate 176%, Insight 291%, Listen 167%, Million Spheres 58%, Move Quietly 100%, Potions 150%, Search 200%, Unknown Kingdoms 300%, Young Kingdoms 500%.

MEETING HER

The adventurers have an appointment to keep at the corner of Westgate and Silver Streets. Ranyart Finn is reluctant to go, but can be persuaded once he has strengthened his courage with apricot brandy.

A young man walks alone along Westgate Street. He is neatly dressed, but his leather jerkin has many black smudges. He carries a bunch of flowers, and asks passers-by to direct him to the mill. Ranyart winces when he sees him. It is the love-struck charcoal-burner from the story he told earlier in the evening.

The dun-colored house on the corner is a dilapidated two-story merchants'-style dwelling, with its upper windows boarded over. Finn whispers that when he last went past this place, it was derelict; now the welcoming flicker of firelight and lanterns glows in the downstairs room. The front door is open, and the old woman's voice comes from within, beckoning them to enter and not to be afraid.

Inside, the house is cozy. The front door leads into the parlor, where a comforting fire burns and ceiling lanterns provide soothing light. The old woman sits in a rocking chair, her withered face carrying a grandmotherly smile. She bids her guests to be seated. No matter how many come, there is a chair and a place for each.

The old woman stares at the fire, and answers no questions. When all have fallen silent, she smiles broadly and leans forward. Her voice becomes authoritative, and it fills the room.

"I can help your friend Ranyart Finn," she says firmly, "and only I can do so. He wanted his stories to be so real as to be alive, and now they are. I can tell you that it will not end until those stories are captured in a certain, very special book, the *Book of Brilliant Things*."

The old woman tells the adventurers that *Brilliant Things* is an ancient tome written for an emperor of Melniboné, during the height of the Bright Empire. It is not a spell-book, but a nightmare, a magical means of capturing fantasies and dreams so that they may be relived, although doing so leaves men mad after a time. If the book is brought to her, she can show Finn how to use it to entrap his wayward stories; thus will Raschil be saved from living nightmares.

The old woman explains that while the stories are illusory now, they will grow more palpable with each passing night until they become real. "If you do not get the book, the Nine of Mashabak will someday truly turn people into stone and the Gátha will lay waste to the city everywhere. Daylight won't save them: all harm will be real. These things must be captured while they are still dreams and shadows, for it is the power of Chaos to make reality of desire." Insight rolls note her particular leer at Finn as she makes the last statement.

The old woman refuses to elaborate on the nature of these living dreams, saying that is the province of the gods. She tells them where to find the book, and describes the bronze-bound tome. The outer box is one hand wide and two hands deep, the thickness of a Raschil muffin (by city ordinance a muffin in Raschil must be at least two inches thick), and is decorated by leering, eyeless faces. The book within is in High Speech, written all in one hand. The library at the University of Cadsandria holds the book, where it is kept under lock and key.

The Avatar offers no reward for finding the book, and if asked looks at the adventurer making the enquiry with a quizzical expression: "Is not saving your friend's sanity enough?" she asks, "Or saving the sanity of an entire city? Many would ask for such an opportunity."

Protests, or successful Bargain or Fast Talk rolls cause her to drag a ring from one scrawny hand. This she gives to a particular adventurer (see About The Ring, just below). The ring is a plain band of heavy gold. A successful Evaluate suggests it is worth about B.600. "Since you doughty

sword-wielders are not too proud to take an old woman's gold, mark well that you complete your task," she sneers.

ABOUT THE RING

THE EXTERIOR SURFACE of the ring is a plain band of gold. It has a small eight arrowed sign of Chaos inset in the inside surface. Study of the band detects nothing more, nor does casting Witch Sight show that it is magical. A successful Insight roll suggests that she spoke of the ring in a peculiarly knowing way, and that it might be wise not to convert it into cash without need.

The essential functions of the ring are to let the adventurers know that Chaos may be involved, and to supply some ready cash. This is the sort of bribe that Nilgis the assistant librarian might accept, for instance.

If the gamemaster wishes, however, the ring may prove enchanted. If that is so, the One-Eyed Woman gives the ring to the adventurer who has the highest chosen characteristic, or who is tied for the highest. (She never gives the ring to Ranyart Finn.) Worn or carried, the ring has the same effect, but the adventurers must deduce what that effect is. The effect or effects begin when they set foot in Cadsandria.

Please note that the ring may be passed from hand to hand. Possessed by a different adventurer, the enhanced characteristic or characteristics may be quite different. If the adventurer carrying it has no highest characteristic within the group, the ring does nothing.

If the adventurer has two or more of the highest characteristics, all the possible enhancements occur.

When a characteristic has doubled, the ring is detectable by Witch Sight. Champions of any allegiance may also sense that Chaos is in the vicinity, though not be able to specify the source of their feelings.

► **IF STR**, the ring doubles the adventurer's Strength and increases the damage bonus; he or she needs successful DEX rolls not to destroy doors when opening them, not to kill people with simple shoves, or not to crush wine bottle necks instead of removing their corks. The first successful Resistance Table roll for STR so-doubled adds a point of permanent STR, but further Resistance Table rolls add no further points.

► **IF CON**, the ring doubles the adventurer's Constitution, and increases the adventurer's hit points; it enhances resistance to poisons and disease, and increases the adventurer's natural rate of healing to 1D3 hit points per day. The adventurer does not feel the cold, and must make Idea rolls, or he or she appears in public dressed indecently. The first successful Resistance Table roll for CON so-doubled adds a point of permanent CON, but further Resistance Table rolls add no further points.

► **IF SIZ**, the ring doubles the adventurer's Size, to approximately eight feet in height and double present weight (see the rulesbook table *Adventurer* siz Defined for weight parameters). The adventurer's hit points and damage bonus also increase. Whatever clothes or weapons the adventurer puts on or picks up also increase proportionately, so that a great sword zooms in scale to nearly the length of a long spear. The giant adventurer cannot fit through doorways without stooping, and cannot ride a horse. One point of this increase is permanent.

► **IF INT**, the ring doubles Intelligence, doubling the adventurer's INT-limit. If over 100%, the Idea roll fails only on a roll result of 00. The speed with which knowledge and

ABOUT AVATARS

THE LORDS OF CHAOS are normally kept from the Young Kingdoms plane, held back by a barrier erected by the Lords of Law thousands of years ago. It is possible for the most powerful Chaos gods to breach this barrier in various subtle ways, but this pains them, and costs them much energy and effort. They are willing to manifest only if skillfully summoned by a particularly favored individual.

The Lords of Chaos can influence events through avatars, they can command miracles, they can even cast sorceries if it is worth their while. Usually it is not.

communication skills are acquired is now halved (if possessed of the ring the entire time); skill points so-increased are retained if the ring is given up. Riddles and other intellectual problems become child's play; Bargain, Evaluate, Fast Talk, Oratory, and Search skill points double while the ring is active. The adventurer's speech quickens, and if excited he or she is high unintelligible. He or she also begins to think of the other adventurers as dullards and half-wits. The first successful Resistance Table roll for INT so-doubled adds a point of permanent INT, but further Resistance Table rolls add no further points.

- **IF POW**, the ring doubles Power, doubling the number of spells that may reside in memory and making the summoning of demons very much safer. Magic points also double and excess ones are retained after the ring is given up, except that they only renew to the old limit. If the ring is given up, excess spells in memory are lost. The Luck roll doubles, and if over 100%, fails only on a roll of 00. However, the bad luck which the adventurer avoids always seem to fall twice as hard on his or her companions. The first successful Resistance Table roll for POW so-doubled adds a point of permanent POW, but further Resistance Table rolls add no further points.
- **IF DEX**, the ring doubles Dexterity and therefore DEX-rank, so that the adventurer can move incredibly fast. If sitting, the adventurer can rise and leave the room without anyone noticing, as if he or she had disappeared; pick-pocketing and other sorts of sleight-of-hand maneuvers fail only on a D100 result of 00. Climb, Conceal Object, DEX, Dodge, Hide, Move Quietly, and Throw skill points double while the ring is active. The adventurer sometimes completes an action before he or she has realized it is underway; to simulate this, the gamemaster should take every statement of intent made by the player of this adventurer literally, and never allow a change of mind without a successful Idea roll. The first successful Resistance Table roll for DEX so-doubled adds a point of permanent DEX, but further such Resistance Table rolls have no effect.
- **IF APP**, the ring doubles Appearance, so that the adventurer is incredibly handsome, beautiful, agreeable, attractive, and so on. If the adventurer claims to be a god, none will dispute the notion. No human or animal will attack the adventurer. Double the skill points for all communication skills while the ring is held; commands and wishes that can be expressed silently automatically succeed. Crowds of people and beasts start to follow him or her everywhere, doting on every word. Men and women fall in love with the adventurer, and duels break out. The Charisma roll is also doubled. One point of this increase is permanent.

FINN'S SECRET

A STUTE ADVENTURERS deduce that Ranyart Finn is involved more deeply than he has revealed. Finn does not volunteer this information, but soon crumbles under stringent questioning, as demonstrated by successful Fast Talk or Oratory rolls. He tells of another one-eyed stranger he met last year, a fair young woman, not old and withered like this one. She invited him to drink a toast the Lords of Disorder, that they might bless his stories. He never thought that his foolish entreaty would take on such terrible meaning.

Killing Finn is one way of saving Raschil. His stories die with him. This is a callous solution, for the poor man meant no harm by his actions, and gains the adventurers 1D8 Chaos points apiece. Better instead that they play the avatar's game, win it, and find redemption for Ranyart Finn in the *Book of Brilliant Things*.

DARNIZHAAN'S INTERFERENCE

THE OTHER PLAYER in this game, Darnizhaan, has also been making plans. The Dead God has recruited into his service Menekeyil, an Ilmioran mercenary. Darnizhaan has given Menekeyil nothing as yet, because he has nothing to give (the Dead Gods have no power on this plane). Instead, he has promised his servant immortality, to be fulfilled as soon as his powers return.

Menekeyil accepted the offer, and will soon be in Cadsandria. He will, by the time the adventurers reach the city, be ready to attempt the theft of *Brilliant Things* on Darnizhaan's behalf. Menekeyil must then take the book to a remote temple in the hills of the northern Weeping Wastes—a lost shrine that is still dedicated to the Dead Gods.

Beating Menekeyil will not be easy. He has many contacts in the Young Kingdoms, among them the Mereghn, Ilmar's feared guild of assassins. Menekeyil has hired the Mereghn to aid him in retrieving the book, and his investment will pay off next week, when he arrives in Cadsandria and learns that the book is kept in the University library.

CADSANDRIA

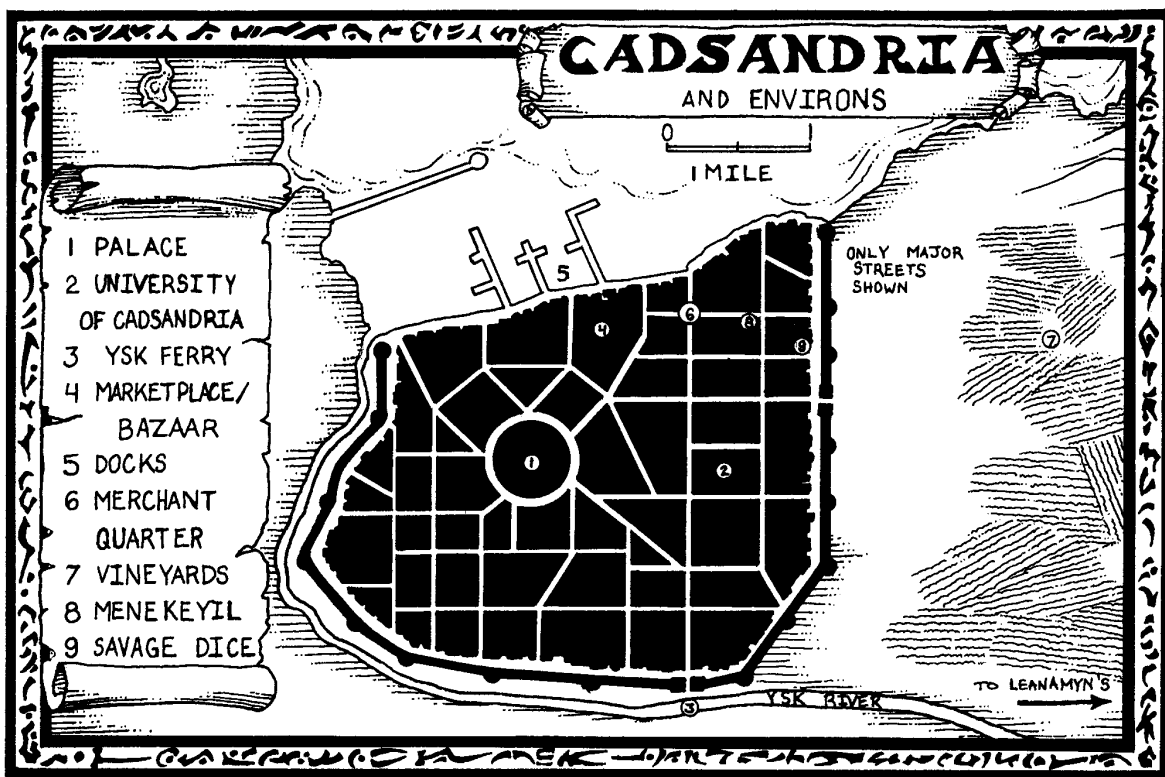
ARRANGING PASSAGE TO Cadsandria is easy enough; boats sailing to and from Cadsandria are frequent visitors in Raschil's harbor, and the adventurers find that a Filkharian trading brig sets sail there tomorrow morning, with the full tide and the usual southwest wind.

The journey takes a few days. Filkhar and Argimiliar are prosperous, and their coasts are well patrolled; this area of the sea is largely free from pirates.

Though Old Hrolmar rivals her, fabulous Cadsandria is the most vibrant city in the Young Kingdoms. In Cadsandria dwell scholars, sages, and students of all descriptions and every occupation. Her broad avenues, laid out in the days of the Lormyrian Empire, are strolled upon by persons deep in thought and debate. In the garrets of her tenement buildings dwell impoverished students, starving that they may afford the price of this fine scroll or that rare treatise. The halls of her many-pillared palace buzz with talk of philosophy, anthropology, mathematics, and theology. Graybeards debate the nature of the world with vendors in the markets. In Cadsandria, education is the province of all.

Come nightfall, Cadsandria's paved streets gleam with the light from oil lamps raised by order of King Jiku. Then hollow-cheeked students rant and rationalize over mugs of fine wine in cafes and theaters. Come morning, as the lamp lighters retrace their steps, snuffing the lanterns lit the previous night, drunken students stagger home along the boulevards, or sleep slumped in gutters and doorways.

Cadsandria is a cradle of wisdom, her university attracting intelligentsia from the four corners of the Young Kingdoms. The city's nobility hedonistically worships Chaos; the cults of Slortar the Beautiful and Amara (goddess of naked anointing, drugs, and carnality) are popular here.



Elsewhere in Cadsandria the only gods are lore and learning. Cadsandria's markets are full of illuminated texts, and the still-expensive examples of the new printing, as well as works of art, antiquities, and curiosities. Small galleries dot the city; they exhibit works from Melniboné and beyond.

Outside Cadsandria sprawl miles of vineyards. Here magnificent wines are pressed and exported to all parts of the Young Kingdoms.

WELCOME TO THE CITY

CADSANDRIA IS FILLED with prosperous people enjoying their lives. Folk of all cultures are welcome here. The air smells of flowers, from the city's many ornamental gardens; heavier, subtler musks from taverns, cook-houses, brothels, and gambling halls lend an unconscious feeling that anything is possible.

New arrivals are greeted on the dock by a bizarre mix of traditional harbor-side activities and Cadsandrian eccentricities: there are warehouses and rope makers, strange forms of theater, dance, and acrobatics, baskets of still-flopping fresh fish, and roadside debates that range from religion through politics to the nature of the multiverse. "Does it exist? I am sure it does not! Why, how can there be more than one of anything? If you read Sajatiir's treatise on existential rationality you would surely realize..."

Beneath the hurly-burly, an ominous presence lurks: the Mereghn. The assassins Menekeyil hired are watching the streets. Though the adventurers know no more about the One-Eyed Woman than they can infer, Menekeyil knows all about the game Damizhaan is engaged in and is expecting the arrival of Maluk's agents. As a precaution he has ordered part of his Mereghn contingent to watch the harbor area and the taverns, while he and the rest scour the city for the book. Though they hardly expect to overhear conversations mentioning the *Book of Brilliant Things*, Menekeyil expects to see some battle-hardened veterans arrive, and then incongruously ask the way to the University library. Having revealed their intentions, the adventurers will be watched most carefully by the assassins and targeted for *attention*, the Mereghn euphemism for *death*.

ABOUT THE MEREGHN

POWER IS RARELY controlled by those who hold office; it is usually manipulated by those who keep them there, and this is essentially what the Mereghn do. The name *mereghn* derives from the High Speech word *mereghn'i'agn*, or information. Following the war with the Dharzi and after Melniboné retreated from Ilmiora, the emergent rulers of the country fought long among themselves to create their own empires. Cities rose and fell. Two, Ilmar

MEREKHN ASSASSINS

THE MEREKHN ARE a nondescript bunch who have neither the swagger nor the gear of men-at-arms. They dress in the smocks and trows common to Cadsandrian farmers and laborers, but beneath wear Leather and Ring armor.

They aim to kill, but do not try twice in any given attempt; tomorrow is always another day. They are professional, calm, and almost impassive—murder is business, and business needs care.

If cornered, Mereghn fight fiercely, but allow themselves to be taken when resistance is plainly futile. See *The Captive*, below, for further information.

For the gamemaster's convenience, the nearby statistics assume the same skills and percentages for four assassins.

FOUR JOURNEMEN MEREKHN

	#1	#2	#3	#4
STR	13	13	16	13
CON	15	17	15	14
SIZ	12	11	11	13
INT	14	14	16	10
POW	11	13	15	13
DEX	18	14	14	13
APP	10	12	11	13
HP	14	14	13	14
DB	+1D4	—	+1D4	+1D4

Weapons: Desert Bow 100%, damage 1D8+2+1D2, base range 100 yards

Hilted Dagger 110%, damage 1D4+2+1D4

Brawl 120%, damage 2D3+1D4

Armor: 1D6 (no helm), Leather & Rings.

Shields: none.

Spells: none.

Skills: Bargain 55%, Climb 103%, Conceal Object 76%, Craft (Sleight-of-Hand) 70%, Disguise 125%, Escape Techniques 30%, Fast Talk 66%, Hide 97%, Insight 85%, Jump 78%, Listen 73%, Move Quietly 104%, Physik 44%, Pick Lock 69%, Potions 29%, Ride 80%, Search 79%, Throw 112%, Track 66%, Trap 74%.

and Bakshaan, survived. The war lord founders of these cities protected themselves by establishing secret networks of spies who gathered information from the streets, pinpointed troublemakers and enemies of the city-state, and then removed them before the ruler could be challenged. In Ilmar, the Mereghn began as a brotherhood of spies and informants, and quickly developed supplementary skills in assassination, espionage, and intrigue.

The Mereghn found that it could manipulate the information it uncovered to suit its own needs, bringing down one ruler, for instance, to enthrone another more sympathetic to its aims. Gradually the Mereghn ceased to serve Ilmar, Bakshaan, or the newly-established government of Ilmiora. It hired out its services to other nations, carrying out espionage and assassinations wherever the price was right.

The Mereghn spread its influence yet remained unknown to most. No one knew who its leaders were, nor how many

people it employed. Finally, even Ilmar's rulers lost track and became resigned to contract with the Mereghn as if with a sovereign power. Ilmar and Ilmiora pay for Mereghn services like everyone else.

Members of the Mereghn are trained in information gathering, disguise, thievery, deception, and assassination. If a dirty job needs delicate doing, the Mereghn are the agents of choice. Anyone can hire the Mereghn, and the price depends on the nature of the work and on what the client can afford. In some respects the Mereghn are rather benevolent; they are open to negotiation and believe in a fair rate for a fair service. When Menekeyil approached them and asked for help in finding the book, they charged a modest (though substantial to most pockets) fee for their services. They would be required to find the book, retrieve it, and prevent others from getting it.

The Mereghn are professional, but they are not fanatical. If one of their number is captured in the line of duty, the organization offers fair ransom for the assassin's safe return: they cancel the contract, and return the money they have been paid. Any who torture or execute a Mereghn have made eternal enemies.

Menekeyil has eight Mereghn with him, and can contract locally for more. They have been in Cadsandria for a day, have established the book's location, and are developing schemes for obtaining it. They have also given thought to preventing others from getting the book, and this is the next obstacle the adventurers have to face.

ADVENTURERS IN TOWN

Many cheap and comfortable inns exist in Cadsandria. Popular taverns include the "Hogshead Inn," the "Den of Debate," the "Beer and Theorem," the "Philosopher's Welcome," and the "Warm Fire." All offer food, lodgings, and spirited conversation.

Every citizen of Cadsandria can give directions to the University (it's in the center of the city, close to the palace). Few people in the Young Kingdoms much understand what a library is, but luckily, most of them live in this city.

If the adventurers ask only of passersby, the Mereghn stand only a 10% chance of learning of the adventurers' presence. If the adventurers ask innkeepers, beggars, bartenders, and other dock-side fixtures, then a 60% chance exists that a Mereghn or his agent have offered that particular worthy twenty bronzes to report the question.

Once noticed, the adventurers are tailed by an assassin, who reports their whereabouts to the other Mereghn. The adventurers should be allowed a Search or Insight roll to notice the shadow; if they do, allow the Mereghn the same rolls to realize that they have been detected. If this happens, the Mereghn withdraws. These agents are too cunning to be easily caught.

ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS

Once the adventurers are identified, the Mereghn stage deadly attacks, with the aim of killing or dissuading them. Either is acceptable. Each is different, and each breaks off before the adventurers have much chance to respond.

Some sample ambushes:

► **AN ARROW** streaks down from a high place. The firer has 100% skill, and damage is 1D8+2+1D2. The tip is envenomed with poison of POT 10+1D10. Search rolls trace the arrow's flight to an open window in the house opposite, and a figure holding a bow is glimpsed running from the back of the building and into a .

If the adventurers give chase, they reach a street crowded with be-finned and seaweed-swathed celebrants from a Fishers Guild ritual. The bow floats in a horse-trough; the assassin is gone. The running figure was not the man who fired, but a second Mereghn; while the adventurers chase the false archer, the real one slips away. Idea rolls suggest afterwards that the figure appeared on the ground too quickly for one who had been in an upstairs room.

If the adventurers ignore the fleeing figure, and run into the house, they stand to catch the real archer, if they cover both front and back doors. He hides until discovered, and then fights desperately until he can safely flee.

If he is taken alive, see *The Captive*, below.

► **A WOODEN PLATFORM**, laden with bricks, hangs in front of a building under construction. As the adventurers pass beneath, there is a low whistle the platform tilts and the bricks fall, causing 4D6 damage to those who fail Dodge or Jump rolls. A Traps roll determines that the platform was tipped by a wire running behind the building. By the time the adventurers run around the building, the assassin is gone.

► **IN A CROWDED TAVERN**, an adventurer's drink is spiked with a poison of POT 20 which causes the imbiber to sleep for 24 hours (here the Mereghn use a non-lethal assault, in case an innocent should sup the drink by accident). The tavern staff protest their innocence.

► **A DOZEN WATCH-MEN** confront the adventurers, with warrants for their arrest, signed by King Jiku himself. These were given to them by a sergeant of the guard. The adventurers have been recognized as an infamous band of arsonists, wanted in six nations.

If the adventurers surrender peacefully, they can plead their case with successful Oratory and Fast Talk rolls. Success causes the validity of the warrant to be questioned. No known sergeant recalls delivering it to the watch, and it is found to be a forgery. The due processes of law take at least a day to clear the adventurers, but gain them an unexpected ally: the King himself, who is not amused by unknown parties forging his signature.

If the adventurers fight the watch-men, then regardless of the false warrant, they have committed assault and possibly murder, and are widely hunted. This is the result the Mereghn hope for.

The gamemaster may devise further obstacles along these lines, a mix of direct assaults and mysterious hindrances. None of these attempts should automatically succeed, and every surprise attack should provide for some sort of saving roll or other grace note for the adventurers involved. As the assaults continue, however, also expect the adventurers to be better prepared than at the beginning.

THE CAPTIVE

A CAPTIVE MEREGHN delivers the following speech, in monotone. An insight roll confirms the genuine nature of the offer, and the deadly truth of the threat. A Young Kingdoms roll recalls the name of Mereghn, a group spoken of in fearful whispers.

"I am of the Mereghn. In capturing one of us, you show yourselves to be our equals. We honor you. We cannot betray our employer, but we will return the money we have been paid, and withdraw from this matter. This is our promise."

"I am of the Mereghn. Do not detain one of us, or torture one of us, or slay one of us. If you do any of these things, you are our enemy. We are in every city, in every nation, in every shadow. Our enemies die. This is our promise."

All is as he says. If the adventurers release the captive, he returns to his fellow Mereghn, careful to ensure that he is not followed. Together the assassins return Menekeyil's money, and depart, despite his rage. He must hire local muscle, less skilled and more thug-like. For such goons, re-use the Mereghn statistics, but uniformly halve all skill percentiles. These thugs stage no clever ambushes, but are perhaps witty enough to lurk in dark alleys and mug lone adventurers.

If the adventurers choose instead to torture their prisoner, then he breaks, as

men do. His information is summarized below. Thereafter, the Mereghn have a vendetta against the adventurers. This should be a threat in all future scenarios. Such repercussions are for the gamemaster to explore in his or her ongoing campaign.

WHAT HE KNOWS

The Mereghn were brought to Cadsandria from the Northern Continent by a man named Menekeyil, a tall, hollow-eyed man of iron discipline and will. Menekeyil seeks the *Book of Brilliant Things* to offer to his god, Darnizhaan, an entity about whom the Mereghn have not inquired.

The captive knows the current location of the Mereghn, though that location will change as soon as one of their number is found to be missing. He also can tell how many there are (with Menekeyil, nine), and that *Brilliant Things* is safe in the bowels of the University library, carefully guarded.

He also knows that Nilgis, the assistant librarian, has betrayed his trust and revealed that the head librarian, Leanamayn Lenathan, knows how to disarm the defenses. He knows that the Mereghn intend to torture and perhaps kidnap the head librarian to learn the secret. As the gamemaster needs, of

course, the captive can also supply other information.

THE IMPORT OF THIS KNOWLEDGE

The adventurers now know the essence of what the Mereghn know. With it they can attempt any of the steps possible to the Mereghn: a counter-ambush, a warning to the librarian, the practice of their own brutality upon her, and so on.

Once equipped with this knowledge, the positions of the Mereghn and the adventurers become essentially interchangeable. Every setting can be told as though the adventurers were attacking, defending, or observing. Let the adventurers make their plans. But also let them watch their backs; they now have enemies for life, far beyond the reach of this scenario.

THE CHANCE TO ESCAPE

If the adventurers allow their captive to live, he has a 30% chance per day of escaping. If locked in some room, he simply disappears. If bound or chained, he slips loose and surprises his guard with a Brawl attack. Just how he manages these tricks is a mystery to the adventurers.

The captive cannot fool a demon guard, who successfully carries out whatever commands were given to it.

THE COMPETITION

The first attack by the Mereghn should have made plain to the adventurers that they have adversaries. This unknown group wants the book strongly enough to kill for it. The attack is also a warning: if the adventurers do not move fast, they will lose the book.

THE POSSIBILITIES

The library neither allows the book to be borrowed, nor will it sell *Brilliant Things* for any sum of money which adventurers are likely to have. To fulfill their mission, the adventurers must steal the tome, either from the library or from the Mereghn after they have stolen it.

If they have captured one of the Mereghn, the adventurers are in a position to outwit Menekeyil. The adventurers might ambush the Mereghn at the library, at Lenathan's town home, or at her villa. If foiled at the library, a chance exists to convince Lenathan to release the book after tracking her down at her villa. If Nilgis can be exposed, or Lenathan rescued, the Chancellor will grant as a reward the gift of *Brilliant Things*.

The adventurers and the Mereghn have the same set of choices; the group that out-speeds, outwits, or out-fights the other group will win the day. A final possibility is that too many corpses might cause Cadsandria's watch or King Jiku's armed soldiers to intrude upon university property to restore order, tilting the balance either for or against the adventurers.

THE PACE OF EVENTS

Unless the adventurers influence them, events in Cadsandria occur as follows.

- ▶ **Day 1** — The adventurers arrive at dusk in Cadsandria. In a gaming hall, meanwhile, the Mereghn close a deal with Nilgis that betrays the library.
- ▶ **Day 2** — The librarian, Leanamayn Lenathan, departs at midday for her villa, for a three day sabbatical. The library is open at midmorning and until dusk. The Mereghn probably detect the adventurers today and ambush them.
- ▶ **Day 3** — Lenathan remains at her villa; the library and University close in respect for the Chaotic holiday of the Martyrs of Polymorphous Performance. Using Nilgis' information, the Mereghn may raid Lenathan's villa and force the secret of the library's defenses from her.
- ▶ **Day 4** — Lenathan remains at her villa; library and University are open at midmorning and until dusk. If the Mereghn has the secret of the library's defenses, they return to Cadsandria and this night steal the book, perhaps breaking in through the skylight.
- ▶ **Day 5** — Lenathan's scheduled return to the library at noon on this day does not occur. Library and university are open at midmorning and until dusk. On this night, the Mereghn likely murder Nilgis to cover their trail.
- ▶ **Day 6** — If they have the book, the Mereghn and Menekeyil set sail this morning aboard the *Free and Easy Tide* for the Northern Continent; if the adventurers have the book, they set sail for Raschil aboard the *Wine-Dark Sea*.

The rest of the adventure is presented as settings. Each setting is suitable for either side to conduct interviews in, to raid, to defend, or otherwise deal with.



THE LIBRARY

CADSANDRIA'S FAMED UNIVERSITY lies within the city walls, close to the palace of dandyish King Jiku. Like the palace, the university buildings are constructed of bluestone, with many pillars, porticos, courts, and flying buttresses in evidence. The university is located within a single city block, in the most crowded section of town. As well as the faculty buildings, it also holds the renowned library, and several halls of residence (King's College and Aubec Hall are rivals as the most prestigious). Everywhere are sunny or shady courtyards, where students and scholars read, compose, dispute, and share food and wine.

Students pay tuition directly to the teachers rather than to the *faculty*, which is supported by the King. But separate fees are demanded of students who live on campus rather than in the town, and these latter pay directly to the faculty.

Courses of study include alchemy, geometry, philosophy, surveying, and metaphysics (taught by the School of Science, whose lecturers are invariably priests of Law), anatomy and physik (the province of the School of Medicine), theology and history (the School of Arts), rhetoric, oratory, poetry, song, and courtesie (taught by the School of Rhetoric, whose lecturers are invariably zealots of Chaos), and canon law, King's law, the declension of guilt and innocence, and the disposition of property (the School of Law).

ABOUT THE LIBRARY

At the heart of the university, the library is a marble hall crowned by a windowed dome that delivers natural light to all parts of the main hall of the library. It is the huge tanned and varnished head of a Chaos thing, long ago hollowed out and lifted triumphantly to the roof to form a broad skylight. The library's main entrance looks onto an ornamental garden. Trees and hedges shelter it on all sides: besides bird songs, all is quiet here.

The Librarian is Leanamayn Lenathan. Her recently appointed deputy is Nilgis Nightdiver, Assistant Librarian. She reports only to the Chancellor; Nilgis reports only to her. More about both occur at their respective stations further below.

The library building is new, built strongly and securely; some tomes in its collection are worth much to sorcerers and to collectors who prize fine books and bindings. Knowledge is freely available to all in Cadsandria, but even so the University must guard against theft, else there be nothing left for future generations of scholars. Several years ago, clandestine agents of the Vilmirian Inquisition began to systematically steal tomes and destroy them, thus prompting the chancellor to introduce stern security measures.

PORTICO

Only one entrance exists to the library, two tall and impressive bronze doors depicting the Eight Lords of Chaos facing the Nine Lords of Law, and all in mighty disputation. Across the center, great letters in Common Tongue boast that *Knowledge Prevails Where the Warrior Cannot*.

From a little armored turret built into the left door, a guard dressed in the motley uniform presently favored by King Jiku surveys from within all who would enter the library. The guard

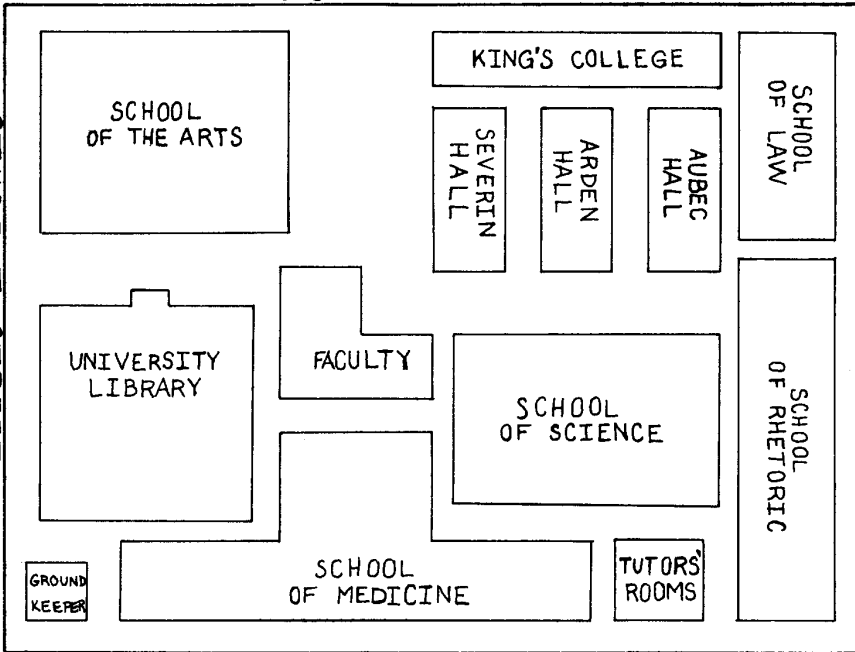
THE BOOK OF BRILLIANT THINGS

UNIVERSITY OF CAD SANDRIA

EDUCATION BOULEVARD

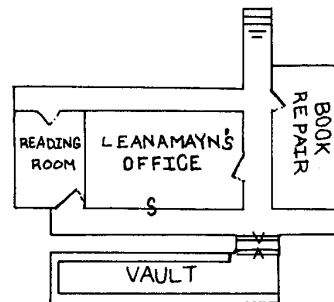
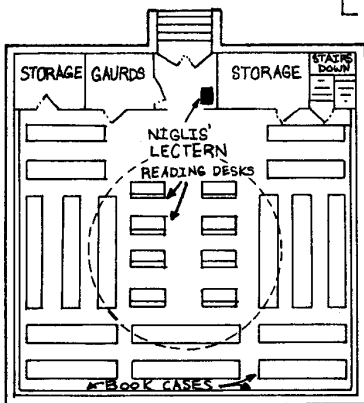
STUDENT STREET

SCHOLAR STREET



WISDOM BOULEVARD

LIBRARY



BASE MENT

- DOOR — SECRET DOOR
- ▭ STAIRS

listens dutifully and opens the way to those who are dressed respectably. Approved, the mighty door opens slightly, the supplicant squeezes in, and the door thunders shut.

The library ordinarily closes at dusk, when the light is no longer adequate for reading. When all of the staff have left the building, the guards bar the doors from within, and admit no one until the Head or Assistant Librarian appears at mid-morning on the following day.

ENTRANCE HALL

An elaborate floor mosaic depicts Golden Rectangles ascending in size, spiraling wider and wider from a tiny center to form a whirlpool of rational form and space straining to extend beyond the marble walls. The Assistant Librarian has his lectern here, close to the smaller doors opening into the

main collection. These latter are merely five yards high and two yards across, half the dimensions of the outer doors. Two blind slaves wait inside and outside, to admit those whom Nilgis indicates, or to allow to exit those already within.

THE GUARDS

Six guards are stationed permanently in the library, at the King's command; trespass here incurs the wrath of the ruler of Argimiliar. These worthies are probably bribable, but they are insulated against approach, and are rarely alone. Fresh guards are rotated in every other week. The next six are due a week from Day One.

One guard mans the portico, as described above. Two more stand motionless beside the inner doors, ready to intervene at Nilgis' command. A single small door across the entry hall

RANDOM BOOK TABLE

USE THESE TABLES to learn the nature, value, and language of books or scrolls picked up by the adventurers.

1 - ROLL D100 FOR SUBJECT MATTER

01-10. HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY. — General history, specific topics (ages of the Bright Empire, for instance, or the Lormyrian Republic), map scrolls, charts, sailing instructions, etc. The newest books and charts are the most trustworthy, unless of Melnibonéan make, where the reverse is truer.

11-20. ASTROLOGY, SORcery, NECROMANCY, ETC. — Charts and notes for interpreting the motions of the heavens and how the constellations can affect one's personality, grimoires, works of theoretical magic, runecasting, prophecy, etc. The best of these are in the security vault.

21-30. STORIES, LEGENDS, SONGS, POETRY, ETC. — Ancient tales of the Bright Empire, local folk tales still being told around the taverns of Cadsandria, songs of wooing, poems of regret, etc.

31-40. DIARIES, MEMORIES, ROYAL GENEALOGIES, LETTERS, LAWS, TREATIES, EDICTS, AND CUSTOMS. — Either by some obscure and unimportant Young Kingdoms nobody or by an important historical figure. Often of obscure purpose, and difficult to read.

41-45. RECORDS OF THE KINGS. — Here are the archives of Argimiliar no longer thought of use to the King, Peers, or their servants, bundled up every generation or so and sent here to make room in the Palace for new records.

46-50. GEOMETRY, LOGIC, PHILOSOPHY. — The meanings of the world as can be deduced by only referring to it.

51-60. PLANTS, FARMING, POISONS. — A definitive text on the subject which can be used for study and skill increase, or else a bound collection of pressed and identified leaves, seeds, flowers, and roots.

61-70. TENETS OF THE ELEMENTAL CHURCHES. — Information on rituals and customs of the elemental churches. Useful to followers of the elements and to the churches' enemies.

71-80. TENETS OF CHAOS. — As similar to 61-70.

81-85. TENETS OF THE BALANCE. — As per 61-70.

86-95. TENETS OF LAW. — As per 61-70.

96-00. OBSCURE WORK. — A singular volume of unknown purpose, shelved here largely because the staff can think of nowhere else to put it, such as a book written in no known language, or containing illustrations without text, or entirely blank save for a single word, or designed to be read backwards.

2 - TO DETERMINE A BOOK'S VALUE, ROLL 1D10

1-2 1D20 years old — value 1D20 x10 bronzes.

3-4 20 x1D6 years old — value in years x10 bronzes.

5-6 50 x1D10 years old — value in years x20 bronzes.

7-8 100 x1D10 years old — value in years x30 bronzes

9 500 x1D10 years old — value in years x40 bronzes.

0 1000 x1D10 years old — value in years x50 bronzes.

3 - A BOOK'S AGE PARTLY DETERMINES ITS LANGUAGE

A SPECKLING OF alien volumes—Mabden, Dharzi, a dialect written in Quarzhasaat, something from Phum, etc., also exist, but represent less than a percent of the library's holdings.

age	roll D100
1-300	01-85 Common Tongue 86-95 Melnibonéan 96-00 High Speech
301-1500	01-20 Common Tongue 21-85 Melnibonéan 86-00 High Speech
1500-3000	01-60 Melnibonéan 61-00 High Speech
3000+	01-20 Melnibonéan 21-00 High Speech

leads to the guard room where, if not off-duty or running errands, three more soldiers wait. The guard room is furnished with simple bunks. A fine chain descends from a hole in the ceiling. This opens the door of a pigeon cage situated on the roof. The pigeon is trained to fly to the main barracks, thus raising the alarm that there is trouble at the library. Reinforcements arrive fifteen minutes later.

At night, four guards sleep while the other two patrol the interior of the library. Only when the library is closed are the interior doors open.

LIBRARY GUARDS, Six Soldiers of the King

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6
STR	14	14	14	15	15	15
CON	14	13	16	15	12	11
SIZ	15	14	13	13	16	16
INT	11	10	12	12	13	12
POW	09	13	12	15	10	11
DEX	16	16	14	14	12	12
HP	15	14	15	14	14	14
DB	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4

Weapons: Broadsword 80%, damage 1D8+1+1D4

Dagger 70%, damage 1D4+2+1D4

Heavy Mace (2H) 70%, damage 1D8+2+1D4

Small Shield 80%, damage kb+1D3+1D4

Armor: 1D6-1 (raffish cap on), Soft Leather.

Skills: Dodge 65%, Fast Talk 50%, Jump 35%, Listen 50%,

Move Quietly 65%, Search 63%, Throw 58%.

NILGIS NIGHTDIVER

It is the essential duty of the Assistant Librarian to judge the rationality and suitability of those who seek to use the resources of the library. The guard at the main doors screens out beggars and obvious riffraff, but has no authority to refuse anyone else. At the beginning of each term, Nightdiver memorizes the faces of all the new students, teachers, and faculty. He still must interview visitors to ascertain their worthiness.

Those associated with the palace or with Cadsandria's city government, and those bearing letters of recommendation from the Chancellor of the university are granted entry. Those who do not qualify, he politely refers to the Chancellor's office, which ultimately controls access.

If Nilgis is threatened, he signals the waiting guards. One strikes a gong, then both advance in support of the Assistant Librarian. The gong alerts the off-duty guards in the guard room beyond, and also instructs the slaves within to bar the inner doors against intrusion.

Arrogant trespassers, the insultingly drunken, and potential thieves are punished on the spot by the guards, who invite malefactors to choose between twenty strokes from the Whistling Rod of Law or twenty lashes from the Eight-Tailed Cat of Chaos. Those of the Balance get ten blows from each.



MORE ABOUT NILGIS NIGHTDIVER

PLUMP, OBSEQUIOUS, and mealy-mouthed, he resembles a cross between man and bullfrog. He perpetually chews licorice root that has stained his teeth to a filthy brown and contributes to his unpleasant body odor. Nightdiver is ambitious, but not clever enough to much advance his position.

A born bureaucrat from a wealthy Vilmirian family, he enjoys filling out the acquisition log and dealing with the kind of paperwork most people find tedious.

He is at his post before the library opens at midmorning, and stays there until dusk or storm makes study too difficult. He reads, guards the entrance, and oversees the floor staff who guide users from book to book. Perched on his high stool, hunched over the papers that spill over the rim of the lectern, he looks over from his work to peer down condescendingly at those craving entry.

Outside the library, Nilgis' pleasure is gambling. Recently he has lost nearly 20,000 bronzes at the dice tables in "The Savage Dice Rolleth," and has been threatened with physical violence by Huric Ashenen, the owner, if he cannot soon cover his debts. It is unlikely that Ashenen would carry out such a threat for the sum involved, but he knows how to scare people. He must collect to stay in business. Nilgis is frantic.

In studying Nilgis, the Mereghn quickly learned this and promised him substantial payment if he helped them get the *Book of Brilliant Things*. Nilgis betrayed Lenathan's knowledge of the library's defenses, with the unstated additional hope that they would kill Lenathan, and that he would become Head Librarian.

NILGIS NIGHTDIVER, age 41, Assistant Librarian

Chaos 80, Balance 11, Law 47.

STR 08 CON 13 SIZ 15 INT 13 POW 11
DEX 12 APP 09 HP 14

Damage Bonus: none.

Weapon: Dagger 45%, damage 1D4+2

Skills: Bargain 64%, Conceal Object 36%, Craft (Bookbinding 20%), Dodge 30%, Fast Talk 54%, Fill Out Complicated Forms 88%, Gambling 37%, Insight 30%, Oratory 35%, Scent/Taste 45%, Search 40%, Young Kingdoms 30%.

THE MAIN COLLECTION

BEYOND THE SMALLER DOORS of the interior entrance lies the main collection. Shelving holds thousands of books and scrolls, most without external identification or title page. There is no card catalog, nor even a complete list of books—that sort of record-keeping is unknown even in Melniboné. The librarians commit to memory the position of each volume, its apparent author, its conventional title, and a summary of its contents.

In this task they are helped not a little by the chains that bind each tome to a reading desk. Changing a book's position is something rarely done, and occurs only rarely, after earnest discussion by the staff and at the express order of the Head Librarian. Physical position is an important memory aid.

Light reaches the reading desks through the translucent demon-skin roof, high above. Only by special approval of the Chancellor may the lamps lit, since fire is a chief enemy of books. For the great part, the library closes near sunset.

There is order of a sort, for the keepers of this collection have tried to chain all of the same sort of book to the shelves above the same desk. As the collection has mushroomed, however, these sometimes tenuous associations have come to exist mostly in the minds of successive Head Librarians. To an outsider, the volumes are a jumble; to those who know the secrets of the books, the library is a fountain of knowledge, arrayed and displayed according to the finest intellectual heritages of the world.

Every tome represents such labor and effort that every book is valuable. Of the unique volumes that the library holds, the ensorcelled and bejewelled may not be consulted easily, even by faculty or students. Such volumes are stored in a well-defended basement vault.

THE STAFF

Of the library staff, 1D6+3 can be found in the main collection, assisting, straightening, making records, or making copies, and 1D3 more pursue researches requested by the nobility or by the counselors to King Jiku. All seem to enjoy the work, since the prestige of the library is high, but Insight rolls reveal that Nilgis Nightdiver is not popular with them.

STALKIS OG JADMAR



The staff cannot be interviewed in the library building, as silence is required there. If a staff member is stopped outside, have the adventurer make a Luck roll. If the roll is made, the scribe is happy to talk. His name is Stalkis og Jadmar, a thin, eager young man. He fled from the oppressive regime of Vilmir, to this wonderful land where learning is encouraged, not

restricted. He speaks with admiration of the size of the collection, and of the erudition of the Head Librarian, Leanamayn Lenathan, who is currently taking leave for a few days. He has less good to say of the Assistant Librarian, who he obviously considers unfit for the post. Fast Talk rolls encourage Stalkis to add the gossip that although Nilgis Nightdiver is paid handsomely, it is known that he squanders his earnings at the gambling establishments found along Unlucky Buggers Way.

If offered a bribe of any kind, Stalkis becomes suspicious, and informs Chancellor Rethik of the inquisitive strangers.

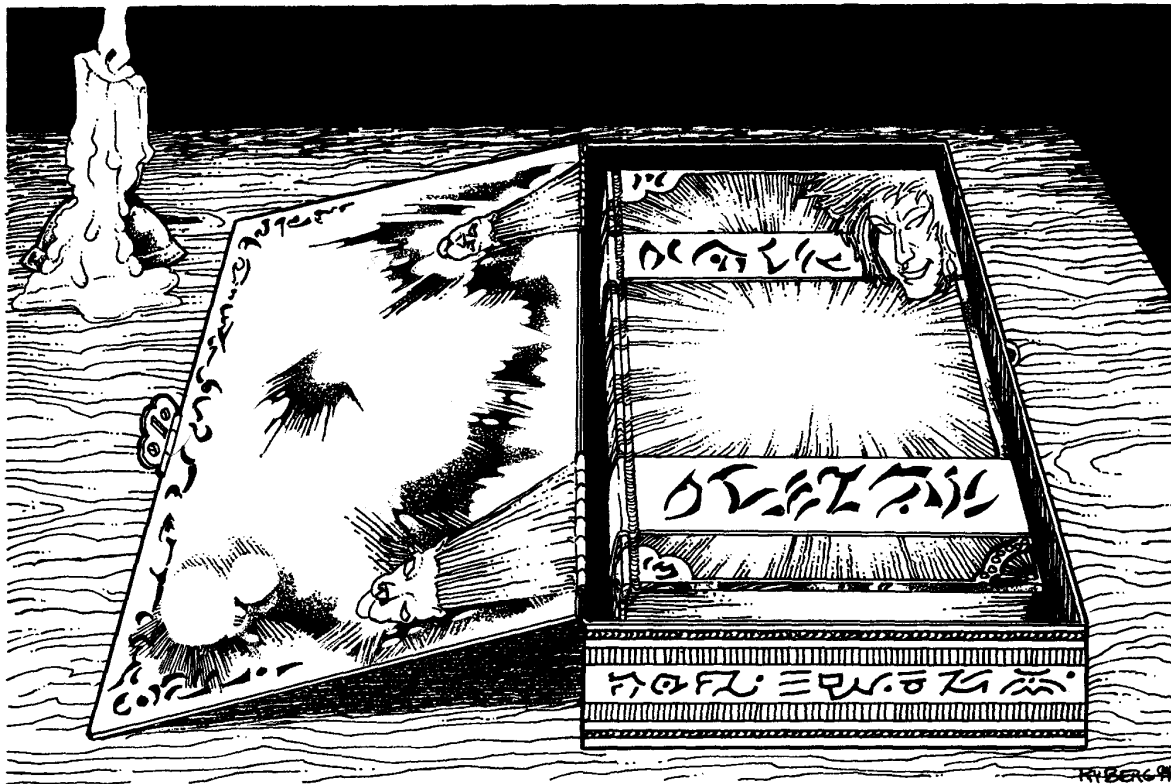
BENEATH THE LIBRARY

RYPTS UNDERNEATH the main collection house Lenathan's office, the book repair studio, the vault, and a private reading room.



IN THE STACKS

THE BOOK OF BRILLIANT THINGS



THE BOOK OF BRILLIANT THINGS

IT IS KEPT IN A hinged box made of strangely inscribed bronze. The book itself is about the length of a hand wide, two hands long, and one hand thick. The book is bound in boards and fine leather, into which has been hammered thick veneers of polished brass inscribed with runes and eyeless, leering faces: it radiates nothing to Witch Sight, but the box glows strongly under such magical inspection.

The book is not a grimoire, but a nightmare. The pages are filled with finely worked High Speech script. The writings describe the nightmares which plagued a Melnibonéan emperor, Elic the Second. By having such dreams inscribed, he stopped having them. (Unfortunately, when the dreams stopped, so did sleep itself, and Elic the Second died insane one month later.)

The nightmares were mostly of the end of the world, of all things devolved into entropy and the earth reduced to protoplasm. All mortal endeavour is made futile by such cosmic destruction, before which even the Bright Empire

cannot stand. Other dreams were of beautiful gods and other planes of existence, unreachable by the sane and rational mind. One such dream concerned the insistent whispering of a powerful demon called Stormbringer, who told the emperor where it could be found, in the plane of Ameroon, beyond the Shade Gate (for more, see Moorcock's *Elic of Melniboné*). Stormbringer, who knew that Elic was its destiny, was calling to the wrong emperor; Elic the Third is destined to wield that black hell-blade.

These nightmares terrified a powerful Melnibonéan emperor. Their effect on mere humans is devastating. Adventurers who read the book and receive D100 rolls of more than pow x1 are left gibbering wrecks, unable and unwilling to speak sensibly, but crushed by the knowledge that the world is ineffably doomed. Such madness is permanent.

Melnibonéan adventurers, being of sterner stuff, need D100 rolls of only pow

x3 or less when using the book; failure leads to the same effects upon sanity.

If the book is removed from the box, the nightmares leech out and infect the dreams of all who sleep within 100 leagues of its pages. The first night the dreams are experienced, sleepers must roll POW x10 to remain sane. Reduce the multiplier to x9 the second night, x8 the third night, and so on, until all in the vicinity are plunged into hopeless gloom and depression.

If the pages are burnt or destroyed, the nightmares fly screaming across the planes and return to their author, Elic the Second. His shrieks resound across whichever Hell it is that his soul currently resides. The world is made safe, and Darnizhaan has been foiled in his quest for the location of the black swords.

The hinged box nullifies the power of the nightmares. Any dream or story kept beneath its lid is made harmless. Ranyart Finn's stories, once put down in writing and placed within the box, will be trapped and cannot take on the life with which they currently afflict Raschil.

LENATHAN'S CHAMBERS

When working at the library, Leanamayn Lenathan is often in this quiet, dark office. It is adjacent to the book repair studio and affords easy access to the vault. Books and scrolls line her office; her desk is littered with papers and work in progress.

An accomplished researcher, she often undertakes projects for lecturers or the faculty of the university.

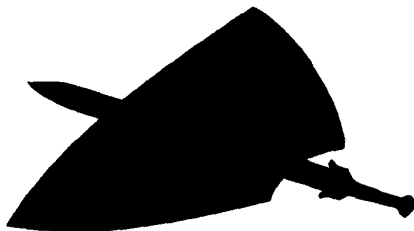
Her secret door to the vault is concealed behind a set of book shelves and requires successful Search rolls to find. The door connects with the short passage leading to the vault doors, bypassing the vault's reading room. The door gives Lenathan quick access to the collection, and allows her to take books out. The secret door is marked with a rune, matching a rune inscribed on the librarian's silver ring. The door can only be opened if the two runes are brought into contact. Failing that, it must be broken down. Its STR is 30, and only one person may attempt to force it at a time, although a battering ram might be fashioned from a book shelf.

Lenathan's statistics are found in the next section, "Lenathan's Homes."

BOOK REPAIR STUDIO

This large workshop repairs and maintains the library's holdings, and prepares new acquisitions. Damage chiefly occurs from dampness, sunlight, time, poor materials, and worms. At the rear of the workshop a short shelf of books await repair.

Three skilled bookbinders regularly work here. Their tools include such potential weapons as wooden mallets, awls for piercing leather, and razor-sharp craft knives, as well as leather strips for binding captives.



THE READING ROOM

THE VAULT HOLDS treasured and fragile books. It can be reached either through the reading room, the only way known to most, or through the Head Librarian's office, a secret way that opens directly into the vault passageway.

The reading room is a small, comfortable study, lit by bound salamanders in the ceiling. It is also the first defense in the vault's security system. Only the privileged enjoy the comforts of this room. Ordinarily, a staff member turns each page, to guard against tearing or mutilation. Occasionally, a reader's rank is high enough that a request for privacy cannot be denied, and he or she is left alone with some invaluable tome.

Rune magic prevents the removal of the book from this room. Inscribed on the spine of each text in the vault is a small Rune of Alarm (Search roll to spot and a High Speech roll to

understand); a second rune is inscribed on the floor just in front of the door. In this special configuration, if one rune crosses the other, the door slams shut and locks from the outside. A gong alerts the staff to the situation.

If more than a hit point of damage is done to the interior of the door, matters get more serious. The air in the reading room is then slowly dragged out by four average sylphs, one bound in each corner of the ceiling. The reading room is airtight: occupants begin to asphyxiate in 1D3 rounds. Apply the rulesbook spot rule for drowning/suffocation.

GETTING OUT

An occupant can escape from the reading room in one of four ways: either by replacing the book in the vault, by destroying the bound sylphs, by battering down the door, or by using the secret way to Lenathan's office.

- Replacing the book is easiest, as long as the vault doors have not been locked. The sylphs restore the air pumped out.
- Killing the sylphs requires magic or a magical weapon.
- The door is formidable, of iron-shod oak, hinged on the outside, and barred by a massive iron bolt. Its STR is 60, and it has 200 hit points. The door is narrow enough that only two people can press against it from the inside.
- The secret way to Lenathan's study bypasses the reading room. Removing a book through her room does not activate the asphyxiation cantrip in the reading room, although the guardian of the vault is not deactivated unless the vault door has been opened correctly.

THE VAULT

THE VAULT ITSELF IS closed off by two round, massive iron doors which fill the passageway, held closed by a guardian demon, the shedri, within. Each door has 500 hit points; for the demon, see further below.

The easy way into the vault is to use the password that mollifies the demon. Only Lenathan and Chancellor Rethik know the password, a complicated Melnibonéan rune that requires great skill to memorize and recite. Neither will reveal the password nor the knowledge of the secret entrance except under duress.

Beyond the doors is a long, narrow, shelf-lined room. The shelves reach from floor to ceiling and the air is heavy with the musty scent of ancient paper. Here are kept books deemed too valuable or too dangerous to be on general display. Some spines glitter in the dim light with the flash of rare gems, while others are of plain leather. The collection includes treatises stored in tubes of bone, thick sheafs of yellowed parchment bound only with string, and rotting tomes which seem ready to collapse under the weight of their own lore.

If the vault has not been opened in the correct way, the guardian bound within it is activated 1D4 rounds after the vault is breached. The guardian's binding instruction is to protect all the works held within the vault and to prevent them from being removed.

THE SHEDRI

The shedri is a greater demon, a whirlwind of mouths and eyes that thrash around bewilderingly. The mouths screech and gibber as they twist and contort maniacally; they extend on tendrils of flesh and sinew and then snap back into the hideous morass of the creature. The morass of eyes and mouths then begins to twist and spin violently; the mouths scream insults

and cry for blood. This shedri is average in all respects; refer to the statistics for the breed, nearby. In the close quarters of the vault, it makes a fierce opponent, and its attacks do not splatter blood or otherwise pose dangers to the books.

A shedri has eight mouths on eight necks; it attacks 1D8 times per round. Each mouth shoots out on tendrils of muscle up to three yards long. The mouths bite incidentally, gripping the face of the demon's prey, and sealing tight over the nose and lips. The victim can hold his or her breath, as per the drowning rules, starting at CON x6. Once this roll fails, the victim takes 1D6 damage per round. The sucking mouth can be torn off the face with a successful STR:STR roll on the Resistance Table. (Entrapped adventurers who run in opposite directions may combine their STR if they can get more than seven yards apart. If the Resistance roll succeeds, the shedri releases the one who makes the lowest Luck roll.)

Furthermore, the sucking mouths wrench and spin, in an effort to break the victim's neck. This causes an automatic 1D4 damage per round, and is not lessened by armor. The only way to avoid this damage is to lift oneself into the air by grasping the tendril above the mouth. This can be accomplished with a Resistance Roll each round of the adventurer's STR against his or her own SIZ. The only attacks such adventurers can make against the demon are Brawl attacks, with feet, and the occasional free hand.

Besides its Carapace ability, the shedri has a natural defense caused by its ever changing, ever whirling, ever extending, shrinking, growing appearance. Because of this disturbing form, attackers must subtract the demon's POW from his or her attack percentiles if not receiving a D100 roll of INT x3 or less.

At the gamemaster's option, the shedri returns to life on the turn following its death, this time equipped with only four necks and four mouths, but each visibly larger, and capable of swallowing an adventurer's entire head. But if this second shedri dies, it remains dead.

SHEDRI, greater demons, non-human, guardians

characteristics	rolls	averages
STR	6D8	27
CON	5D8	22-23
SIZ	5D8	22-23
INT	2D8	9
POW	4D8	18
DEX	3D8	13-14
MOV 1/2 DEX		av. HP 22-23

Av. Damage Bonus: +2D8

Abilities: *Suck Face*, at 70%, damage is asphyxiation, plus 1D4 per round from buffeting.

Carapace, 1D8 slimy sinew.

Need: be always underground.

Skills: Climb 60%, Dodge 20%, Hide 90%, Move Quietly 70%, Own Plane 15%, Scent/Taste 60%, Track 90%.

Magic Points to Summon: 107.



THE SHEDRI

RYBERG 94

GETTING INTO THE LIBRARY

THE SIMPLEST, though not the quickest way for the adventurers to enter the library is to present a letter from the Chancellor, as Nilgis suggests. Once inside, the adventurers can ask for the *Book of Brilliant Things*, and leisurely inspect the vault's position, layout, and likely defenses.

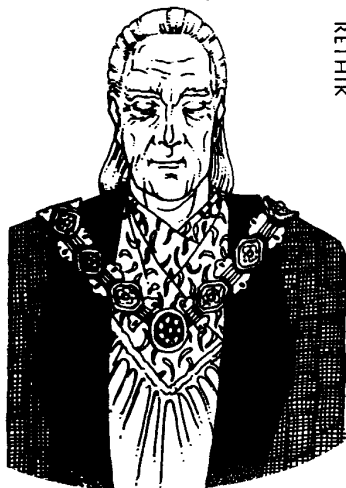
In the evening, they can return to steal the book. They might climb to the roof and cut through the membranous skylight, then drop down on climbing ropes. Alternately, they might send gnomes to tunnel under the building and into the basement, or use a demon to cut through or bash down the doors. (Either scheme might be countered by troops summoned by the guards' carrier pigeon).

Or they might approach the problem through Nilgis, as the Mereghn have done, or foil the attempt by the Mereghn at the library, and take the book from *them*.

THE CHANCELLOR

THE CHANCELLOR IS ONE Geddis Rethik. His is not a busy post, though it is a comfortable one. The adventurers can see him if they apply with an air of sincerity to his factotum, dress respectably, behave with decorum, and express a believable need.

Tall, stately, and dressed habitually in the austere robes of the Chancellor of the University Faculty, Rethik tolerates little nonsense. Though dedicated to learning, he has become hardened by battles with unruly students, with arrogant lecturers, and with court bureaucrats who feel that the university is too expensive a toy even for King Jiku.



In conversation Rethik is softly spoken but sometimes abrupt. He speaks his mind. His duty is to the university, and all other matters take second place.

He meets the adventurers in his cavernous study, sipping wine and leafing through an illustrated study of the sea creatures of Argimiliar's coast.

FOR ADMITTANCE TO THE LIBRARY

The adventurers must have a reason for consulting the library, and it must be believable to Chancellor Rethik. He also must trust that they will not harm the library.

When those conditions are satisfied, Rethik has a document written, and places his seal upon it. Shown to Nilgis Nightdiver, this grants the use of the library for the next month. The whole process takes up to a day.

To satisfy Rethik, the adventurers may need one or more letters of recommendation, preferably from scholarly sources well away from Cadsandria. Use the Scribe skill to forge impeccable documents, or the Bargain skill to bribe someone to write them, or the Fast Talk skill to learn who is the best forger in town.

If the adventurers secure a recommendation from the King, or from some counselor or minister close to him, then the Chancellor may well allow them to borrow the *Book of Brilliant Things* indefinitely. Except for pursuing Menekeyil, that solves the problem neatly and without fuss.

GEDDIS RETHIK, age 61, Chancellor of the University

Law 95, Balance 88, Chaos 78

STR 13 CON 14 SIZ 14 INT 17 POW 17
DEX 13 APP 11 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapon: none.

Skills: Bargain 71%, Evaluate 63%, Fast Talk 55%, Listen 44%, Melnibonéan 55%, Oratory 77%, Scribe 81%, Young Kingdoms 46%.

LENATHAN'S HOMES

THOUGH THIS SECTION IS written about Lenathan's country villa, it can also double for her town house if the action demands. Both houses are similar in layout. Individual furnishings differ, but not sufficiently to warrant space for separate description. Her town house is in a quiet district a few minutes' walk from the University. Lenathan's two servants travel with her; when she is in the country, her town house stands empty.

The villa is about two hours ride from Cadsandria's east gate. The rolling countryside, replete with wineries and vineyards, gives way to steep hills and a narrow valley through which the River Ysk steadily flows. Leanamayn Lenathan's villa is set among these hills, three miles from the river's south bank, and is reached by a narrow, winding path.

Villa or town house, it and its stables are isolated by trees and walls from the rest of the world. A low, single-story structure, the house is built around an interior court. The building is built in the flat, spare style popular with Cadsandrian intellectuals for a time. To the left side is a large walled garden.

The windows are small, high-set, and barred. Sheet glass is known only to Melnibonéans; in Cadsandria, translucent hide

THE OCCUPANTS

WHETHER THIS building represents Lenathan's country villa or home in town, there are two servants, Wolk and Clystia. If the Mereghn raid the house before the adventurers arrive, servants and mistress are dead and their bodies stacked in the cellar. All three have had their necks broken. Lenathan's corpse displays evidence of multiple small cuts and burns, and a Search roll notes an indentation on her index finger, suggesting that a ring has been removed. She has been tortured into revealing the secret of the library defenses. If the raid has not occurred, Clystia answers the door, Wolk is in the kitchen preparing baked salmon, and Lenathan is in her day room, on the left side of the house. If the adventurers arrive as the raid begins, they have a chance to foil its aims and earn the librarian's gratitude.

WHO'S GOT THE BOOK?

BY THIS STAGE either the adventurers or Menekeyil should have succeeded in acquiring *The Book of Brilliant Things*. Those who have it make their plans to depart; those who don't make their plans to acquire it.

The description on page 30, The House on Hospodar Street, concerns the hideout of Menekeyil and his allies. It is there that the book is being held, if that group has it.

If the adventurers have it, the Mereghn stage an all-out ambush at the tavern where the adventurers are staying. Such a scene is left to the gamemaster. Draw a map of the tavern in conjunction with the players, and ask for their strategies of defence. At this stage, no tactic is too low for Menekeyil, including kidnap of innocents. He stops short of arson, for that might threaten the book.

If Menekeyil succeeds in stealing the book from the adventurers, they may yet find him at Hospodar Street, and steal it back.

or heavy waxed papers block the wind and admit light. All the doors are of oak planks, or of iron where noted.

- If the adventurers come before the Mereghn arrive, they encounter two servants and Leanamayn Lenathan. The house's main doors are intact. There is no interior damage.
- If they come after the Mereghn have paid their visit, the house is deathly quiet. From outside, all seems in order, but within the walls are signs of rampage and pillage. Incidental blood and damage can be observed in the reception room. Both servants are dead. Lenathan is chained in the wine cellar along with their corpses.

ATRIUM AND CENTRAL COURT

Porcelain figures stand in the marble atrium, along with indoor plants in elegant pots and holders. Double doors lead left to a reception room, and another set leads right to a dining hall. A third set leads out to the interior court, where a roofed loggia surrounds a small pool and herb garden that are open to the sky. Doors from every room open into the central court.

No map is provided for the villa. If the adventurers move left from the atrium, start with the reception room and continue back to the bedrooms; if the adventurers search right, start with the dining hall and continue back to the servants' rooms.

LEANAMAYN LENATHAN,
age 45, Librarian,
Scholar, Researcher

Tall and thin, she is mostly abstracted from the world by her books and by her duties as Head Librarian, especially the all-important personal relationships with the university Chancellor and certain ministers to the King. She has so little to say to either of her servants that she often seems like a visitor to Clystia and Wolk.



LEANAMAYN

If alive, Lenathan wears a silver ring inscribed with a rune on her left hand. This opens the secret door in her study, at the library.

Chaos 62, Balance 84, Law 110

STR 13 CON 14 SIZ 08 INT 17 POW 15
DEX 12 APP 12 HP 11

Damage Bonus: none.

Weapons: none.

Skills: Art (painting) 44%, Bargain 50%, Common Tongue 120%, Evaluate 40%, Insight 58%, Melnibonéan 45%, Natural World 35%, Oratory 63%, Philosophical Allegiances 70%, Scribe 94%, Unknown Kingdoms 04%, Young Kingdoms 86%, Young Kingdoms History 93%.

WOLK, age 43, Cook, Gardener, Companion

Wolk is quiet, methodical, and moody. Lenathan allows him almost complete command of his domains. Though he answers the door, he may turn away unscheduled visitors. His great sword



WOLK

rests in a sheath attached to the door. A successful Insight roll shows that he responds readily to flattery. He and Clystia have been occasional lovers for a decade.

Chaos 48, Balance 67, Law 74

STR 14 CON 13
SIZ 12 INT 12
POW 11 DEX 12
APP 11 HP 13

Damage Bonus:
+1D4.

Weapons: Hunting Bow 75%, damage 1D6+1
Great Sword 85%, damage 2D8

Skills: Bargain 35%, Craft (Cooking) 79%, Craft (Nurture Plants) 65%, Evaluate 55%, Insight 68%, Move Quietly 75%, Natural World 66%, Repair/Devise 68%, Scent/Taste 65%, Search 44%.

CLYSTIA, age 29, Housekeeper, Companion

Clystia is the energy of the household, arranging flowers, sending gifts, dealing with tax collectors and vendors, acting as maid and mother to Lenathan, and so on. Her existence has been so placid and satisfying for so long that the possibility of danger is invisible to her. She will open the door to anyone.

Chaos 59, Balance 71, Law 63

STR 12 CON 13
SIZ 10 INT 13
POW 12 DEX 12
APP 12 HP 12

Damage Bonus:
none.

Weapon: Dagger
40%, damage 1D4+2

Skills: Art (Declaim Poetry) 65%, Craft (Bookbinding) 64%, Fast Talk 70%, Listen 60%, Move Quietly 65%, Oratory 80%, Own Language (Common) 110%, Ride 55%, Scribe 48%, Young Kingdoms 55%.



CLYSTIA

LEFT FROM THE ATRIUM

RECEPTION

The reception room is finely and tastefully furnished with furniture from all over the Young Kingdoms. Other decorations are clearly expensive and rare. The tapestries are made from the best Purple Towns silks. The carpets are of Jharkorian loom.

DAY-ROOM AND LIBRARY

Doors from the reception room open into the day-room. This is Lenathan's study, and contains a large, ornate desk. Chairs and couches await visitors and guests. The outside wall of the day-room has high, small barred windows covered with translucent hide; the courtside wall is broken by an iron door relieved by small floral cutouts, again sealing out drafts and weather by means of translucent cured hide.

A third door leads into Lenathan's bedroom. A fourth door leads out to the Walled Garden. For this garden, see at the end of the house description.

Hundreds of volumes cover a range of subjects, chiefly Young Kingdoms history. Some are valuable; Evaluate rolls note individual bindings that might fetch three to four thousand bronzes each from collectors.

THE BEDROOM

The far door from the day-room opens on Lenathan's sleeping quarters. From this long, cool room a second door leads to the interior court, and a third door leads to the guest room.

The furnishings are modest. Clothes are tossed across the few pieces of furniture. A long brass and tile bathtub is the single luxurious item in this room.

At the foot of the bed, a cedar chest contains linens and a smaller box in which 276 silver coins rest.

Brushes, combs, and other grooming tools rest on the dressing table. Hanging from a cord draped over the fine brass mirror is a hair slide, Melnibonéan in design, a good copy made in the Young Kingdoms. It is of antique silver and mother-of-pearl, and might fetch three or four hundred bronzes if sold as a Melnibonéan artifact.

THE GUEST ROOM

This room is empty of all but a table, a bed and mattress, some shelves, a cupboard for clothes, a copper bathtub, and two chairs. It is undisturbed. From it, doors lead only to the interior court and to Lenathan's room.

RIGHT FROM THE ATRIUM

THE DINING HALL

This room is much larger than its eight-place table and twin sideboards warrant. Doors lead to the atrium, to the kitchen, and to the interior court.

Some excellent local china and a fine silver service stand proudly on one sideboard. Four ancient shields, obviously veterans of many battles and emblazoned with antique designs, hang in a row over one sideboard. A Young Kingdoms roll identifies them as of Lormyrian design, dating from time of the overthrow of the Bright Empire.

KITCHEN, SCULLERY, PANTRY

The scullery is clean, stocked with cooking tools and a large, deep fireplace beside which two iron ovens have been inset.

In the pantry are bins of flour, nuts, and lentils, strings of onions and of garlic, crocks and jars of preserves, and bundles of drying herbs. Two cured hams hang from the ceiling, as do long strips of smoked salmon. Dusty flasks of wine are stacked untidily beside a barrel of pickled herring.

The scullery is clean, without dirty dishes or dirty clothes. It has its own small fireplace for heating water.

A STAIRWAY DOWN

This leads to The Cellar, described a paragraph below.

SERVANTS' ROOMS

Beyond the stairs, five small chambers open individually onto the interior court, and do not connect. Two are furnished. They contain the personal possessions of a man and a woman, respectively. Three are empty cells, barren of all but bedsteads. Nothing here is of interest.

THE CELLAR

Circular stairs from the pantry lead to a wine cellar below, about six yards square. A stout hoist simplifies the movement of wine casks up and down through the open center of the stairs. Ropes presently dangle from the pulley.

If the Mereghn have raided the house, Lenathan is chained here, nearly dead, and the corpses of her servants have been flung nearby.

WALLED GARDEN

A FOUR-YARD HIGH wall of stuccoed stone encloses the garden, a rectangle about forty yards wide and sixty yards long. An iron service gate, stoutly bolted from within, opens to the road. From the villa, a door from the day-room opens into this quiet, protected place.

In the garden, a sheltering roof juts out from the southern wall. Pillars support this roofed section. Benches run along this sheltered area at regular intervals.

The garden is lovely to look at. Flowers of all kinds mingle with wild bushes and flowering trees. In the center a small ornamental fountain spouts multicolored streams of water during the summer months. The fountain depicts Straasha in the Purple Towns style, riding a train of dolphins through whitecaps of bronze and silver. The thick foliage around the fountain provides excellent cover for anyone wishing not to be seen by someone in the house.

THE SAVAGE DICE ROLLETH!

THE SAVAGE DICE ROLLETH' is a sophisticated gambling establishment run by Huric Ashenen, a professional gambler and card sharp who has made and lost fortunes several times over. Ashenen's establishment has a reputation for fair tables and a

(relatively) honest owner. Ashenen does not tolerate cheats, bad losers, or professional gamblers (he knows them too well). In return he only fixes a modest number of games and makes sure that the punters win enough to want to return and lose more the next day.

ROLLING THE BONES

THE SAVAGE DICE ROLLETH is on Unlucky Buggers Way, winding between Cadsandria's main bazaar and the merchants' quarter. Several dozen gambling houses line the street. "The Savage Dice" is one of the most respected.

In coming here, the adventurers could be following Nilgis, or they might be tailing the Mereghn. If their timing is right, they may witness an assassination. After any raid on Lenathan's house, Nilgis will be here to collect another 10,000 bronzes from the Mereghn.

Unlucky Buggers Way is crowded, as though the whole of Cadsandria's rich and beautiful have come out to play. Wealthy merchants and their concubines rub shoulders with nobility and their entourages. Tourists bicker with drunken students. Players and bemused onlookers crowd every room. Winners shout triumphantly, and losers stumble into the bleak night, and all are numbed by the copious drinks.

Those who enter "The Savage Dice" must deposit their weapons with a huge bodyguard, receiving chits in exchange for the weapons. If the adventurers do not check their weapons, they are asked to leave. If they refuse, three guards appear and politely repeat the request.

This trio is Pikaraydian. They have wild manes of hair, and thickly-muscled arms blue with faded tattoos. They are not amused by jokes about their accents. There are few such jokes, because all three are the sizes of small mountains. Adept at fighting in narrow spaces and at close quarters, they gleefully deal with troublemakers.



SAPPER

SAPPER

Sullen and bad-tempered, he is a mute, and people think that he's ignorant. He isn't, and many have regretted the assumption.

Chaos 88, Balance 58, Law 41

STR 17 CON 12 SIZ 16 INT 10 POW 13
DEX 12 APP 09 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Weapons: Thieves' Bludgeon 89%, damage 1D8+1D6
Brawl 131%, damage 2D3+1D6
Wrestle 85%, damage special

Shield, Armor: none

Skills: Dodge 75%, Insight 59%, Listen 65%, Move Quietly 70%, Search 45%.



HAMMER

HAMMER

Hammer is by far the most civilized of the trio and is pleasant and endearing to animals, small children, and adventurers alike, unless they cause trouble.

Chaos 37, Balance 89, Law 51

STR 16 CON 15
SIZ 17 INT 13
POW 12 DEX 13
APP 11 HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Weapons: Cestus/Brawl 130%, damage 1D3+2+2D3+1D6

Brawl 105%, damage 2D3+1D6

Wrestle 80%, damage special

Shield, Armor: none

Skills: Bargain 55%, Dodge 80%, Insight 50%, Listen 45%, Move Quietly 60%, Search 65%.

BEASTIE

Beastie is a massive hirsute block of a man. His deep eyes border on the malicious. He never causes trouble but can always deal with it. Some say he eats rocks and drinks rat poison; others know his tastes are far less refined.

Chaos 36, Balance 44, Law 79

STR 17 CON 16
SIZ 18 INT 08
POW 10 DEX 11
APP 09 HP 17

Damage Bonus: +1D6

Weapons: Wrestle

160%, damage special

Brawl 110%, damage 2D3+1D6

Shield, Armor: none

Skills: Dodge 90%, Insight 20%, Listen 35%, Move Quietly 60%, Search 35%.



BEASTIE

The bouncers brawl and wrestle unwelcome customers out of the gambling hall and into the street, where they attempt to knock them unconscious and leave them for the city watch. But no hard feelings: if the adventurers wake up in time, they can check in their weapons and enter the gambling house. If the adventurers draw weapons, the fight is a more serious matter, and attracts the attention of the authorities.

Within "The Savage Dice," there are fifteen gaming tables set in a large room. Dim but golden light comes from a magnificent gilded chandelier. Servants squeeze between the idle rich, pouring Cadsandria's finest vintages, while musicians play discreetly from behind a screen.

The Cadsandrian elite flirts with chance in games like Nine Fingered Whist, Vilmirian Do-or-Die, and other popular card and dice games.

Nilgis Nightdiver enters and pushes through the crowd to a dice table dedicated to a game called "Chance Would Be a

Finé Thing." This game is a complex affair, involving thirty-four dice, a pack of Pan Tangian tarot cards, and the birth signs of the competitors.

Nilgis plops into a seat beside a stately woman whose hair is elaborately piled into the shape of a pagoda. He places fifty bronzes on the next throw and wins double when the rolled dice total more than the sum on the tarot card he draws from the pack plus the numerical value attached to his birth sign. Nightdiver cackles gleefully, and bets again.

THE MEREHGN ASSASSIN

Alas for Nilgis, the stately woman with the pagoda-piled hair is a Mereghn in disguise. The statistics for this assassin are similar to those given earlier for Journeyman Assassin #1, but with weapons appropriate to this location.

The assassin's throwing needles keep his wig in place; each carries blade venom of POT 18. This venom takes effect in 1D3 rounds of entering the target's bloodstream. The assassin has four needles; each has a maximum effective range of six yards.

THE ASSASSIN WITH THE PAGODA-PILED HAIR

Chaos 78, Balance 15, Law 39

STR 13 CON 15 SIZ 12 INT 14 POW 11
DEX 18 APP 10 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4.

Weapons: Brawl 120%, damage 2D3+1D4
Thrown Needle-Dart 75%, damage 1D2-1, POT 18 blade venom on tips.

Hittless Dirk (in leg sheath) 74%, damage 1D4+2+1D4
Strangle Cord 68%, damage strangulation

Shield, Armor: none.

Skills: Bargain 55%, Climb 73%, Conceal Object 56%, Craft (Sleight-of-Hand) 70%, Disguise 125%, Escape Techniques 30%, Fast Talk 66%, Hide 58%, Insight 39%, Jump 48%, Listen 73%, Move Quietly 104%, Physik 44%, Pick Lock 69%, Potions 29%, Search 79%, Throw 132%, Track 66%, Trap 74%.

Since Nilgis conveniently sat near to him, the assassin needs only to remove a needle from his/her ludicrous wig and slide the hand-long shaft beneath the table.

By leaning forward, the assassin can scratch the pin across Nilgis's thigh, sufficient to break the skin and admit the poison into his bloodstream. This may happen when the adventurers are not looking: if they are paying close attention to Nilgis and watching everyone seated around the dice table, they may, on a successful Search roll, notice the way that the woman sitting next to Nilgis is reaching across toward his leg. Alas for the assistant librarian, only an adventurer with DEX greater than the assassin's DEX 18 is fast enough to prevent what happens next.

Nilgis flinches and yelps in pain. He complains that an insect bit him. A minute later he pitches face first onto the table, sending dice, cards, and gamblers scattering. His body convulses wildly, then Nilgis breathes his last, tortured breath. His face has turned purple and his eyes bulge in their sockets: a successful Physik or Potions roll identifies the presence of poison, but whether from an assassin or a poisonous spider or snake cannot be told.

In the commotion, a Search roll spots the assassin slipping through the gathering crowd. If pursued, the assassin makes a run for it, scrambling over gaming tables, shoving past the gamblers and heading for the door, altogether unlike a middle-aged woman.

The large number of people and furniture in the gambling hall make for a baffling obstacle course. The chandelier hangs

down tantalizingly; swinging across on this provides a speedy way of getting from one side of the hall to the other. The assassin doesn't make use of this, but one swashbuckling adventurer might, and on a successful Luck and Dexterity roll can swing across the hall and slam into the assassin's back before he reaches the exit.

Transport awaits outside, a lacquered black carriage drawn by four grey horses. Another Mereghn is at the reins. If the assassin does not emerge from "The Savage Dice" within a few moments of the uproar, the carriage rattles off down Unlucky Buggers Way without him.

Quick-witted adventurers may spot the carriage as it trundles toward the mercantile quarter. It is easy to follow, since it must go at a sedate speed. If the adventurers follow at a discreet distance, taking care not to be seen by the vigilant Mereghn, they are rewarded by being shown to Menekeyil's hideout.

If the assassin is captured, he confesses his crime for all to hear, and surrenders to the city watch, thus throwing himself at Argimilite jurisdiction, rather than the adventurers'. He is imprisoned, pending trial, but in a few days he vanishes from his cell. If the adventurers make impassioned Oratory to the watch commander, they are granted one interview with the murderer. For such a scene, see the information on The Captive, given previously.

HOUSE ON HOSPODAR STREET

THE MERCHANT VENTURERS' GUILD, the organization which regulates trade in the city, rents out this three-story house. Such properties are common in this area, and Hospodar Street is full of them; tall, comfortable granite houses that come complete with servants to provide temporary homes for itinerant merchant-traders.

The carriage turns into an alley between two houses and draws to a halt in a courtyard. The Mereghn crosses to the kitchen entrance, signaling to those within with a special knock. The door opens, and he slips inside.

GETTING IN

The adventurers could gain entrance similarly, if Menekeyil and the other assassins expect Nilgis' assassin to return shortly. This manner means tackling the Mereghn agent who answers the door, and it may alert Menekeyil to the adventurers' presence: if this occurs, he tries to escape via the front, taking the book with him and heading for the harbor where he will lie low until just before his ship departs in the morning. Menekeyil is on foot, and is cunning in the maze of small lanes.

Alternatively the adventurers could try to break in at any point of the building, or stake out the place and ambush the Mereghn when they leave.

There is no rear to the house, no rear doors and no rear windows. It and the house behind share a common wall.

GROUND FLOOR

The courtyard door leads into the kitchen. Servant quarters are nearby. There are only two servants, Altae and Jem, women of late middle age who attend to the cooking and cleaning. They are paid to be discreet and efficient. They are discreet: no word of what happens in such a house ever escapes their lips. The other two servants' rooms are empty.

If the adventurers kill the Mereghn at the door, the women do nothing except make superstitious signs of protection and then continue their chores.

SECOND FLOOR

The stairs lead up to a door that separates the servants' area from that of the renters. The door is unlocked. Beyond is a narrow, unfurnished passage broken only by a set of iron circular stairs. These steps lead up to the three bedrooms on the third floor.

The dining room contains a sideboard, a dining table, and six chairs. A woodcut of Lord Elgis the Gentle, Knight of Harmony and Lawful Deity of Peace and Civilization, has been turned to the wall. On its back something bulky with squiggly tentacles has been drawn in charcoal. A wide door is open to the living room.

Menekeyil and the remaining Mereghn (there were eight originally, less those killed so far) are talking in the living room. Successful Move Quietly and Listen rolls allow adventurers to sneak up and hear what is being said through the intervening door.

This gist of the discussion is that the group is to set sail in the morning for the Northern Continent aboard a ship named the *Free and Easy Tide*. The man called Menekeyil assures the others that he has the Book in a safe place, and that their mission is concluding successfully.

Following the conference, the group relax over wine and pipes crammed with foul-smelling weeds. After a time, Menekeyil and one Mereghn go to their bedrooms upstairs to fetch gear and belongings. Menekeyil also frees *Brilliant Things* from its trap and brings it downstairs.

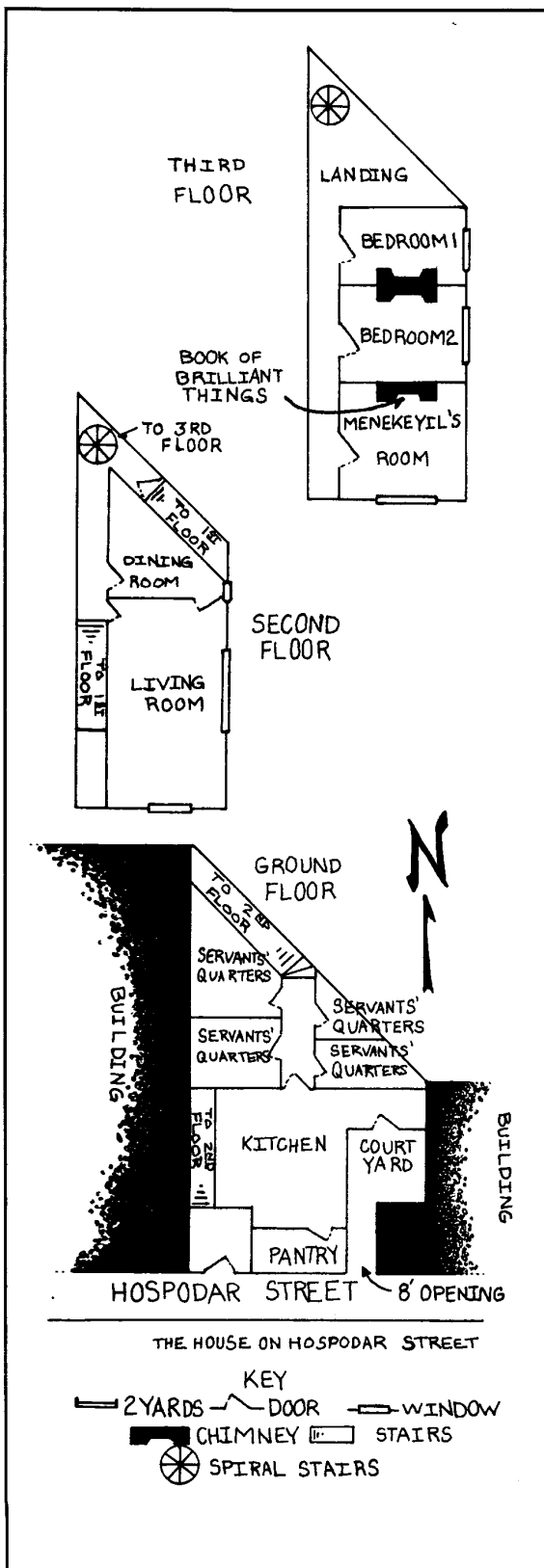
If confronted, or if they discover the adventurers in the house, the defenders fight with intensity. Allowing the assassins to cover him, Menekeyil attempts to retrieve the book from its hiding place in the fireplace and escape through the front bedroom window. Perhaps he will use the falian oil (see further below) as a fiery diversion. The Mereghn first fight to protect their mission, then to escape, and only finally to kill adventurers.

Should Menekeyil escape, he makes for the docks and hides until the *Free and Easy Tide* is nearly ready to sail. If the adventurers overheard the conversation in the living room, they can probably prevent him from leaving Cadsandria with the book.

THIRD FLOOR SLEEPING QUARTERS

The uppermost floor of the house is for sleeping. There are three large bedrooms. Menekeyil has one room, and the Mereghn split the other two.

The spartan rooms are furnished with three bedsteads each and a simple wooden trunk bolted to the floor. Renters must purchase their own mattresses.



The trunks contain few possessions. These Mereghn find it simpler to steal what they need. Each trunk contains a small canvas purse, yielding 4,000 bronzes between them.

A successful Search roll finds that one trunk holds 1D3 small vials of a thick, noxious liquid. It is a blade venom of POT 1D10+10. Each vial holds sufficient poison to anoint one sword, or two daggers, or five arrow-heads. This is the same poison that the Mereghn have already used against the adventurers, and Nilgus.

THE FRONT BEDROOM

THE BEDROOM NEAREST the street has a large window that overlooks the street. An Idea roll estimates it is possible for someone to drop down from the window to the porch beneath. Menekeyil uses this route to flee the house if circumstances require it.

Papers are scattered across the table, weighted down by a dirty wine glass and a blunt paper knife, including maps of Cadsandria and its environs, with the positions of the library and Lenathan's villa marked in ink.

If the raid against Lenathan was accomplished successfully, the papers also include handwritten notes for memorizing the rune needed to gain entrance to the library vault. The rune is a pictogram in High Speech; it represents not just a word, but also a state of mind, a certain phrasing, and specific hand gestures. Learning it is a feat requiring intense study and concentration. Adventurers who try to understand the rune see only a complicated shape that seems to exist in several separate dimensions, occasionally shifting from one to another as though the rune itself was a living thing.

THE FALIAN OIL

If he has the *Book of Brilliant Things*, Menekeyil has hidden it in the chimney breast. To find it, the adventurers must specify that they are checking inside the chimney. The box is hanging inside the chimney, at head height, suspended by six thin wires anchored into the stonework twelve inches or so further up.

Two of these are trip-wires attached to a flask of falian oil (in a blackened bottle hidden in a crevasse between the stones). Falian oil is a volatile substance distilled from the sap of the fal tree, common in the Forest of Troos, in areas of the Dead Hills, and on Sorcerers' Isle. Subjected to force—dropped, thrown, burned, etc.—the distilled sap explodes with a blast causing 4D6 damage to anyone within 1 yard of it, 3D6 to anyone within 1-2 yards, 2D6 within 2-3 yards, and 1D6 to anyone within 3-4 yards. Since the book is protected by a bronze case, Menekeyil judges it safe from such an explosion, though the case may be seared.

A clue to this trap exists. Unlike the other fireplaces, in this one no fire is laid, nor is charcoal or ash present—the fireplace is swept clean and the andirons shoved aside. Menekeyil has tried to eliminate every chance of a fire being started here. With a successful Search roll, faint outlines of the soles of his boots show where he stood in the fireplace to hide the book and set the trap.

To move the book, disarm the trap. With a successful Search roll, the falian oil can be seen if the adventurer climbs into the fireplace with a light and stands up. Only one person at a time can attempt this. He or she can hold the oil and simply snip it free.

If not finding the oil, a successful Traps roll is required to figure out which two wires cause the oil to fall; the adventurer disarming the trap must cut these two wires first, using a very sharp blade and a great deal of care. Menekeyil can do this in six combat rounds.

Alternately, the adventurers can set off the trap from a distance and hope that the book will survive, or use magic to prevent flames or to prevent the oil from catching fire.

If the falian oil explodes, a ball of flame rolls out from the fireplace and engulfs the room. Within three combat rounds choking black smoke begins to suffocate survivors. At the beginning of the fifth combat round, the whole room is ablaze, and in five combat rounds more, the whole third story is burning. The entire block of buildings along Hospodar Street is at risk from the fire.

MENEKEYIL

IDEAL MATERIAL FOR Darnizhaan, Menekeyil is morally and spiritually bankrupt. His soul has been eroded on too many battlefields for him to care about any living thing. Menekeyil prefers to serve others who share his amoral aims of self-preservation and power for its own sake.

In combat, Menekeyil casts Hell's Armor upon himself first, and then adds Hell's Razor when he can. He prefers to cast both. He is expert with cutlass and dagger.

THE RIVALS MEET

Menekeyil has no interest in talking with the adventurers. They stand in his way, and must be crushed. However, they may wish to talk to him. In the event of a stand-off, or with persuasive argument and Fast Talk rolls, he stays his hand and listens to what they have to say. If the Mereghn can maneuver for a surprise attack during such a parley, so much the better.

Menekeyil brooks no compromise. The book must be his alone. Mawkish pleas concerning Finn's fate do not move him. Instead, he invites the adventurers to join him, and tells them boastfully of the power of the Dead God Darnizhaan, who grants immortality to the faithful.

Herein exists a possibility to sow the seeds of doubt in Menekeyil's mind. The hopeless case of cursed and drunken Ranyart Finn is an example of exactly how well the Lords of the Other Worlds reward their followers. What guarantee does Menekeyil hold? What has Darnizhaan given him thus far? Critical success in Oratory rolls here, or impassioned roleplaying from the players, convince the hardened mercenary. He does not surrender, but is willing to be bought out. He accepts 15,000 bronzes if he does not have the book, and 30,000 if he does. Bargain rolls reduce the amounts, but in any event, a peaceful solution is now possible.



MENEKEYIL

MENEKEYIL, age 37, Minion of Darnizhaan

Tall and gaunt, the mercenary's thin face that is better suited to that of a starving poet than an experienced and ruthless soldier. His hair is long and dark, secured at the nape of his neck by an ornate silver comb of unfamiliar design. He is thin, but his muscles are hard and trim. Menekeyil wears the robes and silks of a merchant, but thrown over them is the armored longcoat of an Ilmioran scout, a sleeveless garment that allows freedom to the sword arms while protecting the legs, body, and neck.

Chaos 97, Balance 56, Law 22

STR 16 CON 17 SIZ 14 INT 15 POW 19
DEX 17 APP 10 HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1D4

Weapons: Cutlass 160%, damage 1D6+2+1D4
Parrying Dagger 135%, damage 1D4+2+1D4
Throwing Dagger 86%, damage 1D4+1D2, base range 10 y
Brawl 83%, damage 1D3+1D4
Wrestle 69%, damage special

Armor: 1D6 (no helm), Ilmioran armored longcoat and military leathers.

Spells: Hell's Armor (1-4) Hell's Razor (1-4), Witch Sight (3).

Skills: Climb 51%, Common Tongue 99%, Conceal Object 44%, Disguise 31%, Dodge 73%, Hide 66%, High Speech 15%, Insight 63%, Jump 49%, Listen 76%, Million Spheres 01%, Physik 35%, Repair/Devise 68%, Search 82%, Swim 31%, Throw 60%, Track 56%, Trap 48%, Young Kingdoms 61%.

FOUR MORE MEREGHN

	#1	#2	#3	#4
STR	16	13	14	12
CON	15	14	11	12
SIZ	11	13	14	12
INT	16	10	11	16
POW	15	13	13	12
DEX	14	13	13	13
HP	13	14	13	12
DB	+1D4	+1D4	+1D4	none

Weapons: Brawl 120%, damage 2D3+db
Broadsword 110%, damage 1D8+1+db
Hilted Dagger 80%, damage 1D4+2+db
Thrown Needle-Dart 75%, damage 1D2-1, POT 18 blade venom on tips.
Hitless Dirk (in leg sheath) 74%, damage 1D4+2+db
Strangle Cord 68%, damage strangulation
Desert Bow 60%, damage 1D*+2+1/2 db
no shields

Armor: 1D6 (no helms) Leather & Rings.

Spells, Summonings: none.

Skills: Bargain 55%, Climb 73%, Conceal Object 56%, Craft (Sleight-of-Hand) 70%, Disguise 125%, Escape Techniques 30%, Fast Talk 66%, Hide 58%, Insight 39%, Jump 48%, Listen 73%, Move Quietly 104%, Physik 44%, Pick Lock 69%, Potions 29%, Search 79%, Throw 132%, Track 66%, Trap 74%.

and destroying the adventurers. Menekeyil thus becomes an arch enemy and his crusade could form the center for many further scenarios.

- **Menekeyil defeats the adventurers and goes on to leave Cadsandria aboard the *Free and Easy Tide***, returning to the Weeping Waste and presenting the book to Darnizhaan. If the adventurers wish to give chase; the gamemaster must create the materials for such a chase.

REWARDS IN CADSANDRIA

Some Cadsandrians may have cause to reward the adventurers before they depart. If they have rescued Lenathan, she and Chancellor Rethik thank them for their aid. If the adventurers seem rough and of low class, each is bluntly handed five silvers and given a meal in the scullery.

If they seem of higher class and intelligent, each adventurer is offered a semester or two of tuition-free instruction in some seemingly art or science.

If the adventurers seem of high rank, the Chancellor thanks them profusely and offers his personal service and that of the university whenever they have need. This very broad promise is one that he hopes will never need satisfaction, but one he will stand by. Such a promise would oblige succeeding chancellors, but not to the same degree.

RETURN TO RASCHIL

IF THE ADVENTURERS RECOVER the book, they return to Raschil. The stories haunting the city have worsened, and fear grips the town. Lynch mobs roam the streets, hunting for Ranyart Finn. His humble shack has been gutted by fire, and people spit at the mention of his name.

Have each adventurer make a Luck roll; for each roll that fails, one person has been killed by the marauding stories during their absence. Perhaps Ashlyn's hounds have killed a young woman, or the Gátha has eaten an old man, or the Sad Hill ambush has crushed a street-vendor. The love-lorn charcoal burner takes no such victims, but everyone is sick of his endless carping about the beauty of the miller's daughter.

If the adventurers make themselves known, a friend of Finn sidles up to them, and whispers that the story-teller is hiding out at the "Three Blades Sharpened." The innkeep there nods to the adventurers, and bids them to be seated. After closing time, he ushers them down to the beer cellar.

Finn sits there alone, pickling his senses with alcohol. A single lamp illuminates the cellar. He greets the adventurers with desperate hope shining in his eyes. When they finish the tale of their adventure, a young voice laughs with glee, and Maluk's Avatar steps out of the shadows between the barrels, although no mortal Search roll espied her there.

This incarnation of the avatar is a slim young girl, perhaps twelve years old. Her face is full of malicious knowing, terrible to see in one so young. She congratulates the adventurers on their success.

"Did you bring back my ring?" she asks. If they did, she takes it and replaces it on her finger. If they keep the ring and lie about it, the One-Eyed Girl says nothing, but eventually Maluk should take vengeance for the theft and for the lie.

The avatar cannot ask for the book, it must be offered to her. If this is done, she snatches it with glee, and tears out all of the pages. She gives Finn the cover, and the box. "Write down all of your stories," she tells him, "and bind the parchment

ENDGAME

THE BOOK OF BRILLIANT THINGS might conclude in several ways, depending on whether the adventurers succeed or fail. Presented here are three possible outcomes.

- **The adventurers vanquish Menekeyil and the Meregghn**, retrieve the book, and make their way back to Raschil to help Ranyart Finn.
- **The adventurers defeat, but do not kill, Menekeyil**. The mercenary gathers new allies, and devotes his life to finding

between these covers. Keep it in the box, and never lose it, or the stories will return to haunt you."

She takes the original pages, and holds them up to the lamp's flame. "Now Darnizhaan shall never learn where lie the black swords," she says. "Our own pretty pets shall wield them, and they shall slay him, The Dead God of the Wastes, The Dead God of Nothing." The paper burns quickly, and acrid smoke fills the cellar, obscuring all and making Finn and the adventurers splutter and cough. When the smoke clears, the avatar is gone.

A FINAL REWARD

ON ONE OF THE BARRELS, a bottle of wine and goblets for each adventurer (and one for Ranyart Finn, as well) has appeared. Ranyart swears it was not there before. The wine confers on each drinker 1D4 points of INT, enough of the exquisite brew exists for each member of the party to take one drink each.

Almost at once they feel their minds freshened with the energy of the Cosmic Struggle that they perceive surging around them; this is Maluk's parting gift. Add to each drinker's Chaos box 1D8 points per point of INT bestowed by Maluk's brew.

As with all gifts of Chaos, the wine takes its toll. Whenever an adventurer succeeds an Idea roll by virtue of the augmented INT, he or she suffers a sharp pain behind the left eyeball, which soon swells to a throbbing headache. Reduce all skills by ten percentiles for a period of 1D8 hours.

RANYART FINN FREED

Finn must write down the five stories that presently roam the streets, bind them into the *Book of Brilliant Things*, and keep the book in the box. The stories return to the province of pure fiction, and bother Raschil no more. The populace rejoice, and their anger diminishes. Several days later, Finn asks the adventurers to give him armed escort to the marketplace. There he makes a public declaration of the whole affair, save for those parts concerning his own involvement with Chaos. His brilliant oratory convinces all of his innocence, and he and the adventurers are feted as heroes. That night, Finn makes a triumphant return to the "Three Blades," and entralls a packed house with the Hanging of King Argnion, an especially grisly tale.

Alas for Ranyart Finn. Next morning, witnesses report that a spectral gibbet appeared last night in the market square, with a crowned corpse swinging from it. The fear that reigned in Raschil threatens to return. Finn quickly writes down the tale of King Argnion and puts it in the *Book*. The hanging specter does not return.

Thus is Finn cursed: he is a storyteller no more. Every tale he weaves seems doomed to come to life. His livelihood is gone, and his way of life. He is a broken man. He embarks on a terrible binge, quite determined to drink himself to death.

Once again, the adventurers can save Finn. Although the tale of the Hanged King came to life, his account of their recovery of the *Book of Brilliant Things* did not. He cannot spin a tale, but he can give an entertaining account of the truth. If convinced, he practices by relating an amusing anecdote of a fight he saw yesterday between two men too drunk to stand. The tale told, no brawling ghosts stagger the streets that night. Finn is given new hope, and he is soon well-loved for his skill in making heroic the deeds of ordinary folk.

SHOULD THE ADVENTURERS FAIL...

THE STORIES BECOME WORSE, until each has taken multiple victims. The innkeep can no longer keep Finn from the mob in all conscience, and the story-teller is given up to them, and hung in the market square. The hauntings stop. Thereafter all curse Finn as a sorcerer, and spit on the ground when his name is mentioned.

Nor has the adventurers' failure been forgotten or overlooked by Maluk. He exacts his revenge. One morning, after waking from a particularly restless sleep, each adventurer finds that he or she is blind in the left eye. All the adventurers are unable to talk: their tongues are frozen in their mouths.

Reduce adventurer DEXs by 1D8 points and allow no rolls for verbal Arts, Bargain, Disguise, Fast Talk, Oratory, spoken Other Language, and spoken Own Language skills. The affliction lasts for exactly 24 hours, at the end of which sight and speech are fully restored. The Stigmata of Maluk recurs 1D8 days later, and then 1D8 days later than that, etc., individually or to the group, as the gamemaster wishes. When the gamemaster finds it appropriate, then Maluk lifts his curse, and the adventurers suffer no more ill effects for their failure. Punishing the theft of the ring can occur at a later time.

END NOTES

The Young Kingdoms can follow a path undetermined by the likes of Menekeyil and Darnizhaan, but by a greater, more malevolent force that has yet to realize its destiny.

Plenty in this adventure can be extended into further scenarios. Ranyart Finn makes a useful and colorful friend and companion when the adventurers are in Raschil. If Leanamayn Lenathan is indebted to them, she may help them in the future; on the other hand, if she knows that they stole a valuable book from the library, she will not soon forgive them.

The question of the ring may remain to be resolved, as do acts of vengeance by other worshipers of Darnizhaan.

If Menekeyil successfully retained the *Book of Brilliant Things*, then the adventurers may find themselves engaged in a quest to stop him from locating the Black Swords, Stormbringer and Mournblade, which he is pledged to destroy on behalf of the Dead Gods. How gamemasters choose to run such an interpretation of the Elric Saga is beyond the scope of this adventure. ■





FOUR SEASONS

WHEREIN AN AFFAIR OF THE HEART PROVOKES A QUEST
ACROSS HALF A CONTINENT, AND PERHAPS LEAVES THE
ADVENTURERES LITTLE WISER AT ITS END.

FOUR SEASONS has as much to do with passion and longing as with sharp swords and heavy armor. It is a tale of romance, despair, treason, and lost dreams: a monk falls from purity, a priest falls from grace, two men strive to win a love that never can be theirs, and a woman tries to free herself from all the entanglements of love.

As written, this adventure takes a year to play. If they wish, gamemasters might consider the turn of seasons as symbolic of life, of the wheel of love, of the regions through which they quest, and of the characters of the four protagonists.

FOUR SEASONS HAS SEVEN SECTIONS

- **LOVE'S LABORS**, wherein the gamemaster learns of a perverse passion and its consequences, and certain secrets and longings are revealed.
- **SPRING**, wherein the adventurers are introduced to this tale of obsessive love, meet with a lovesick young noble and a mad high priest, and witness the terrible fate of a fair maiden.
- **SUMMER**, wherein the adventurers trudge the ever-moaning sands of the Sighing Desert, discover ancient ruins, meet with a learned seer, and make a crucial decision.
- **AUTUMN**, wherein the adventurers sash through the mist and rain of the Weeping Waste, walk into a bestial ambush, learn the ways of the Red Horse Mane tribe, and speak with visions.
- **WINTER**, wherein the adventurers encounter the deep snows of the Unnamed Mountains, meet a beautiful maiden and her white guardian of the snows, and save mountain-dwellers from a terrible fate, all in the name of Law.
- **LOVE'S LOSS**, wherein the adventurers return to Ilmar, experience beauty restored and beauty destroyed, and learn sad lessons of life and love.
- **STATISTICS**, wherein is found no story but numerical values useful in play.

LOVE'S LABORS

NADEC ASCAND HIRES the adventurers to accompany him on a quest. Ariocho has turned Nadece's beloved into a grotesque reptile. A special lute, a special song, and a special singer can return her to her original form. To get them, the party must visit the Sighing Desert, the Weeping Waste, the Unnamed Mountains, and then return to Ilmar. A rival, Captain Sevik, threatens and harasses their progress, as do other dangers along the way.

The passions of five people provide the drama in this scenario. Nadece is deeply in love with Lady Vesna, as is his rival, Captain Bahar Sevik. Kimroc du Feadio, high priest of the Church of Law in Ilmar, is the darkly jealous father of the young woman whom Nadece and Sevik want. The object of their mutual desire is Vesna du Feadio, who is not without desires of her own.

The gamemaster bears an unusual burden in this scenario. Beyond assorted humans, animals, creatures, demons, and bad weather to be narrated, he or she has continuing roles to play, discussed individually below. Try to evolve situations in which dialog with the adventurers is paramount; flee from opportunities to talk to yourself. If Nadece and Feadio converse, they shut the door first and the adventurers are told about it later. If Nadece and Sevik must parley, Nadece nominates an adventurer to do it, or they shout back and forth, Nadece asking advice at every turn. If two or three of your characters are in one place or one room at the same time, cause the most important to carry the conversation. The others can react silently, say a few words, or comment individually later. Give the stage to the adventurers.

NADEC ASCAND

NADEC IS THE only son of a noble house in the city-state of Ilmar. Handsome and fair, with neat brown hair and deep brown eyes, he dresses in the latest fashions, is educated, and has gracious manners. His wealthy father, Sir Areehn Ascand, is respected in the city and

renowned for his merchant enterprises. Nadec is in line for high status and a rich inheritance.

Forgetful and naive, he is rich enough to buy whatever he loses, and servants scurry to attend to or smooth over his every misconception.

Freed of small troubles, Nadec's interests have become theology, philosophy, and politics. He loves to discuss issues and grand achievements. He believes that Law offers harmony, while he despises inconstant Chaos.

This dreamer and romantic is also a singer of ballads and rondeaux praising chaste love and doughty Lawful deeds. He recently swore an oath of everlasting love to Vesna, but his love goes unrequited and even unanswered, for her father does not allow her to express her feelings. Young Ascand has had painted a miniature portrait of her that he wears in a locket at his neck.

Nadec prefers noble company and rigid devotees of Law, and warms to any among the adventurers. A female adventurer might draw his interest during the quest, but he cruelly forgets her upon returning to Ilmar and his place in society.

In the scenario, Nadec Ascand hires the adventurers because he is unaccustomed to rigorous travel. At first he whines and complains like a child. He takes no hand in chores, nor can he fight. His exaggerated sense of chivalry at first forbids treachery against Captain Sevik.

As the weeks pass, Nadec could show increasing independence and responsibility. If possible, at some point he should prove himself to the adventurers by taking the lead during danger. By the time he returns to Ilmar, he might be man than youth, a decent candidate for husband and father.

CAPTAIN BAHAR SEVIK

SEVIK IS A MAN of the world, in his thirties. His black hair flows to his shoulders, and his piercing gray eyes, bristling beard, bushy eyebrows, and weather-beaten face make him a threatening and frightening figure. He is solidly built. He habitually dresses as a warrior in a leather jerkin reinforced with steel rings over simple clothes. Sevik wears heavy boots, and a stout broadsword hangs at his hip.

He speaks the language of a strong man. Believing that the mighty naturally rule the weak, he behaves arrogantly and rudely much of the time. He can be ruthless and dangerous. The captain knows stratagem and battle, siege and supply, weapons and mounts, battle songs and the squeals of opponents. He spits upon religion, philosophy, sorcery, magic, and all the jewelry of the mind. Concerning the war of Law and Chaos he has no interest, except in gaining glory.

When the captain fell in love with Vesna, his new emotion foiled nearly his every instinct. He has spoken of his love to

her father, but Feadio has refused his visits. Sevik's passion disrupts his sleep, and he is angry with that stubborn old man.

Sevik's soldierly honor can be appealed to. If insulted before bystanders, he will always offer a duel with swords, which he will fight fairly and bravely. Against a Champion like Lady Frida, he stands little chance, for he is a soldier among soldiers: his training and instincts are honed for group fights on horseback, not for single hand-to-hand combat on foot. Many adventurers include individuals with better hand-to-hand skills than his.

Captain Sevik brings twenty loyal men-at-arms as companions upon his quest. He anticipates that a weakling like Nadec, even with a few hired bodyguards, represents no obstacle to him. If his rival ever becomes a threat, the Captain uses his military cunning, deploying ambushes, instigating treason, and setting lethal traps for the younger Ascand. He does not dare to openly assassinate his opponent, for Nadec's father would then become a redoubtable and influential foe.

Sevik's presence is like Vesna's, mostly unseen. If the gamemaster plays him skillfully, that hidden presence can be upsetting to and dreaded by the adventurers.



NADEC ASCAND



BAHAR SEVIK

KIMROC DU FEADIO

HE IS THE POWERFUL high priest of Ilmar's Church of Law. Vesna is his daughter and only child. His wife died years before. Kimroc and Vesna live in a pleasant villa, close to the church, with a dozen loyal servants.

Feadio dresses in the raiment of his faith, white silken robes decorated with the single arrow of Law. Kimroc has a harsh profile, an eagles-beak nose, deep-set eyes, domed skull, and a pointed gray beard. He is bony, with a bent and weary body. Many people wonder how the beautiful Vesna could spring from his loins.

Kimroc du Feadio is accustomed to commanding. He rules the Ilmar church with a strong grip and a quick temper. He demands true faith and obedience, and does not allow uncertainty or doubt: there is One Way, and Feadio knows what it is. He seldom mingles with his followers, and never asks their advice or opinion. He lives to bring Law and constancy to the Young Kingdoms. Chance and change are the shadows of Chaos, dangerous and to be shunned. All who choose Chaos are his enemies.

He also despises love, for love leaves men and women burdened with sentiment, a weak state open to the temptations of Chaos. He possesses feelings for his daughter that could be translated as love, but he struggles against them.

As his daughter matures, the high priest has become obsessed with her beauty, and sees her suitors as men whose lusts would destroy her beauty. Those who tell him of their love for her he sends from his house. Much against her will, he has locked his daughter away.

Feadio dreamed of preserving Vesna's youth forever by instilling in her the full constancy of Law, but Vesna found perfection in Avian, her tutor-monk, and they became lovers. When the high priest learned, he slew the monk outright. In his rage he dedicated Avian's soul to the Lord of the Seven Darks, sneering that even that foulness more aided his daughter more than had the Lords of Law. Amused to be so honored by a priest of Law, Arioch returned the favor by making Vesna immortal, but an immortal scaly lizard-thing, unfit to live among humans.

Dismayed at this turn but still arrogant and self-confident, Feadio had Avian's body placed on ice in his cellar. He combed the temple library and tortured captured sorcerers to learn how to return Vesna to herself. There proved to be three requirements, obtainable only by an arduous quest. Knowing himself too weak, he called upon Vesna's two most persistent suitors, Nadec Ascend and Bahar Sevik. To whomever succeeded in the quest he offered Vesna's hand. They agreed. From the beginning, Feadio planned treachery against whomever succeeded.

When the adventurers first meet Kimroc du Feadio, he has lost his faith in Law and is degenerating into madness. When they complete the quest and return to Ilmar, the high priest is insane and has decided to slay his daughter to create a bizarre likeness of her that can last for all time.

In the scenario, the high priest is met only at the beginning and at the conclusion. At the beginning, he's just another worried father, but when the adventurers meet him again, the man looks and acts insanely. The gamemaster must underplay this character at the beginning, so that Feadio stays believable, yet drop a clue or two concerning Feadio's true state of mind.

VESNA DU FEADIO

MANY SWEAR HER TO be the beauty of the Northern Continent. All who see her remember her. She is twenty years old, slim, with long blonde hair flowing to her waist. Her eyes are clear and blue. She dresses in colorful robes, but never wears jewelry or perfume. She often smiles.

Vesna is conservative and quiet, preferring the company of her books and her thoughts, but her father's jealous rage toward possible suitors dismays her, for such choices should be her own. In consequence, many see her at church and in processions, but few know much about her. No man kissed her hand, spoke with her alone, delivered a poem to her, or



KIMROC DU FEADIO

serenaded her window. Her isolation dimmed her soul and left her tearful.

There then came a monk, Avian the Pure, who stayed at the villa by invitation of her father. Avian admired Vesna's strength and grace, and she loved his warmth and honesty. The latter were his undoing, for when he confessed his love to Feadio, the high priest flew into a rage and stabbed him to the heart.

Vesna was then afflicted with a terrible demon-like transformation. She never learned that Avian was dead. Her father gathered the information necessary to free her, and sought out rival suitors to complete the quest involved. In their competition, neither the younger Ascend nor Sevik knows that the memory of a simple monk already owns Vesna's heart. Tragedy waits.

Until the very end of the scenario, Vesna does nothing. But for most of it, she must be described. The gamemaster must depict her when the adventurers see her disgusting form, when Nadec remembers her, or when he forgets her and becomes depressed, confused, or cowardly. Vesna is the one subject upon whom the gamemaster (as Nadec) can improvise upon without other effect. Hers should be a continuing presence, though she never leaves her room.



VESNA DU FEADIO

THE OBJECTS OF THE QUEST

DESCRIBED HERE FOR the gamemaster are the three requirements for restoring Vesna to her mortal beauty. Each is without equal in the Young Kingdoms. At the start of the quest, the adventurers know only the likely location of the lute.

THE LUTE OF DOLE AND SORROW

The Lute of Dole and Sorrow is a Lawful object, crafted hundreds of years ago by a priest of Theril, the White Lady of Inspiration. It seems to be an ordinary lute, but in the hands of a musician sworn to Theril it makes music beyond compare. No legends explain its melancholy name. It is currently kept by a wise man, Idean the Seer, in the Sighing Desert.

THE HYMN FOR LOVERS' SAKES

This ancient song was written by a mad poet from the Unknown East. It was said to enchant all couples. It turned the willing and the unwilling, the passionate and the inconstant, and the bored and the eager into lovers forever inseparable. The performer of the hymn needed only to place the correct names in the song, and then sing the hymn in that couple's presence. Originally, anyone could use this enchantment, but few mortals dared to accept inseparable, irrevocable love, and so the rare secret was lost. Centuries later, only a line or two from it can be found among tomes of lore.

LADY FRIDA, TROUBADOUR OF THE UNNAMED MOUNTAINS

A legend among the nomads of the Northern Continent, Lady Frida is sometimes said to be an incarnation of the goddess Theril. Frida lives among the peaks of the Unnamed Mountains. She is a matchless troubadour who can play the Lute of Dole and Sorrow and who can sing the "Hymn for Lovers' Sakes" with the needed full intensity and expression. She will not leave her mountain home without reason and (should the adventurers reach her) will bid them first undertake a quest of her own.

SPRING

"NO BLOSSOM DICTATES TO LOVE"

DAWN BREAKS ON A lovely spring day. The streets of Ilmar slowly wake. The merchants are ready for another day of bustling business. The early sun climbs over the hills and kisses the steep-roofed wooden houses clustered along the sides of the

valley. Children and dogs leap from their beds, then race through the narrow cobbled streets.

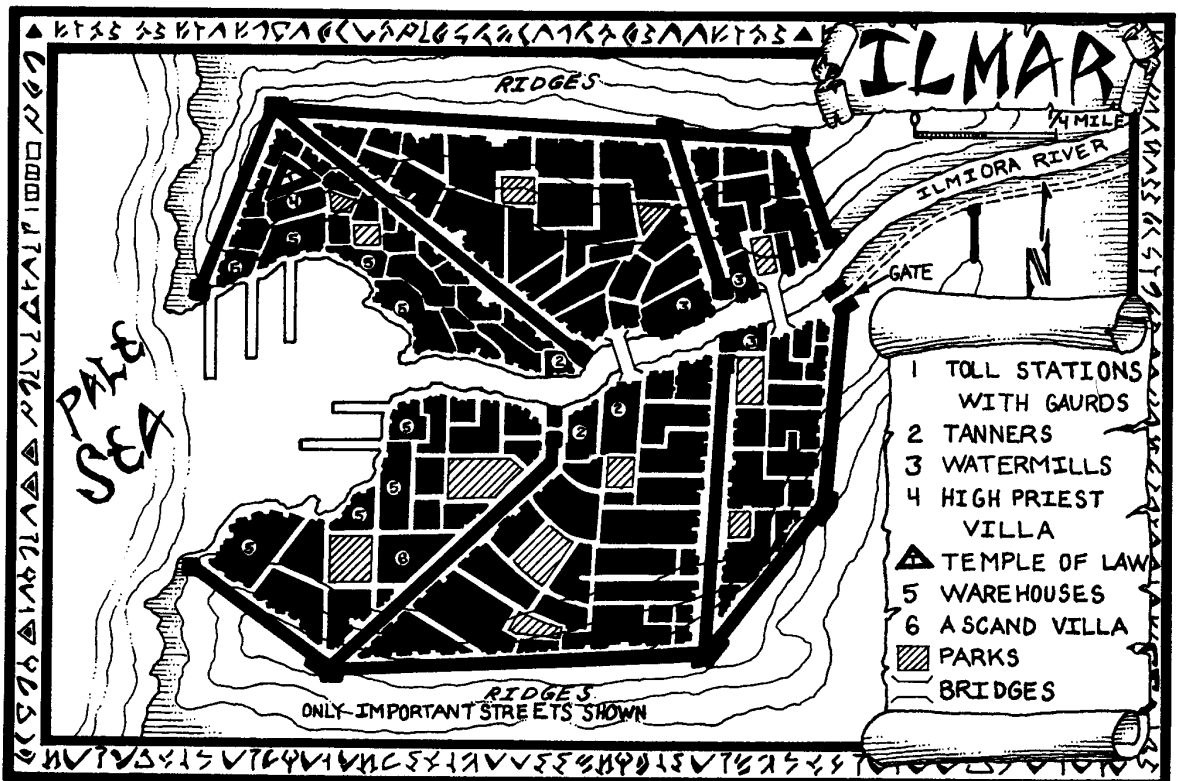
Winter has lifted from the city. Flowers herald the spring. Larch, birch, beech, and maple have thrown off their stark winter dress, and changed into fresh green robes of wonder. In the sky and high in the trees, newly-arrived birds whistle, sing, circle, and swoop as they court and seek out twigs and branches for new nests. As the sun rises, the first nightingale ends his tales of love promised and love forgotten. Even the ruthless and callous feel stings in their hearts, a lightness in living on the first warm day of spring. Such a day is the reward of living in the north, and it is meant for love.

The adventurers arrive this morning. Perhaps they are aboard a merchant ship entering with the tide, or maybe they ride toward the city through green pastures awash with daisies. Where have they been? Where are they bound?

A MEETING

THE ADVENTURERS SPEND the day establishing themselves, finding lodgings, and enjoying the gentle pace of Ilmar in the springtime.

The night is as lovely as the dawn. The smell of spring is in the air. Fire-flies spark and hover, the nightingale wakes and whistles his romantic tunes, flowers expose their beauty, and a full moon looms over the hills and turns streets and roofs to



day. The open squares, so busy in daytime with commerce and barter, are now the property of the restless and lonely. Languishing lovers linger in sheltered lanes and alleys, teasing, kissing, and whispering their oaths, breathing the sweetness of the night and of each other.

Soft music drifts by. One young man stands alone, in a small square near the Church of Law. It is Nadec Ascand. He wears rich silks and a crown of flowers in his hair. A lute is in his hand. He stands in front of a garden wall. Beyond the wall is a richly-appointed villa, and the love-struck man directs his gaze to a darkened balcony. There are tears in his eyes, and a Listen roll catches his pained entreaty—"Vesna!"—as he peers over the wall.

Nadec becomes aware of the adventurers. He tries to smile, and almost succeeds. "Help me, please.... Help me, I beg you!"

Nadec introduces himself, and tells how he glimpsed the beautiful Vesna on a balcony, and fell in love with her. Day and night he dreams of her. He writes poems and songs to her. Once he touched her hand in church. All has been for nothing, for her jealous father forbids him to speak to her or see her. Feadio no longer allows her to leave the house. She is a prisoner.



Today Nadec received worse news. Something bad has happened to Vesna, an accident or illness of some kind. The girl's father has summoned him for a meeting tomorrow night, along with his rival for her affections, Captain Bahar Sevik, a cavalryman of wealthy family. Nadec understands that the rivals will be asked to quest to heal Vesna. He feels

unsuited to long journeys, and thinks his servants of little use on such enterprises, but he vows to save his love, even at the risk of his own life. An Insight roll confirms the depth of the young man's distress.

If the adventurers suggest that they might join him on the quest, Nadec looks at them with surprise. Have each adventurer state his or her qualifications, boast of his or her valor, offer references, and otherwise self-advertise. If the adventurers make good impressions and seem genuine, Nadec smiles broadly. "Your noble sentiments and worthy conduct do you credit!" he exclaims, laughing with joy and congratulating his new comrades. "If you finish our journey with me, your aid will not go unrewarded."

He invites them to lodge at his villa, a short walk through the quiet streets. It is a beautiful stone building. In a city built of wood, this is clear evidence of his wealth. The young noble entertains the adventurers in fine style, serving them excellent wine, and enjoying more than a few cups himself. He is interested in their lives and experiences, and engages them in philosophical discussion about their dreams and beliefs. He proclaims his own true love for Vesna. When the evening grows old, he takes down his lute and sings songs of broken hearts and lovers riven by fate, until he lulls himself to sleep.

A HARD SELL?

If the adventurers ignore Nadec's plight the first night, they see him in the market square the next day, looking for mercenaries. He wants bodyguards in case Captain Sevik tries to conquer him in the wilderness. The pay is B.100 each per week plus expenses, double that for weeks in which they fight. Nadec is highly connected in Ilmioran society, and could be a useful ally. If the adventurers decline Nadec's offer again, the gamemaster must devise some other inducement, but a sappy young nobleman whose pockets bulge with money should be enough.

THE FATE OF VESNA

AT DUSK THE NEXT DAY, Sir Nadec and the adventurers gather before the villa of Kimroc du Feadio. Early roses cover the garden walls, filling the air with a rich scent. Sir Nadec takes snuff from a silver box and sneezes into a silken handkerchief. He passes around the snuff box.

FEADIO'S TALE

IT IS AS YOU SEE. My poor beloved daughter has been transformed into a hideous serpent with limbs, the work of a mad and treacherous monk driven insane by his lust. I trusted him, and he has betrayed me most foully. I thought him to be a good man—Avian the Pure was his name—but I knew otherwise when I caught him with my daughter in his sick embrace! For three months this viper had been my guest! I cursed him, and he shouted that if he could not have her, then no man would.

"I felt my limbs bound with invisible bonds of iron, and looked on helplessly as he chanted unspeakable words, dedicating her beauty of the Lords of Chaos. She screamed—my heart nearly burst—and before my eyes she changed into the thing you see here. Only her hair, her lovely yellow hair, remains of my darling girl. Then the despoiler laughed in my face, and disappeared in a vile and sulfurous cloud.

"This happened a week ago. In my shame, I dismissed some of my servants. I have not slept since then. I have lived in the temple library, searching for an answer, and I have found one. With this knowledge, and your skill, I think you will be able to save my daughter.

"According to my studies, a curse against beauty can be reversed if the best troubadour in the world plays the "Hymn For Lovers' Sakes" upon an instrument of utmost Law. I know of such an instrument, the Lute of Dole and Sorrow. It is in possession of a seer, living alone in the Singing Desert. His name is Idean.

"The rest is a mystery to me. My sources are old, and the "Hymn for Lovers' Sakes" has long been forgotten. Who might be the best troubadour of the world? Perhaps Idean might know the secret. If you can bring the lute, the hymn, and the troubadour to me, we can save poor Vesna. The reward I offer to you, Nadec or Bahar, is the grant of my daughter's hand in marriage.

"I have the resources of the temple of Law. Take pity on a father's shame, and upon his daughter's tragedy. May one of you have the skill to succeed."

Hooves approach. Seven horsemen sweep into the square. It is Captain Sevik, and six of his dashing company. The Captain swings down from his horse, and greets Nadec with a sarcastic smile. He inspects the adventurers without a word, and then stands with his men. He says something quietly, and they all laugh; a successful Listen roll distinguishes the words "Undisciplined cutpurses" and similar insults, not spoken loudly enough to justify a fight.

As the last rays of the sun disappear below the roof of the villa, the garden gate is opened by an old, worn, and tired man. It is Kimroc du Feadio, an awful sight with red-rimmed eyes and gray hair in tangles. He wears a white robe, embossed with a single silver arrow on the breast. With a thin, veined hand he waves in his guests. An Insight roll shows him to be exhausted, and full of fear and sorrow. There is a wildness about him that speaks of madness, yet his actions and manners are controlled.

Feadio leads the procession through the garden. They pass a small shrine to Law; beneath it withers a worm-eaten rose. A little further on, Nadec stops to smell the roses, while the Captain snips a fresh blossom to bring to Lady Vesna.

Within the villa, all is whitewashed walls and polished flagstones, furnished but without decoration, as is the austere style of many who follow Law. There are no servants present. The house is silent. A successful Listen roll notices the stir of something heavy upstairs.

Kimroc du Feadio leads them to the second-floor family rooms. The wooden floors glow. Here are leaded glass windows, not horn, skin, or paper coverings as are normal. Chandeliers are of gold, not iron or brass. The scale of the rooms and furnishings is grand, and everything speaks of restrained wealth and power.

Feadio opens a door. Inside is a small anteroom, neatly kept, with beautiful spring flowers in the window. He holds up his hand and whispers, "A word of preparation. Within is my poor daughter, Vesna." Then reluctantly he opens the inner door.

A horrible creature lies on the bed, one only vaguely human. It is scaly, bulky, and green, about five feet long. It has red, egg-sized eyes. Its open mouth gapes with crooked fangs, and its tongue is blood-red. Its hands are razor-sharp claws. Its breathing is harsh and irregular, marking a troubled sleep. Sometimes a low moan passes the creature's bulky lips, reminiscent of a female human's voice. The creature's beautiful, long blonde hair spreads over the pillow. Beside her sits her maid Anma, a middle-aged woman, red-eyed from crying, who caresses that blonde hair with a silver comb.

Captain Sevik gives a coarse oath, and compulsively puts his hand on his sword hilt. Poor Nadec screams loudly, and faints; a successful Physik roll promptly revives him. Sevik crushes the rose he carried. Vesna has been turned into a monster.

In the shocked silence, the high priest explains Vesna's transformation. His statement, boxed nearby, is lined with lies.

His tale finished, the high priest has little else to tell. The three things needed to reverse the transformation are true, as is his wish to keep Vesna's fate a secret. He lies about Avian the Pure, whose body is hidden in the villa's cellar. (He describes the monk as slim, young, with black hair and green eyes, dressed in robes of russet brown, and warns everyone to beware of him.)

The old man blesses the quest, and wishes that both men gain skill and knowledge during the quest, and that both

ILMAR

ILMAR IS THE CAPITAL city of Ilmiora, a young northern nation of rolling green plains. The city is located in a valley, surrounded by low hills on three sides, gently falling into the Pale Sea on the fourth. Passes into the valley are fortified and guarded, and entry from the inland is by toll.

Within, narrow cobbled streets slope down to the harbor. Most of the buildings are wooden, two to four stories high. The old city has spawned sprawling networks of streets, parks, and plazas that have twice outgrown its walls: these are peaceful, prosperous times.

Ilmar is a prosperous city, if not as prosperous as Bakshaan. It is a major city-state in the nation, known for its shipbuilders, glassblowers, traders, and fine leather workers. Jade trinkets from Karlaak are fashionable just now. The people of Ilmar delight in business, arts, crafts, and dancing. They are famous for their tolerance and generosity of spirit, and it is said that everyone strolls the narrow streets of Ilmar in safety.

Tall defensive towers of stone and wood mark the family mansions of Ilmar's nobility. The towers are Ilmar's symbols of prestige and might. From them bells ring and trumpets blow on holidays and family feast-days. When customarily enormous banners of celebration are unfolded from them, the towers look like great stilt birds readying their wings.

Ilmar's nobility, like those of all of Ilmiora's city states, are merchant princes. Senator Arturo Lorandon of Ilmar and his powerful family control the shipping, while a rival clan, the Giorvario family, own the tanneries, dyers, and butcheries. Ilmar is ruled by an inherent senator, presently Arturo of Ilmar, a member of the state council and an important man in this country.

The church of Law holds sway in Ilmiora. Ilmar's high priest of Law, Kimroc du Feadio, has a tight grip upon the church. The worship of Chaos is not forbidden, but most Ilmiorans fear and despise the foul magic of Chaos and shun its followers.

return. An Insight roll reveals that the high priest is anxious for them to leave.

As the rivals depart, Captain Sevik sneeringly suggests an alliance to Nadec. "We should make best use of our respective talents. I'll get these things to rescue Vesna; you stay here, and compose a pretty ballad to play at our wedding!" All of his men guffaw loudly, and they gallop away together, spurs jangling and horses' hooves clattering on the cobblestones.

CHECKING KIMROC'S STORY

THE ADVENTURERS MIGHT seek out ex-Feadio servants. Versions of their sudden sacking are circulating through Ilmar's taverns.

With a Luck roll, an ex-servant is located, a cheerful red-haired woman called Chiana. A Charisma roll persuades her to share her story with the adventurers. The high priest's factotum fired them one morning without reason or explanation. The longest-serving and most faithful to the family were not fired, but most were. She speaks highly of Avian the Pure, and of Vesna, and remarks that they seemed close. She has little good to say about Feadio, a harsh man

satisfied only by perfection. She asks the adventurers for a few bronzes, to make ends meet until she finds new work.

Chiana knows the names of several other servants, and tells those names to the adventurers, but does not know where the ex-servants live.

If the adventurers decide to persist, that afternoon they find a second servant, a greedy woman named Lura, who confirms Chiana's story. She also claims to have important gossip concerning Feadio, but only will part with it for an unshaven silver coin, of a value in Ilmar equal to 100+1D10 bronzes.

Lura will not drop her price below 100 bronzes even with a successful Bargain roll. If the adventures pay, she reports that three of Kimroc's servants are in the dungeons beneath the Church of Law. They were taken there, insane, the day before the servants were let go.

THE CHURCH OF LAW

It is a broad triangular building of three stories. Getting into the dungeons takes a pass from the high priest or his factotum, or the highly dangerous use of disguise, forged passes, or magical entrance. If the adventurers penetrate to the dungeons, and find the cell containing the three ex-servants of Kimroc, they learn only that all three drool and babble insanely.

If a strong partisan of Law insinuates himself or herself in nearby taverns where the temple's guards meet off-duty, he or she hears that Kimroc du Feadio has imprisoned the servants

for no offense against Law. Several men grumble at his exploitation of the Church. With a successful Luck roll, one man intimates that Kimroc has been dealing with demons himself, though he guesses that from hints by his insane prisoners.

SUMMER

"THE FURNACE OF LOVE
SEARS EVEN THE WISE"

TO FIND IDEAN THE SEER, the adventurers and Nadec must travel into the Sighing Desert, always a perilous undertaking. Nadec Ascand is the proud owner of many horses and can provide adventurers with proper steeds, or with remounts if the adventurers have their own.

A regular caravan route exists between Ilmar and the far north city of Vador, at the edge of the Sighing Desert. A caravan usually departs from Ilmar every fifth day and independent travelers are welcome to accompany the caravan



VESNA'S ANGUISH

in exchange for a small fee. Roll 1D6-1 to see how many days are left for the next caravan.

Traveling with the slow caravan leaves the adventurers a week behind. Captain Sevik departs with his men the morning after seeing Vesna, but traveling with the caravan is safe and secure. It also gives the spoiled, whining Nadec time to learn to do things for himself.

The rolling grasslands of Ilmiora are a landscape of vast animal herds—antelope, wild goats and sheep, bison and buffalo, gazelles, angry wild cattle with horns three yards across, and packs of predator wolves that feast upon them.

As the land rises away from the coast, ancient forest occasionally flanks the road to Vador. Rich farms dot the gentle valleys. Packs of guard dogs and high rock walls protect crops from the herds that dot the plains beyond. In the evening, farmers visit the caravan's campfires. Songs are sung, dances danced, broken hearts mended, and whole hearts ripped in two. Deals are made, and handicrafts traded.

Further into the heart of Ilmiora, the climate becomes more arid, and the color of the soil lightens to ash. Trees are limited to lakesides and watercourses.

THE SIGHING DESERT

THE SIGHING DESERT was once the fertile heartland of the powerful Quarzhasaatim Empire. Today the remnants of those wonders lay deep beneath the blazing sand. Fophean Dals brought the tragedy to his nation two thousand years ago. A powerful sorcerer, he uttered the spell, drew the runes, added the ingredients, and made the gestures needed for the storm.

However, the spell went disastrously wrong. Instead of drowning the arriving forces of Melniboné in sand, it buried most of the glorious Quarzhasaatim Empire. Except for its capital, Quarzhasaat herself, the Empire disappeared below the dunes. In a sense, Dals succeeded, for Melniboné never attacked his city, being unable to reach it. Isolated from the world, the lost city of Quarzhasaat became a legend, forgotten by all but scholars, drunkards, and storytellers.

Remnants of that dead empire sometimes appear in the desert. Wooden structures have collapsed and dispersed, but as the great dunes shift before the wind, rows of columns, palaces, and whole cities of stone can be uncovered for weeks, a month, a year. Then the sands collude, the structures are buried again, and no hint remains of the glories below.

SCENARIOS: the adventurers could stumble into the ruins of some ancient Quarzhasaatim building, leading them to great treasures and forgotten knowledge, or perhaps into horrors and death hidden for two thousand years.

Other possibilities include Mordaga the Giant, who can be found in his castle in the midst of the desert; Lamsar the Hermit, who is to aid Rackhir the Red Archer in saving Tanelorn during the siege by the Beggar Horde; the Silver Flower Oasis and a meeting with the Holy Girl and her tribe; and a visit to the legendary city of Quarzhasaat.

A lost adventurer could begin to hear voices of the long-dead Quarzhasaatim, the howl of armies and the clash of steel against steel. This experience slowly causes despair and madness unless he or she maintains mental balance with a successful Idea roll daily. If missed three days in a row, he or she slips into madness, and becomes full of fear, perhaps even avoiding potential rescuers.



THE SANDSTORM

VADOR

This town of ten thousand exists because of Vador's Springs, a cave mouth the size of a dozen whales that emits a river a hundred yards wide. The river has flowed out here since the doomed Quarzhasaatim were buried in sand millennia ago. Water irrigates thriving fruit groves, fields of vegetables, and rice paddies. Most of the water runs on, to continue to succor the lands beyond. It is known as the Gift of Vador.

Most crafts are practiced in Vador, especially leather work; pottery is expensive here since wood for firing kilns must be carted in from far away. Principal buildings include a church of Law, a council house, and the villa of Magel Matavio, ruler of the city and a young and ambitious member of Ilmiora's ruling Council of Senators.

From here, the adventurers must find their own way through the parched desert to Idean. No trails or marked routes exist across the shifting sands. Occasionally wells, springs, or oases can be found, but their locations and how they are found are secrets jealously guarded by the clans of the desert.

Camels are the best mounts for the conditions to come, everyone agrees. The adventurers' horses can be stabled or sold here. Camels intended for a journey of unknown duration must be purchased, not rented.

FINDING A GUIDE

Sellers of camels know where reliable guides to the desert live. Inquiry among the guides leads to only one, Ulan-a-Medor, who knows of Idean the Seer and agrees to guide the adventurers to him. He will lead Nadeç's party for not less than 20+2D10 bronzes a day, plus food and mounts. Ulan is a keen man with money, and bargains enthusiastically and at length for every groat. Once his word is given, Ulan honorably fulfills his duties until honorably discharged. For more about him, see the sub-section Ulan-a-Medor, below.

TANELORN

THE ETERNAL CITY is sometimes found among the dunes of the Sighing Desert. Since the city does not exist in ordinary time and space, it appears on no map, and only devoted Champions of the Balance can reliably find it. Tanelorn is said to incarnate across the multiverse.

It is a peaceful refuge from the whims of Law and Chaos. The Lords of Law and Chaos alike are banished from within its eternal walls. Chaos would destroy it, and Law would ignore it if it could. Tanelorn is said to exist in whatever manner the seeker wants to find it. In the Young Kingdoms it appears as a city of beauty, of happiness, and of wonder, whereas Corum finds it as an empty city, all in blue.

In the Elric saga, Tanelorn is twice besieged, once by the awful beggar horde from Nadsokor, led by Narjhan (Chaos Lord of Beggars), and once by Theleb K'aarna and the entities he summoned from the distant world of Pio.

SCENARIO POSSIBILITIES: after some particularly harrowing episode in which the adventurers gained some Balance points, they might glimpse Tanelorn across the sands and pursue her, though be unable finally to reach that peaceful place. A devoted adventurer-follower of the Balance might wish to search for Tanelorn. It will be a hard quest and remember, even for the initiate, the discovery of Tanelorn is difficult.

THE BEETLE PIKE

THE NOMADS OF the Sighing Desert designed this weapon against fire beetles. It is a pike made with a special hook to grip under the carapace and force the thing to withdraw. The pike does not make any significant damage to the beetle, but inflicts enough pain to force it to follow the wielder.

The beetle pike is a hand-to-hand weapon with a base chance of 15%. It requires two hands and inflicts 1D8 damage if used as a weapon. It can impale. The special hook does no significant damage but forces the beetle to go where the wielder goes. Its length is long. It has 15 hit points, and if used as a standard weapon can parry attacks. Minimum STR is 9 and DEX 9. It belongs in weapon class 10; its nominal cost is 100 bronzes.

In addition to the per-diem charge, Ulan requires, a customary deposit of B.500 must be left with the Seneschal of Magel, an honest man named Brist-al-Bristakal. This amount is given to the guide's spouse or lover if he or she does not return from the desert.

Nadeç's party should also buy the silk pantaloons, coats, and turbans favored by the nomads of the desert. These cost B.400 and up, depending on style and decoration; those costing B.1000 or more will tempt some of the city's finer thieves.

There exist no good maps of the desert. Ulan can draw a rough line showing Vador at one end, and the home of Idean the Seer at the other, but all is featureless desert between, except for marks indicating small water wells. *Between* is a half moon or so of time, Ulan shrugs, as Great Lassa and Grome allow.

CAPTAIN SEVIK

Inquiries easily establish that Captain Sevik and his troop traded their horses for camels, hired a guide, and struck out across the desert days before. Considerable curiosity was aroused by this seeming invasion of the northern desert by Ilmar's finest. Though Sevik explained their arrival as part of a purely personal quest, everyone in Vador treats his moves as military maneuvers, or else a reconnaissance in force. They are mystified, because relations with the Nomad Nations have been very good.

INTO BLAZING HELL

TO THE NORTHEAST A PALE line gleams on the horizon. That is the Sighing Desert, still spreading slowly southward. If they care to ride half a day to reach it, the adventurers can hear its famous music, a constant mourning and moaning voice invoked as the children of Lassa race across the dune-tops. From the highest dunes, occasional jagged spurs of rocks can be seen rearing from the hot sand. That is all, as far as the eye can see.

The Sighing Desert is a landscape of death, despair, and thirst. No one enters this waterless place without good reason unless wishing to die. It is extremely hot during the days; at night temperatures plummet to freezing.

The dunes and rocks are hardly lifeless. Small mammals, insects, scorpions, snakes, and other kinds of animals live in the sands. Among the most fearful creatures are fire beetles; these giant beetles live below the surface, during which time pools of oil accumulate on their backs. When the beetles come into the sun, these pools frequently ignite.

Many nomad tribes and clans inhabit the desert, but across all this sea of sand they number only ten thousand or so. Their ancestors were escapees from the wrath of Melniboné. Gathered in what they call the Nomad Nations, they survive with dignity in a place few can even imagine.

ULAN-A-MEDOR

ULAN-A-MEDOR BELONGS TO the nomad clan of a-Medor, but lives in Vador to work as a guide. He is tall and thin, his face hawk-like, attentive, sunburnt, and lined. His age is 38. Ulan-a-Medor is a master hunter, and even knows of certain rocks that can burn, when wood cannot be found.

He is of good reputation. Though desert travelers are rare, he has guided many treasure hunts into the desert, more than a dozen successfully. He competently oversees the preparations for this journey.

Half Ilmioran and half nomad, his features take after his nomadic mother, dark skin with deeply-set brown eyes, black hair, and a quiet face revealing strength and much experience. Ulan dresses in the silk pantaloons, loose shirt, turban, and velvet coat common to his people.

He prefers stillness and being alone. He sleeps very little.

Often, as the adventurers wake in the middle of the night, they find him staring into the embers of the fire, meditating into the darkness. At other times he steals into the night on hunt. An experienced fighter, he prefers the scimitar. He carries on his camel the famous nomad pike for defending against fire beetles.

A BREACH OF HONOR

Despite Ulan's skills, he fears magic and religion. Typical of his people, he heeds no god, but seeks peace and enlightenment through meditation and self-awareness. He has contempt for Nadec Ascand, whose emotions are erratic and undignified. If any of the adventurers are obviously sorcerers, or if any of them work noticeable magic, Ulan will ponder whether he should bring such infection into the pure heart of the desert.

If Ulan sees magic being worked, there is a 50% chance that he will come upon Captain Sevik during some night hunt.



ULAN-A-MEDOR

Sevik can then convince the guide that Nadec and the adventurers intend harm to the Nomad Nation. The next day the guide explains that he must search the way ahead alone. He returns with 1D6+4 nomad warriors on camels to kill his astonished employers.

If they capture Ulan-a-Medor during the fray, his attack upon them has imperiled his honor. With successful Fast Talk and Oratory rolls, the adventurers can convince him that they intend no harm, and that he can salvage his honor by loyal service from now on. If he mentions Captain Sevik, they can reveal the reason for the quest. Rivalry among nomads for reasons of love is frequent, and he will understand and be ashamed that he was taken in by an outlander.

WIND LORDS PLAYING

WITH OR WITHOUT ULAN-A-MEDOR, that afternoon the adventurers become aware of an increasing moaning among the dunes. A little later they see dust clouds to the north, piled low in the sky like brown foam. As the front nears, details of these clouds are lost in a haze of stinging sand. A few minutes later the storm engulfs them.

They need shelter, for the sandstorm is powerful. Clothes, skins of water, eyelids, ears, mouths, everything is pierced by the pelting grains. Movement is out of the question. From above, the laughter of great elementals can be heard as they enjoy a game. Then Misha and his brother Graoll drive each other to even stronger deeds.

A small rock outcrop provides some cover. If Ulan is present, he leads them to the outcrop, and shows how to survive. He wraps his coat around him, covers his face with his turban, orders his camel to crouch as though being mounted, and hides between it and the rock. A successful Idea roll could also give this information. No other kind of reliable cover exists.

The competition between Misha and Graoll lasts an hour, then passes on. The adventurers are covered by sand, bruised and abraded, and clothed in ribbons as if sliced by knives. Everywhere the sky is blue.

AMONG THE RUINS

THE PARTY FINDS A RUIN from the forgotten Quarzhasaatim Empire, freshly uncovered from the sands by the Wind Lords' game. It is the top of a palace, now sheared off and choked with rubble. Once it belonged to a powerful prince of the ancient empire and overlooked vast fertile fields and swarms of peasant farmers laboring to make the prince even richer.

The upper part of a tower can be entered. The stairs leading down to the palace proper are blocked by sand. Of interest and still intact are two gold candlesticks, a vase of fine porcelain bearing the image of the city of Quarzhasaat as it was a twenty-four hundred years ago, and three heavy gold coins inside the vase. A successful Evaluate roll puts the value of these objects at B.12,000.

If the adventurers try to excavate the stairway leading down, they rapidly conclude that they lack equipment for such a dig, for two scoops of sand flow in for every one they move aside. With a successful Luck roll, though, they find one more treasure.

THE NECKLACE

It is a small box inlaid with gold leaf, of Quarzhasaatim work worth B.2000 or slightly less. Within, upon red silk, lies a black, teardrop-shaped stone, the center-stone of a gold and bejewelled necklace. With a successful Search roll, the holder sees pairs of lips, ears, and eyes carved into the teardrop. As the sun catches it, the precious stone glows. (See *illus.*, page 60.)

The black stone contains a demon, eternally bound. Demon and necklace have been here since the great mistake made the sands fall, and the demon is heartily tired of such a life. It is also terrified lest the adventurers put the necklace back in the sands and leave it for centuries more.

The demon's name is Phalknap. It can talk with the adventurers, and has no instructions not to, but Phalknap cannot do new researches for the adventurers because its master is still alive somewhere, an ancient sorcerer roaming across this plane or some other.

Because its needs have been neglected for so long, Phalknap desperately wishes to be set free, and may bargain to give up its True Name in return for dismissal by its new master. It must come to trust the adventurers, otherwise it risks being bound by a new tyrant. Meanwhile, it attempts a bluff, relating what it knows from two thousand years ago and making up whatever it does not know in as convincing a fashion as possible. For instance, of the long-dead Quarzhasaat Empire, it knows nearly everything except its end, but of the present-day city-state of Quarzhasaat it knows almost nothing but its location. Its chances for accurate present-day knowledge are nil.

Of the "Hymn for Lovers' Sakes," it knows nothing, the hymn having been composed only a few hundred years ago. Were Phalknap re-bound, to someone else, it could be commanded to learn the hymn, and would likely succeed. It could not sing the hymn expressively enough to end the curse on Vesna.

PHALKNAP, lesser demon, breed unknown, eternally bound.

INT 14 POW 16

Ability: *Knowledge*, restricted to what it already knows.

Need: to washed in the blood of poets and fools once monthly.

Skills: Art (Ancient Songs) 100%, Art (Torture) 100%, Melniboné (Ancient only) 30%, Natural World 70%, Potions 100%, Own Plane 15%, Quarzhasaat Empire 100%, Quarzhasaatim (proto-Common) 28%.

Magic Point Cost to Summon: 66 (+3 POW for the eternal binding)

Though it speaks with a very strange accent, the demon is courteous. It can sing sweetly for its potential new masters. Anyone asking Phalknap something in fields it has already researched gets long summaries and detailed descriptions, frequently from very strange points of view. Until the demon trusts the adventurers and allows itself to be re-bound, questions concerning other fields get only charming, very believable lies.

FURTHER EXCAVATIONS

Nadec Ascand does not approve of the discovered demon. He can abide with such a harmless-seeming, poetical sort, but still feels obliged to make the Sign of the One whenever the thing speaks.

Ascand is very unhappy if the adventurers try to dig further, since they are greedy for mere gold, while his beloved languishes

as a vile serpent in the thralldom of Chaos. Nonetheless, ambitious adventurers may want more.

Returning to the tower, the excavation is difficult for a time, for the sand is like water and flows back when moved aside. After ten minutes or so, something gives way, and the hole begins to deepen. Then the hole turns into a tunnel.

A successful Listen roll detects noise from below. If Ulan-a-Medor is present, he tries to drag the adventurers away. Just a few moments after this, a shape rushes up from the depths, and 1D6 fire beetles, angered by the digging, burst up from the depths.

As they reach the surface, their backs catch fire. The creatures, as terrified as the adventurers by the flames, immediately attack whoever is nearest. The smoke and the oily stink of the smoke becomes nauseating. Not many moments after that the air is also full of irritating flies and midges, swarming around the beetles and the adventurers, trying to enter their nostrils, their mouths, even their eyes.

Any adventurer involved in hand-to-hand combat must receive a roll of CON x5 or less to withstand the fumes and the flies; failing the roll, an adventurer must break off or fight at halved skill.

If Ulan-a-Medor still is with the group he uses his special pike to drive off the beasts. Since he can engage only one at a time, the adventurers must fight off the rest.

As the last of the beetles are disposed of, the fumes and flies dissipate. If Ulan is present, he advises that they ride away quickly: many more beetles could be in the tunnels.

FIRE BEETLES, see Elric rules for notes and drawing

Move: run-15, burrow-4

Damage Bonus: 4D6.

Weapons: Jaws 45%, damage 2D6+3+db

Armor: top of carapace invulnerable, 2D6+6 underneath.

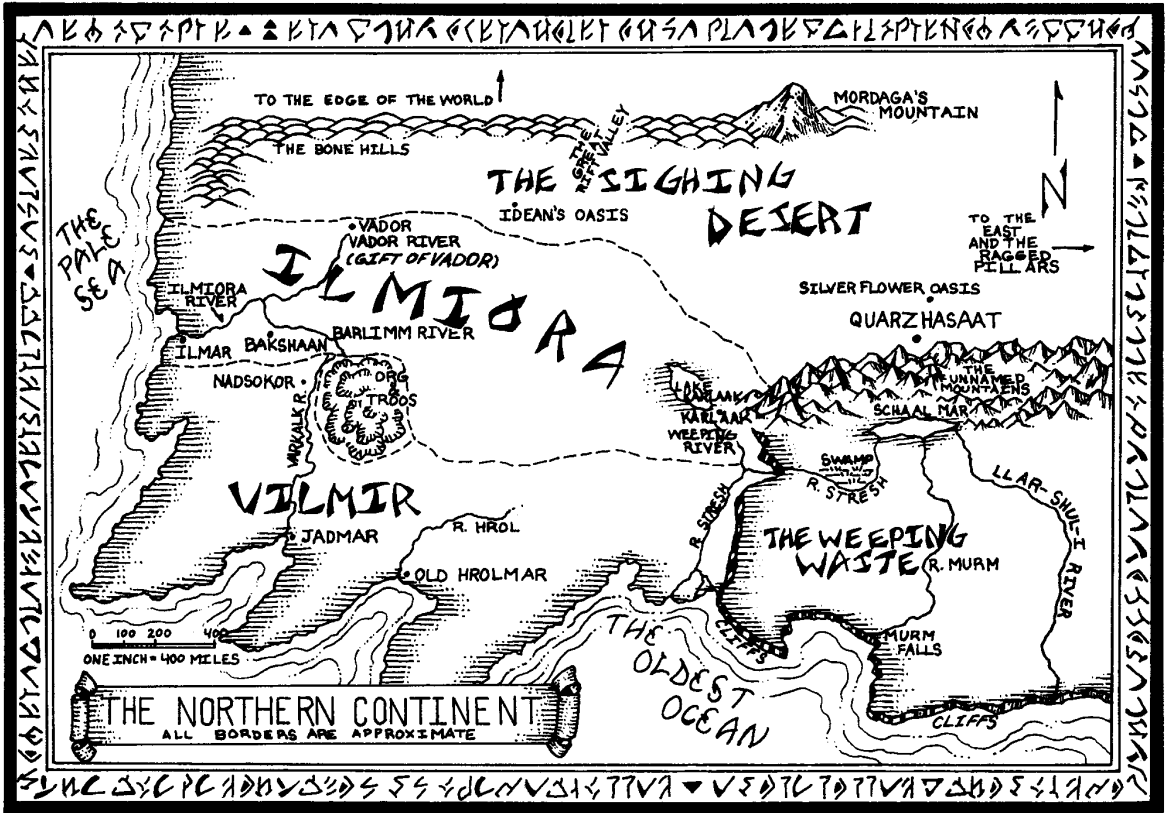
Skills: Dig 45%, Eat 65%, Search 35%.

	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	POW	DB	HP
ONE	45	20	44	12	11	5D6	32
TWO	38	18	40	10	10	4D6	29
THREE	40	18	38	11	9	4D6	28
FOUR	45	15	33	13	13	3D6	24
FIVE	43	19	35	12	12	4D6	27
SIX	41	22	45	12	9	5D6	34

AN OASIS

THEY SEE FIRST THE DARK blue-green of distant vegetation, then a wink of light from a body of water. In a few hours they reach the oasis, and find an encampment. This oasis is a meeting place for several clans, and is by custom neutral ground. All of the nomads speak several dialects of Lesh, and most of the adults speak a few words of Common. The western-most clans, including the Medor, speak a rudimentary Common as a trade-tongue.

Outlanders who are not of Vador are a curiosity. People are aloof, not antagonistic, unless the adventurers have been attacked by Ulan-a-Medor and some of his kinsmen. Then, whatever the outcome, others of the Medor may need vengeance, and vigorous fighting may follow. Fewer than fifty tall tents from all clans are pitched between the willows and the cactus, and six are Medor. A 25% chance for a fight exists. If no adventurer uses obvious magic, the flow of blood satisfies Medor honor, as does six rounds of bloodless combat.



A PORTION OF THE NORTHERN CONTINENT

If the adventurers have been abandoned by Ulan, small, seemly gifts to the nomads, followed by cautious and respectful inquiry soon gamers the location of Idean the Seer. These people would never reveal secrets about themselves, but Idean is an outlander. Laughably he stays always in the same place, and so does not merit the protections of custom, however great his wisdom.

IDEAN THE SEER

TWO ROCK COLUMNS, the Silent Twins, are by legend children of Straasha, turned to stone by Grome during the Elemental Wars. Nearby are a small spring and a thin pond that the nomads know as Straasha's Pool. They imagine it to be Straasha's memorial to his children, and swear that the pool has never gone dry or been diminished.

At a discreet distance from the pool rises a dusty dwelling made of animal skins over a framework of branches. Broad segments of dried cactus reinforce the roof. Nearby is a sheltered, well-tended plot of vegetables. A cool arbor of climbing grapes flanked by palms completes Idean's arrangements.

A man alone generally hears only the movements of the wind. Idean has noticed the sounds of the adventurers' movements for the last half hour. He has put a kettle of water over a fire, hoping for visitors. When the adventurers ride in,

he sits at a table shaded by a blue silk awning, sipping tea and intently studying an arrangement of figurines before him.

About 70, he is a small man, bent by years of travel and burdens. His skin has drooped enough to suggest weary features, through which his chiseled bones contrast sharply. He has deeply-set eyes and waist-long gray hair that he occasionally gathers in two bunches when he wants it out of the way.

Idean has kept his vigor. A steel-shod staff beside him could suggest weakness, but it is a terrifying weapon in the hands of a master such as he is. Even his bare hands and feet are lethal. Nonetheless, he prefers peace and order, and has chosen a home that grants him great quantities of it.

He loves games. When he rises to greet the adventurers, his first words are "Do any of you play?" and his first gesture is to the chessboard and pieces on the table. If someone sits to have a game, he is delighted, and their style and success in chess-play influences how he perceives them afterward. (To play chess, average each players INT+POW and then roll on the Resistance Table. A close result or a win for the adventurer gains Idean's attention and respect.)

Idean loves the life and the customs of the desert nomads; he has lived by the Silent Twins for more than thirty years. Individual nomads sometimes visit him to ask him his opinion of a personal course of action, or how to benefit from a difficult negotiation. Sometimes he can divine if the signs of

Lassa augur windstorms or sandstorms in the future. He always tries to help his visitors and, aided by his crystal globe, he usually gives useful replies. Idean is also a practitioner skilled in the ways of healing, and helps the sick and dying without charge, sometimes traveling great distances in response to desperate appeals.

Idean follows the Balance, the only religious way much respected in the desert. During his travels he has collected wisdom and many old and curious things. He collects musical instruments, among them the Lute of Dole and Sorrow. He will gladly give that lute to them, but the adventurers must give him something in return.

IDEAN THE SEER, age 68, Wise Man and Traveler

Chaos 29, Balance 187, Law 43

STR 11 CON 14 SIZ 9 INT 18 POW 20
DEX 13 APP 17 HP 12

Damage Bonus: none.

Weapons: Staff 150%, damage 1D6+1

Brawl 103%, damage 2D3

Dagger 45%, damage 1D4+2

Armor: none.

Spells: Bonds Unbreakable (3), Brazier of Power (4), Chain of Being (4), Flames of Kakatal (4), Gift of Grome (4), Heal (2), Make Fast (1), Make Whole (3), Moonrise (1), Refutation (1-4), Summon Elemental (1), Undo Magic (1-4), Wings of Lassa (4).

Skills: Art (Flute) 111%, Art (Lute) 116%, Art (Harp) 114%, Art (Tell Story) 167%, Chess 221%, Common Tongue 90%, Dodge 83%, Fast Talk 130%, Insight 108%, Lesh 90%, Listen 90%, Martial Arts 103%, Million Spheres 20%, Mong 27%, Natural World 104%, Oratory 87%, Pandé 14%, Physik 71%, Potions 36%, Ride (Camel) 56%, Scribe 122%, Unknown Kingdoms 34%, Young Kingdoms 59%.

DINNER AT IDEAN'S

THE EVENING MEAL is flat bread, a vegetarian stew (very spicy), and honeyed dates. As the sun lowers, the wind rises. Idean invites them to unsaddle and hobble their animals, and to spend the night in his hut.

The interior is crammed with chessboards, weapons, books, herbs, spices of strange savor and aspect, and weird sketches. In the center of things is a big, dark crystal globe.

When they describe the lute that they seek, Idean nods and says that he surely possesses the Lute of Dole and Sorrow. Only, he smiles, he cannot quite remember which lute it might be. He apologizes for his failing memory. They may select whichever lute they think proper.

For the finest lute in the world, he asks for something in return, perhaps something personal, something of value beyond measurement in bronzes, or some artifact perhaps. He is not interested in money, nor in simple magical objects. It has to be something special. The demon necklace from the ruins he studies for a moment and then declines. It is too Chaotic.



He asks this favor from each adventurer, including Sir Nadeç, who offers him in exchange his own much loved and valuable lute of warm and crystalline sound.

If all the adventurers do not give him an item each, he does not grant the lute to Nadeç. If some adventurers become hostile, he asks all to leave. If a fight occurs, he defends himself but does not pursue, and does not aim to kill. If Idean dies or is seriously wounded, the nomads soon know of it; nomad clans harry the party while they remain in the desert.

If all his visitors accept the price, he shows them through a flap into another room of the hut, which seems much bigger on the inside than on the outside. All over the new room are priceless lutes, harps, guitars, horns, flutes, and so on, of varied materials, sizes, and shapes. There are ten lutes in Idean's hut. Some are beautiful with golden ornaments and set stones, some are brutal with terrible inscriptions and runes all over them, others seem ordinary. The plainest and the oldest, its wood wearing a soft gray patina but its strings new and flavorful, is the Lute of Dole and Sorrow.

Nadeç can choose the lute he wants. He can delegate the choice, but probably none of the adventurers exceed his abilities with a lute. When he sounds a few notes with each instrument, the old gray one clearly has matchless balance, response, and timbre. If the choice is made a matter of chance, the party risks picking the wrong lute. If they do, Vesna's curse cannot be vanquished unless Lady Frida notices that the lute is inadequate and leads the group back to Idean.

THE OTHER ITEMS OF THE QUEST

Idean remembers his travels clearly. He once met a man with an outstanding memory for music; the man seemed to know every song ever sung upon the Young Kingdoms. That was in the Weeping Waste twenty-five years ago. If the man still lives, they can probably find him there. His name is Baku, a shaman of the Red Horse Mane clan. He knows the "Hymn for Lovers' Sakes" if anyone does.

About Lady Frida he knows nothing, save a rumor of a singer who traded her soul for voice. But that was long ago, and perhaps on another plane....

THE BASELESS GLOBE

This carved crystal globe shows the future to whoever has the heart to see it. The flow of images must be seen dispassionately, a trick difficult even for Idean. He can do a reading of the party's future, but he warns them against believing all that they see, since each who watches sees differently. Undue optimism or fear emphasizes incidents correspondent to the mood of the viewer: the more one fears, the more dire the images within. The more hopeful the viewer, the easier to surmount seem the troubles to come. Both sorts of visions are in error.

Among the incidents worthy of mention are the attack by Sevik and his men, the meeting with the Red Horse Mane tribe, the assault of the nalargrun, Urion the giant white wolf, the encounter with the Dharzi sorcerer, and the long ride back to Ilmar.

SEVIK IN THE DESERT

IF THE ADVENTURERS ASK, Captain Sevik and his men have been at the Silent Twins and have gone. Idean supposes that he and his troop now are searching for Baku, knowledge of whose existence he gave to the captain.

Sevik exchanged his battle-worn scimitar for a valuable lute inset with eight rubies on the fingerboard.

The practical captain wasted no time on a mere musical puzzle. Believing that Nadec would easily choose the right lute, Sevik and his cavalry wait in ambush for the party, not far from Idean's oasis or else at some strategic point on the way to the Weeping Waste— wherever he judges that he has the best chance to capture the party without a fight. He will take the Lute of Dole and Sorrow from them by force. He does not want to kill Nadec, since Nadec's father is an important man, but he'll happily slice up some adventurers if they provoke him, just to keep in practice.

In the meantime, the troop has been treasure-hunting. Having no beetle pikes, two of his men were killed by fire beetles. Cross them off the roster in the Statistics section.

If the captain gains the Lute of Dole and Sorrow, events can continue as written, except that the gamemaster must create a situation by which the adventurers can regain the instrument before they return to Ilmar.



BIG DEATH FROM BELOW

THE NALARGRUN or mole-worm is a pale, almost hairless mammal, worm-like with spade-shaped clawed paws beside its sightless eyes. Its nose is a fleshy flower, and its wide mouth is lined with fangs. An adult nalargrun can reach fifteen yards in length. It is effectively blind, its superb hearing guiding its stalks and attacks. Nonetheless, it is the top of the food chain in the Weeping Waste.

The Waste folk hate and despise this carnivore, whose name they use as a synonym for treachery. It mostly ambushes surface creatures from below, and prefers the soft soils present along streams and rivers as home. It avoids rocky terrain and the dense roots of forested areas. Elk, moose, ponies, baby mammoths, and furry hippopotamuses are typical prey.

Nalargruns' collapsed tunnels and dead shrubs and trees (they gnaw on roots to sharpen their teeth) produce a characteristically barren and lumpy local terrain that Waste folk easily recognize and avoid. Concerning rare deaths by nalargrun, a clan saying is that he or she must have been both fat and unlucky. These great predator worms are not energetic, and survive by feeding on bigger game than humans.

All large nalargrun are females. Males and children are sighted, surface-dwelling miniatures of the females. They wander at large, feeding on small birds and mammals. The young are about a third of a yard long at birth and reach about two yards before going to ground. A male goes to ground only when an adult female is ready to mate. She accepts him through her mouth. He is led by an irresistible scent to a special pouch in her throat, where he copulates. He is then ingested. Females of age come to ground at five years of age, but must continue to feed, transform, and grow for years more before large enough to mate.

The Waste folk hold it a mark of honor to kill these things. Mostly they destroy the relatively easy-to-kill surface-dwellers, proudly wearing bracelets of a single claw from each kill. In a few parts of the Waste, these tactics have made nalargrun rare.

THE NALARGRUN (Mole-Worm) ATTACKER

STR 50 CON 32 SIZ 55 INT 4 POW 10
DEX 15 MOV burrow-8 HP 44

Damage Bonus: +6D6.

Weapons: Swallow Prey 75%, victim dies one round later
Bite 55%, damage 1D10+3D6 (half damage bonus)
Crush 45%, damage 6D6 (damage bonus only)

** attacking up through the roof of its burrow, the nalargrun attempts to swallow one victim on its initial strike from below. The target must resist the creature's STR to escape its jaws, or else he-or she is swallowed whole at the end of the*

following round, and the mole-worm withdraws with a full gullet. If the attack fails, the mole-worm makes bite attacks. If it loses half of its hit points, it spits out its prey and retreats into the earth.

Armor: 1D6+3, wrinkled thick hide

Skills: Ambush 70%, Burrow 50%, Dig 100%, Listen 85%, Scent/Taste 80%, Sense Vibration 75%.

AVERAGE NALARGRUN, adult female, Predator from Below

characteristics	rolls	averages
STR	6D6+20	41
CON	5D6+6	30
SIZ	10D6+10	45
INT	4	4
POW	3D6	10-11
DEX	1D6+4	7-8
MOV	writhe 6/burrow 3	av. HP: 37-38

Av. Damage Bonus: +5D6.

Weapons: Swallow Prey* 35%, victim dies one round later
Bite 25%, damage 1D10+ 1/2db
Crush 30%, damage equals damage bonus only

** see note to The Nalargrun Attacker stats, just above.*

Armor: 1D6+2, wrinkled thick hide

Skills: Ambush 35%, Burrow 30%, Dig 55%, Listen 45%, Scent/Taste 50%, Sense Vibration 55%.

NALARGRUN, mobile adolescent, in the year it goes to ground

characteristics	rolls	averages
STR	3D6+3	13-14
CON	3D6+3	13-14
SIZ	2D6+6	13
INT	4	4
POW	2D6	7
DEX	3D6+4	14-15
MOV	10-scamper	av. HP: 13-14

Av. Damage Bonus: +1D4.

Weapons: Bite 40%, damage 1D4+1

Armor: none.

Skills: Ambush 50%, Burrow 10%, Dodge 45%, Listen 75%, Scent/Taste 80%, Search 30%.

AUTUMN

"EVERY LOVE IS DIFFERENT,
AND ALL TEARS ARE THE SAME"

TRAVELING FROM THE northern Sighing Desert to the Weeping Waste is not a simple matter. The adventurers can return to Vador, and there retrieve their horses and gear, or press directly from Idean's toward Karlaak on their camels. It is more than three hundred miles from Idean's to Vador, and another thousand miles from Vador to Karlaak. From Idean's directly to Karlaak is nine hundred miles. Rather than straight lines, both routes curve further south and then east, to take advantage of good water and forage on the Ilmioran plains and to sidestep the comparatively arid steppes bordering the desert.

Unless the gamemaster has sudden inspiration, this part of the journey can be easy and placid.

TWO SORTS OF ATTACKS

If Captain Sevik has not yet struck, the plains offer two good ways for him to make disguised attacks. He and his men could purposefully set a broad wildfire, or stampede bison, wildebeest, or other herbivores that feed in massive herds. Adventurers with failed rolls for Search (for the wildfire) and Listen (for the stampede) need successful Ride rolls to evade these dangers.

KARLAAK

The jade city of Karlaak is Ilmiora's most important eastern city. Bounded by the foothills of the Unnamed Mountains and the Weeping Waste, Karlaak thrives on the water that flows from the perpetually rain-shrouded plateau. The long slope leading up to the Weeping Waste is a hundred miles east.

In Karlaak the party can buy needed equipment and rations. Most items are available here. They can also purchase fresh mounts or rest the ones they own, and buy comforts for themselves. If the adventurers are still riding camels, they should trade them for horses to withstand the rainy Weeping Waste.

If Ulan-a-Medor is still with the party, he may decide to return to Vador. If the guide has been faithful, he may decide to stay with the group, even though he is a stranger to the sodden Weeping Waste. This is more likely if the adventurers consult and defer to him. If Ulan has been incidental to the quest, then he can quietly leave, or perhaps die heroically in another of Captain Sevik's ambushes.

Residents of Karlaak smile when hearing of the Red Horse Mane tribe. There are many tribes on the Waste, they say, but the Red Horse Manes are merely stories for children: no people live in a great cave and smile all the time because they are blessed by the Elemental Rulers.

Persistent adventurers manage to find a few people who have visited the Waste, or who have been exiled from it. They agree that the Red Horse Manes are not a true tribe, just something fun to tell stories about.

If the adventurers try to learn of Captain Sevik and his men, no one has seen them. Even the local garrison commander, whose business it is, knows nothing of them.



RYBERG '94

IN THE WEeping WASTE

THE WEeping WASTE

THE WAY EAST ALONG the south edge of the Unnamed Mountains is a pleasant one. The adventurers' worst chore is to constantly ford broad, gravel-laden streams. They frequently see deer, mountain goats, and other sizable herbivores. Reliable forage exists. A few times they glimpse unknown nomad bands, best avoided without need.

Entering the Weeping Waste from its western edge is easy and almost unnoticeable. The party climbs a long, gentle rise, of talus ranging up to fortress-size boulders. The climb goes on for miles, a single lightly-traveled trail that zigzags up the seemingly endless slope. To their right they see the gold and vermilion cliff-edge of the escarpment stretch unbroken southward. It goes hundreds of miles to the sea.

Grome has driven the Waste upward for thousands of feet. By the time they reach the top, the air has grown humid, and clouds have formed. Tall grass is everywhere. Isolated trees rise here and there. Mud and slick slopes replace the dry footing of desert and steppe.

Without warning a wave of mist blows, and they are awash in a gray world of rain and fog, without end. They move through a waving sea of grass, broken by small trees and wide marshes. It is a damp and silent world, surprisingly barren of trees. Ducks flap away every few minutes. The horses are disconcerted by the rain that coats their fur; their ears keep flicking to dislodge droplets that crawl like flies. There are birds, fish, snakes, and frogs. The adventurers glimpse small herds of wild ponies, elk dipping for watercress in the shallow lakes, and (more rarely) giant mammoths chewing on sheltered copses of willows or birches.

Bear tracks are common. Every few miles they notice huge marsh-cat tracks, and the horses shy from where the huge carnivores have marked their territory. Once they also see an odd burrow-tunnel of great size, its top freshly collapsed and half filled with water, apparently extending in both directions for great distances.

The mists, rain, and featureless terrain make keeping in one direction very difficult, since sun and stars are rarely seen. A compass will work well here, as will a succession of tribal guides if the adventurers can convince anyone to help them. Phalknap the demon can start the adventurers in the proper direction, but its later directions are worse than if it gave no directions at all.

THE PEOPLE

The party meets a man, woman, and three children, each riding a shaggy pony bareback. They wear thick skin cloaks, furred caps, and fringed leather. Their bodies bear strange and beautiful ritual scars, to protect against evil and to be sexually appealing.

Thousands of such families roam the sodden steppes of the Waste. Most are nomadic within a broad region that is the traditional range of their tribe.

Both adults carry slings, short throwing spears, daggers, and boomerangs. They forage for plants and hunt only small game. Two of the ponies ridden by the children are hitched to a travois, on which the family's possessions are stacked and tied. The oldest child, a girl, rides on a pony of her own.

The Common spoken by the adults is more useful for trading pots than in discussing time, distance, or philosophy.

The adventurers gather that the Red Horse Mane tribe is many days of travel east.

The children of this family are curious about the strangers and their strange-looking tall horses. The parents are suspicious and superstitious in behavior, with special hand gestures, ritual movements, and touching ritual amulets and other trinkets. They attend to many different spirits, real and imagined, including the Elemental Rulers.

THE NALARGRUN

IF A GUIDE HAS BEEN recruited, ignore this section, since even Waste children know to avoid the nalargrun. If the adventurers and Nadec are on their own, somewhere during their ride through the Weeping Waste they feel puzzling vibrations from below. Their horses shy, and require successful Ride rolls to control. Then the earth bursts up from beneath that rider who has the largest **SIZE** Grass and earth disappear, and a pallid, disgusting thing smashes upward, attempting to engulf steed and rider and drag both below. The gnarled worm-like thing is very large, with a giant fanged mouth, two strong, wide, flat paws and an almost hairless, wrinkled hide.

If it misses the attack against the largest rider, it gets a second attack against any random adventurer who has been tossed from his or her mount. Adventurers who stayed mounted can race back and pick up their stranded friends on the fly (successful **DEX** roll), and carry them off to safety.

SEVIK'S RETURN

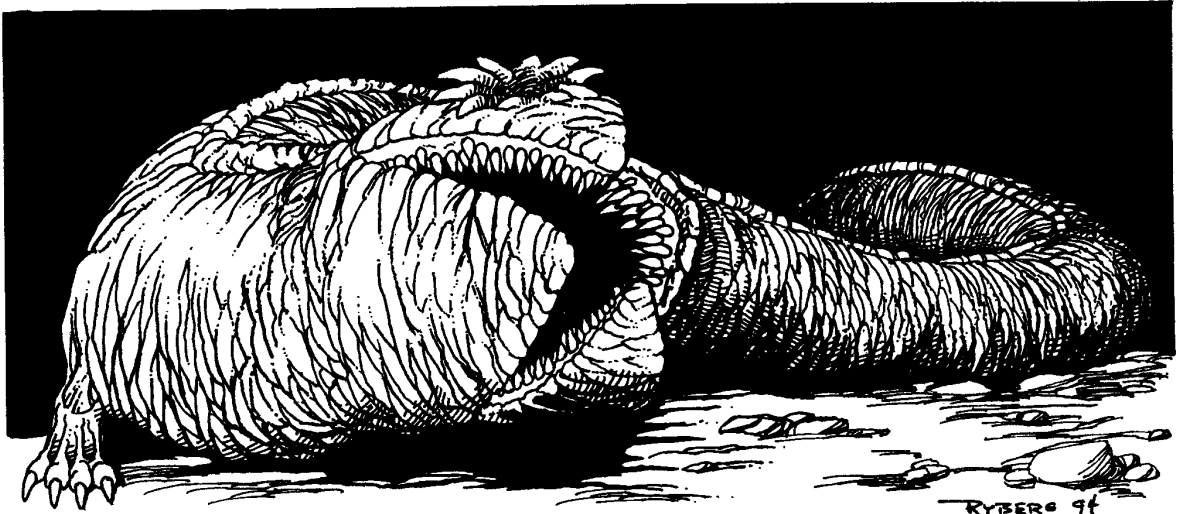
IF CAPTAIN SEVIK and his troop have not been eliminated, he continues to try either to capture Nadec and the lute, or to murder Nadec's bodyguards. This time he sends six archer-skirmishers to harry the party. The archers fire for **1D3** rounds, then unstring their bows and hide the strings from the constant drizzle. They retreat, then catch up an hour later, and repeat the attacks. If they disguise themselves as native to the Weeping Waste, their soldierly bows and their long-legged horses betray them, given a successful idea roll.

Continue harassing the party until they track down the bowmen. Judge the intelligence of the adventurers' plan after hearing it; if it makes any sense at all, allow some or all of the counter-attackers to close with the archers. If one archer dies or is wounded, these harassing attacks stop. If not, the attacks begin anew tomorrow.

It is also possible that Sevik has lost a man or two to a nalargrun, and that someone has fallen in love and deserted this increasingly difficult quest. Mark off dead, deserting, and incapacitated cavalymen from the statistics.

FINDING THE RED HORSE MANES

AS THE ADVENTURERS RIDE through the green world, tribes and families usually ignore them, carefully moving aside or disappearing into thickets if the adventurers attempt to parley. Waste folk who agree to talk prove suspicious and untrusting. When asked for the location of the Red Horse Mane tribe, some become hostile and withdraw, making elaborate magical signs as they go. Others



THE NALARGRUN

cast wild looks and snarl curses, and refuse further reply. Still others laugh out loud and shake their heads at such nonsense. The clear directions that the adventurers obtained from the first Waste folk they met are not repeated.

Weeks go by. Travel is slow in this sodden land. Unused trails are swallowed in a week by vines and grasses. Most people of the Waste know of the tribe from legends, but the stories vary. Some portray them as mystics who transmute tools and clothes. The most superstitious say that the Red Horse Mane tribe keeps human flesh in boxes, and that they are demons, not humans at all.

Friendliness is vital in these discussion, and the friendliness must be worked at. Oratory, simple entertainments like juggling and sleights of hand, gifts of trade goods, and presents of meat and fish go far toward persuading the people that the party means no harm.

At last Balash, an old shaman of the Cedar Bark tribe who longs to journey a final time beyond his tribe's range, shares a meal with the party. He agrees to take them to the Red Horse Manes, if and only if the adventurers avoid future contact with the Cedar Barks. It is a ten-day journey to the Red Horse Manes, who live in a deep gorge scooped through the plateau by the swift waters of the River Stresh.

MAN-FULL-OF-SONGS

THE CLIFFS OF THE GORGE are nearly a mile apart at the top. Fog covers everything below, perhaps mercifully, for the rocky trail down is steep, slick, and narrow. Spindly bushes offer handholds. Vapors from smokehouses below sweeten the air and deepen the gloom.

The village (on both sides of the river) is made up of about forty long-houses set well back from the surging river. Many dugouts and canoes are tied along the shore. There is no way to count, but seven or eight hundred people must live here.

None of the tales told about the clan proves true. Concerning all the foolishness the adventurers have been told, the shaman smiles and shakes his head. It is too much to expect, he says, that men will both answer questions and be wise.

The Red Horse Mane tribe is no longer nomadic. They are happier raising ponies and sheep in their misty canyon, and spearing giant salmon from the river. While the party waits politely at the edge of the village, many individual Red Horse Manes approach to gawk and giggle. They are fascinated by the adventurers' strange horses, that have long legs and unseemly manes into which no strips of red cloth have been woven. The adventurers' outlandish clothing and cheerful ignorance of good manners is interesting and amusing.

The Red Horse Manes are unafraid of strangers, for they trade weekly with other tribes, in trading places on opposing cliffs. Many Red Horse Manes originally came from other tribes. As the Cedar Bark shaman explains, the Red Horse Manes trade boxes of smoked salmon for wives and husbands from other clans, and thereby strengthen the tribe's blood. This exchange also strengthens bonds with the tribes who trade at the edges of the high cliffs.

A very old man, leaning on a heavy and strangely carved staff, comes forward to speak in Mong with the Cedar Bark shaman. Bent, weather-beaten, and weary, he holds a rattle, and burns bones and leaves to cleanse the party of any evil that may cling to them. He is Baku, shaman of the Red Horse Manes. Only after some time can it be guessed that Baku is blind, but no Red Horse Mane will speak of this, and the Cedar Bark shaman advises that it would be improper to ask such a question, for a great shaman such as Baku can see with other than his eyes.

Having ritually protected his tribe, Baku considers the party for a time, then seems to approve and says in halting Common, "Welcome, strangers, to the Red Horse Mane. You come in a time of joy. Today we celebrate our dead ancestors."

The old man invites them to a small long-house, the house of ceremonies, where he lives with his wife, who is as old if not older as himself. Several young assistants fetch for him and guide him, and whom in return he instructs in the ways of the Unseen World. The lodge is full of drying herbs and plants, bones and feathers, rocks and soils, dolls and paintings, drums and pipes, and statues and carvings. Baskets and boxes full of mysterious stuff line the walls. Carvings and amulets hang from the dim ceiling, clattering in a sudden breeze.

He listens carefully to the story of the quest, looking strangely at the adventurers. As they finish the story, probably by asking if Baku knows the text to the "Hymn For Lovers Sake," he stands up, smiling. "I once knew the words. As I knew the words of every song. I am old now a-day. My memory hides from me. I will speak with the spirits. I will ask your question of them. In return, you must grant a barter. That is the way of the Waste. All must be balanced. Nothing may be gained without giving in return."

If the adventurers agree, the old man considers for a while. "My gift from you must be a new song. A song I never heard. Now, let us enjoy the day of forerunners."

REVERE YOUR ANCESTORS

THE ADVENTURERS SPEND the day among the folk of the Red Horse Mane. They learn the history and beliefs of the tribe. They witness wild dances and strange musical performances, eat and drink, gamble on and participate in riding games, compete with the best slingers, and so on. The day is full of joy, games, food, wonders, strange conversations, and rhythmical music.

As the night draws near, everyone ignores the constant drizzle and gathers at the center of the camp, where a great fire crackles from wood carefully cured for the occasion. The central figure is old Baku, who speaks softly in Mong. He talks for half an hour, then stands up. He and his assistants circulate, and let all who wish sip from bowls of ill-smelling liquor. The adventurers can choose to drink or not. Nadee probably turns up his nose at the idea.

Baku talks in rhythmical falling and rising tones. He calls to something unseen, and repeats strange names. Sometimes he throws strange-smelling herbs on the fire. Soon most of the Red Horse Manes chant with him. Drums beat, and gourds blow softly. The ritual continues the whole night, but most people quickly slip into trances and are not active participants.



BAKU THE SHAMAN, age 70, Man-Full-of-Songs

Chaos 95, Balance 120, Law 96

STR 7 CON 9 SIZ 8 INT 17 POW 18
DEX 8 APP 15 HP 9

Damage Bonus: -1D4.

Weapons: Wooden Staff 41%, damage 1D6+1-1D4

Armor: none.

Spells: Bonds Unbreakable (3), Bounty of Straasha (4), Buzzard Eyes (1), Flames of Kakatal (4), Gift of Grome (4), Heal (2), Liken Shape (4), Rat Vision (1), Summon Elemental (1), Wings of Lassa (4).

Skills: Art (Drums) 107%, Art (Song) 54%, Art (Music Lore) 380%, Common Tongue 35%, Insight 96%, Million Spheres 11%, Mong 85%, Natural World 102%, Navigate 77%, 'pande 13%,

Physik 92%, Potions 56%, Ride 94%, Search 86%, Unknown Kingdoms 20%, Young Kingdoms 33%.

SPIRIT MOTION

Adventurers who drank of the odd liquor soon feel their spirits leave their bodies. They find themselves in unknown lands. They travel in strange forests never seen, walk a land of strange landmarks, and meet people never seen before. At some point in this mental journey each converses with a person or a creature somehow familiar to them but never met, either in their own life or via ancestral tales.

This person or creature might be some long-dead relative, a Beast-Lord, the spirit-totem of some animal who instructs the adventurer in that animal's lore, or a spirit-guide who will be important to the adventurer hereafter. Or the encounter might be with someone from the past with whom the adventurer has not finished—a dead lover, the adventurer's dead parents, a relative who has been wronged, a person whom the adventurer needs to repay in some way, or someone who will suffer a terrible fate unless something is done. The meeting generates strong feelings, and the adventurer always remembers the experience, and treasures it.

As the night ends, so do the chants and visions. The exhausted adventurers are tired to their bones. In the gray and damp dawn, one of Baku's young apprentice shamans summons the adventurers to a lean-to high above the river.

THE HYMN FOR LOVERS' SAKES

THE OLD SHAMAN SMILES when the adventurers arrive at the bark-roofed shelter. He asks them if they have had a good night. He could explain some of the strange visions the adventurers experienced last night, if they ask him. Much is unique experience, related to the individual which must be discovered personally.

Baku's ancestors were kindly last night. He has learned the text and the tones of the "Hymn for Lovers' Sakes." He has parchment, if they wish to write it down, but he will be patient in teaching it so that they can memorize it. He warns them that the hymn is a powerful thing, crafted by a madman later sent to eternal torture in the chambers of Chardros. Used capriciously, the hymn can do terrible wrongs. They should destroy their notes about it when they've freed Lady Vesna.

The adventurers now have to pay their end of the bargain. If possessing the skill Art (Song) and receiving a critical success roll on D100, an adventurer can compose a new song or recall an old one unknown to the man who knows all songs. Any other result fails.

If they fail to give Baku a new song, he smiles beatifically and says, "No mind. If you do not have it, you must find it later. Then you bring it to me." The adventurers understand that Baku is serious, and feels theirs to be a genuine obligation.

If the adventurers possess the demon necklace found in the ruins at the Sighing Desert, they could ask it to sing one of its obscure songs. It takes only a few minutes to choose a song so strange, so perverse, and so obscure that it astonishes the old shaman. Only a fumble (00 on a D100) shows that the demon does not find such a song.

LADY FRIDA

If asked about Lady Frida, he looks at them curiously, saying that she is thought to be high between the peaks of the Unnamed Mountains. Those peaks protect the Weeping Waste from the deadly sands of the desert beyond. The people of the Weeping Waste believe her a goddess, but Baku knows her to be a human partisan of Law, as dangerous in her way as a god.

She is known for her songs. For a long time now she has not visited the Waste, but remains among the eternal snows, surrounded by animal friends, and overseeing the lives of the mountain beasts. Many in the Waste revere her, pray to her, and sacrifice food and clothes to her. He does not know the location of her home, but the children of Lassa love her songs and carry them everywhere, and by following their music upwind she can be found.

Baku warns the adventurers to avoid Schaal-Mar, the Lake That Is the Birthplace of Rivers, a great body of water cradled next to the mountains. As Stret-Sha's sacred home, the lake is fiercely protected against desecration.

PREPARATIONS

Let the adventurers prepare as they wish for the expedition into the mountains. Many tribes come to trade with the Red

Horse Manes, and almost anything provided by a tribal culture is available at the edge of the gorge.

For the perilous ice and blizzards of the mountains Baku suggests the woolen clothing and felt and leather boots available from many tribes. The Red Horse Manes can provide bags of dried fish and enough ponies to carry them all. "Leave your beasts here in exchange," he says, "for they surely will refuse the snows, or else die in them. We will trade your steeds to those who will tend them well." The Red Horse Manes' sturdy, shaggy ponies are snappish, but are also strong and sure-footed, almost more goat than horse.

A SOLDIERLY CAMP

IN ADVANCE OF THE ADVENTURERS or still dogging them, Sevik and his men survey the Unnamed Mountains. Everyone he talks to agrees that the mountains cannot be crossed—if they could be crossed, the desert would have done so.

Mindful of his losses already, Sevik instead heads west. At the base of the slope leading up to the Weeping Waste they make a comfortable camp and settle in to wait for the adventurers to return. At any one time thereafter, four cavalymen are on leave, enjoying the fleshpots of Karlaak and congratulating themselves on serving a man with such far-seeing military mind.

WINTER

"WHAT LOVE WITHSTANDS
THE LOVE OF TRUTH?"

FROM THE ETERNAL MISTS of the Weeping Waste, the ground toward the Unnamed Mountains rises, the mists lessen, and the cold wind hardens. The rain blowing out of the Weeping Waste turns to snow. In the foothills, snow is everywhere. Ice covers the lakes and streams. The adventurers have been following a narrow track into the mountains, but as the snow deepens, the way becomes difficult. Even the ponies sag and become disheartened. The adventurers need to camp, build shelters and fires, and wait out the storm.

A MOUNTAIN VILLAGE

WHEN THE ADVENTURERS can press on, a few miles bring them to a village of two-story cabins rising above the deep snows, and crammed with people and animals. A hundred mountain folk live here.

They are awkward around strangers, but they can be bargained into giving food and shelter for the night, if the adventurers don't mind sleeping downstairs with cows, chickens, dogs, hogs, and ponies. They can offer warmer felt clothing than the adventurers own, and have snowshoes, skis, rawhide rope, and other mountain gear. These keen traders are especially interested in jewelry, daggers, armor, musical instruments, wine, and other goods useful in whiling away long winters.



RYBERG 94

VILLAGE IN SNOW



LADY FRIDA AND URION

OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS

Lady Frida is known to all. She is real, though none have seen her of late. At times she has punished those who trap animals for their skins. Now no one traps or hunts without great need; those who do are dead. They say that Lady Frida is a goddess, a powerful deity who rules the mountains and has as allies all the animals of the mountains.

They also believe that she protects the righteous among the mountain folk from avalanches, lightning, and other dangers. On quiet nights, when the aurora dances in the skies, the winds bring her songs and laughter. Sometimes they hear the thunderous growls of Urion, her white wolf companion. Her music comes often. When it does, the party can follow it. Perhaps she will allow them into her presence.

A DARKER PRESENCE

They also tell of a demon hunter in the area. Villages have been smashed to the ground and people have been found ripped in pieces, slain by great claws. The mountain people warn the adventurers against entering the mountains, but do not try to stop them.



A SONG OF WONDER

SOON AN EVENING COMES when the music of Lady Frida is plain to every ear. To become aware of the music, each adventurer needs a successful Listen roll, but only one needs to distinguish it for all to notice it and follow it. They hear a beautiful voice singing, accompanied to perfection on a lute. The winds diffuse the precise notes and elegant phrases, blending stories of love, longing, and despair into dreamlike tapestries.

The next morning the music has stopped, but the adventurers can take the direction from which the music came. At noon the music begins again, wafting across mountain ridges and frozen lakes. All day they adventurers search for the elusive source, without success. The night is silent.

Very early the next morning, long before the sun rises, the music begins again, now louder than before. Strong winds blow out their tracks. They are alone in a strange world of glaciers, cols, cirques, and knife-edged cliffs, but the music erases their fears and draws them on.

That evening they see a bright fire across a broad valley. If they press on, they can see a small snow-dressed cottage, a young woman sitting by a fire outside. Beside her a giant white wolf rests quietly. In her hands she holds a beautiful lute that she plays upon now and then. She smiles warmly at her

SKI, A NEW SKILL

NO PATH EXISTS beyond the village, and the snow is too deep for the ponies. When they must, the villagers move about by sleigh, sledge, skis, and snowshoes. The new skill Ski covers most ways of successfully moving through or over snow, of evaluating climatic conditions related to snow, and of creating, maintaining, and repairing such equipment. Base chance for this skill is 20%. With a successful skill roll at the beginning of the day, an adventurer can move at walking speed for the entire day, modified for terrain conditions. Failing, reduce his or her rate by one-third.

Given level or downhill terrain, skis and sleighs can be up to three times faster than snowshoes and freight sledges. When needed, the gamemaster must judge the conditions and set the maximum speed.

Because it relies on a trained specific breed of dog, very cold temperatures, flat terrain, and thin snow, the dog sled is a special exception not covered by this skill.

visitors. "Welcome, friends, you must be cold. Come forward and warm yourselves."

LADY FRIDA'S QUEST

Lady Frida is friendly and open, lovely and beautiful. She offers them hot food and warm drink, and serenades them until they have taken their fill. With raven black hair to her shoulders, blue-grey eyes, and smooth pale skin, dressed in white wool robes, and long white boots, and a white mantle, she seems made of snow herself. She is tall, and in appearance looks about age twenty, though her manner is remote and timeless.

The adventurers are not invited into her home. Frida uncovers a radiant stone at her throat that turns the circle of firelight into a warm summer afternoon. Many adventurers gratefully remove their heaviest garments and loll in the snow as if it were hot sand, but those adventurers who are allies of Chaos are unable to relax. To them, the chill air and unwelcome winds irritate and bite. Sullen growls and rumbles from the ice and snow suggests a place of threat and danger.

She absorbs the deeds the adventurers have done, the unrequited love of Nadec Ascand, the treachery of Captain Sevik, and the hope that Lady Frida can absolve poor Vesna of her reptilian doom. Frida listens and weeps at the cruelty of Chaos. Upon hearing her role in this thing, and of Nadec's dream of winning Vesna's hand through an enchantment achieved by Lady Frida herself, she frowns and says she must long ponder such a deed. Pleas by a frantic Nadec only deepen the frown on her face.

Lady Frida then takes a long walk with Urion. They move across the snow and ice like ghosts, neither sinking in nor leaving footprints. They return after midnight. When she and Urion emerge from the darkness, she has decided. Frida will help them as they request, but the animals of her mountains are in danger. She will not leave until assured of their safety. In this, the adventurers can aid her, as she explains.

A dangerous demon-thing stalks the mountains, and kills what it finds. It has slept two thousand years in a mountain cave. When a Dharzi sorcerer collapsed during the Dharzi-Melnibonéan war, it carried him here. The demon has

guarded its master since then, waiting for the sorcerer to revive.

A few weeks ago the demon woke, and wrought havoc among the villages and wildlife of the area. Already some refugees have fled its reach. Frida placed Membrane of Law over the cavern-mouth, but the demon is able somehow to pass through it or else has another entrance unknown to her. Some spell similar to Membrane keeps her out, and she has not been able to break it: she is not expert in magic.

It may be that adventurers less Lawful than she may pass through. If the adventurers aid her, and destroy demon and sorcerer, she will leave her beloved mountains and go with them to Ilmar to aid poor Vesna.

ADVENTURER ARROGANCE

Forcing Lady Frida to do as the adventurers want is unwise. Her sword, her magic, and her wolf Urion and other animals protect her, for many Beast-Lords favor her.

Urion is her special guardian. He gives off a terrible howl and springs to defend his mistress. Many howls echo his, as dozens of huge white wolves appear near the house, precipitating from the snows. If they kill or capture Lady Frida, the adventurers must subsequently defend themselves from wild bears, snow leopards, eagles, herds of reindeer, and



THE ZOMBIE BEAST

ZOMBIE BEAST OF DHARZI

THIS CREATURE GUARDS the tomb of Ryn Iln Ryn. It is an ancient Dharzi construct, a sorcerous meld of animal and reptile. It has a bison head with a forked tongue, a powerful ape body, and shimmering snake skin. Three sets of condor wings waggle on its back, but seem useless for flying. Its eyes are glassy and dead. The sorcerer's prearranged magic has awakened it, that it may begin to cleanse the region of life in preparation for the sorcerer's revival. (See illustration on page 55.)

The zombie beast charges and gores, or else grabs its prey in its ape arms. Captured prey is bitten on the round following, and then hurled away of the tomb.

STR 54 CON 27 SIZ 24 INT 1 POW 4
DEX 7 MOV shamble 4 / levitate 14 HP 26

Damage Bonus: +4D6.

Weapons: Bite 80%, damage 1D8 + POT 12 venom

Gore 80%, damage 1D10+4D6

Wrestle 80%, damage special.

Armor: 1D2 snake skin. Impaling weapons do half damage.

Skills: Follow Instructions 100%, Sense Intruder 100%.



RYN ILN RYN

others of her animal-friends, all seeking her release or vengeance for her death.

ABOUT LADY FRIDA

She is cool, aloof, and stern, an ice-like beauty dedicated to her beasts and music. She is a Champion of Law and an implacable enemy of Chaos. She is also a master of potions with which she succors mountain animals wounded or ill.

She is sworn to the White Lady Theril, Goddess of Inspiration and bringer of music to humanity. That Lawful deity has granted her the ability to age one year in every hundred. Frida must deny love to all but her animals and to the goddess, or fall from the goddess's high regard.

SOME COMPLICATIONS

Given Lady Frida's strong allegiance to Law, some adventurers may take exception to her, perhaps even daring to harm or to try to kill her. The skills and magic of Lady Frida are powerful, and her allies among the beasts of the mountains are legion. Another possibility is that an adventurer or two may fall in love with the beautiful lady. They get no encouragement from her, and face a hopeless battle for her interest. If someone is obviously lovesick for her, she could reveal her dedication to Theril. Other possibilities exist. Should Lady Frida die, Vesna's transformation is unlikely unless Nadec can fill Frida's shoes.



AT THE BURIAL CAVE

BECAUSE THE CAVE is far across the ice fields, Frida calls down a wolf-steed for every adventurer. In a few hours the great beasts have carried everyone dozens of miles across blinding glaciers and along cliff-side trails barely narrow enough for paws, let alone feet. Riding these steeds takes no riding rolls, for the wolves take no direction. Riders hang on, close their eyes, and grit their teeth. The wolves follow Lady Frida and Urion, and no one else.

Approaching the cave Lady Frida specifies, they see no footprints in the snow. Perhaps the demon has wings. Snow and ice fills most of the entrance. The adventurers must crawl in or take out their swords to hack a walkway through the snow banks.

WHO CAN ENTER

A simple Dharzi entry spell controls the cave mouth. The spell restricts passage in or out of the cave to those whose Chaos points are the highest of their three forces, or to those who loudly call out for passage in the name of one of the Lords of Hell. Though common an age ago, it is a tough enough spell, as Lady Frida has discovered. The wolves, creatures of the Balance, are similarly baffled.

As long as the spell is sustained by the caster, the Dharzi sorcerer in this case, only a being of POW 30 passing through the field breaks the spell permanently. When the caster starts a new spell, his maintenance of this one is ended, and all can enter or exit.

Those who cannot enter feel everywhere a smooth cool surface like glass. If they chipped away rock at the sides of the cave, they would find this impermeable surface inside the rock, though it is not really there—only there in the sense that it denies motion through.

WITHIN THE CAVE

Two chambers make up the whole of the cave. The front one is small, containing reindeer bones left by long-departed predators. A short narrow tube leads into a larger rear chamber, now empty except for a bier of river stones on which rests a perfectly preserved human body. This is the ancient sorcerer. As the adventurers enter, cool air rushes by them, but they can see nothing.

The Dharzi sorcerer's hands are clasped over his breast, holding a small wooden staff. His clothes are all of black satin. Ice and frost are everywhere. His body is hard as stone. At his neck hangs a small medallion engraved with the octagon of Chaos. At his hip hangs a broadsword. His brown cat-like eyes are wide open and his face bears a mad expression of anticipation. He is short, broad-chested, and his features are saturnine. He is completely motionless.

As they reach the body, a hiss of air can be heard. If they touch or try to harm the body, the Dharzi beast then appears.

As long as the Dharzi-thing continues to fight, the sorcerer does not change. If the construct dies, it croaks out three words: "Awake, O master!"

The sorcerer hears. Rising from his stone slab, he leaves strands of hair, fragments of clothing, and patches of skin frozen to the stones beneath him. The Dharzi sorcerer slowly stands. With every movement comes the sound of tearing tissues and snapping bones. His clumsy, alien movements are horrifying. He lurches across the cave, then suddenly he rises in the air and moves smoothly. His gestures become fluid and lifelike. "Nâgi! Nâgi!" he intones, then smirks and switches to Proto-Common. "Naughty, naughty!"

The sneering sorcerer is fully awake. Lips moving softly as he utters certain spells, he takes up his weapons and moves to the attack. Outside, the barrier disappears. All the members of the party can enter the cave.

RYN ILN RYN, ageless, Revived Dharzi Sorcerer

Chaos 500, Balance 0, Law 0

STR 26 CON 24 SIZ 16 INT 18 POW 19
DEX 6 APP 0 HP 20

Damage Bonus: +2D6.

Weapons: Enchanted Broadsword* 200%, damage 1D8+1+2D6

Small Shield 190%, damage kb+1D3+2D6

Claw 80%, damage 1D4+2D6

* this weapon never leaves the sorcerer's hand unless the sorcerer wills it, rendering him immune to fumbles. A 00 result is just a miss.

Armor: 1D10, frozen body. Impaling weapons do half damage; no weapon impales.

Spells: Chaos Warp (4), Curse of Chaos (4), Hell's Armor (1-4), Hell's Razor (1-4), Hell's Talons (1-4), Pox (1), Refutation (1-4), Undo Magic (1-4), strange Dharzi magicks at the gamemaster's option.

Skills: Bargain 135%, Dharzi 95%, Dodge 40%, Listen 45%, Mel-nibonéan 45%, Million Spheres 24%, Proto-Common 35%, Search 75%.

BACK TO ILMAR

PRESUMABLY THE ADVENTURERS succeed in their quest and bring to Ilmar the three requisites for restoring Vesna to human form. Their return to Ilmar can be as quick or as complicated as the gamemaster desires.

If Captain Sevik is still alive, the road back to Ilmar can be stacked with dangers. The Captain traps, ambushes, and poisons as long as he can. These encounters are not outlined, since it seems likely that Sevik has been defeated in the desert or in the Weeping Waste.

LOVE'S LOSS

AMID FLOWERS AND SOFT WINDS they arrive at the villa of Kimroc du Feadio. The high priest of Law has aged greatly. His features are eroded, and his deep clear eyes are sunken and dull. His hair is mostly gone, and the remnants hang in ugly strings. His thin body is heavily bent and his clothes are no longer white and beautiful but gray and torn.

He greets the adventurers and Nadec with a cackling, heavily-broken voice. "The winner," he says with a crooked smile, revealing a toothless mouth. He congratulates the participants, looking with mad and feverish eyes upon the objects brought to him, cackling, humming, laughing, and talking to himself. There is no need of an Insight roll. Feadio is now insane.

He shows his guests into his house. Vesna has been moved to the tower. Everywhere now are animal specimens that he has stuffed and mounted. His collection includes a bestial man from Org. As they walk rapidly through the deserted villa, a successful Search roll notices something like a stuffed human hand reaching out motionlessly from behind an arras. There is no opportunity to investigate, for the gleeful high priest leads them up the stairs to Vesna.

Congratulating them and laughing insanely all the time, he listens to their story, asking irrelevant and insane questions over and over. Finally, as they finish their story, he shows them into the darkened room of his daughter.

Lamplight reveals a reptilian Vesna bigger and more hideous. Her body has turned gray and jelly-like, her scaly skin is falling apart, and her red tongue runs frantically over her black, fat lips. Some of her fangs have fallen out. Vesna's breathing is labored, irregular, and harsh. She makes toad-like mutters. Like a toothpick, the tail of a rat wedges in a corner of her mouth.

Filth and animal bones litter the room. A successful Idea roll decides that Vesna has not been cared for and that no servants are in the house. Stout wooden boards block the windows, blocking sunlight and vision. "Vesna's maid, Anna, was driven insane by her charge's metamorphosis," Kimroc cackles, neglecting to add that he slew her and stuffed her, along with the remainder of the servants.

Poor Nadec succumbs as usual and falls to the floor, unconscious. This amuses Kimroc. He kneels beside Nadec and holds his hand solicitously. "Everything is prepared," the high priest announces. "When night comes, we shall restore my daughter. Then you can become her husband."

METAMORPHOSIS

AT SUNSET THE adventurers, Nadec, and Lady Frida return to the villa. All is prepared for the banishment of the terrible curse. The boards have been removed from Vesna's window, and Lady Frida waits in the garden below, ready to play the lute and sing the words of the hymn. As the full moon looms above the roofs of Ilmar she begins. Suddenly only her lute-strings can be heard. The tones fall and rise, rise and fall; honey-like they enter every sense of the hearers. Her fingers dance across the frets with impossible grace and skill. Then she starts to sing the hymn, and all else disappears. The black of night is complete. The only light radiates from Vesna's window: no stars, no moon, no friends, no building. Frida's voice ascends and builds.

As the hymn ends, something happens. The cool precise notes from the lute blend into a hovering tone that increases in volume without losing timbre or pitch. Glass shatters, the strings of the instrument break, the wood of the lute cracks, yet the tone does not end. Lady Frida's voice rises so high that it no longer can be heard, though all can feel it. Then voice and lute blend into one, and everyone loses consciousness.

The adventurers slowly wake. In the garden the beautiful troubadour sprawls on the grass. Tears stream from her eyes, her fingers bleed, her lungs gasp for air that they do not find, her body convulses. If an adventurer has fallen in love with her, she addresses that person.

"The magic within the hymn was more terrible than I could have dreamed. Nothing living survives perfection, and I have been exposed to the unyielding truth of Law." She turns to Nadec. "I gave Vesna to herself, Nadec. Forgive me. You yourself must win her or lose her. Use no magic but that which is in your heart. I could not free Vesna's body and yet enslave her soul." From far away comes the howl of wolves. Lady Frida is dead.

Chortles of joy come from Vesna's room as Kimroc beholds the return of his daughter. Racing upstairs, the adventurers and Nadec see a beautiful girl moving uncertainly from the inner chamber. Her screaming, mad-eyed, gleeful father clutches at her. Burdened by him, she reclines on a divan. She is thin and weak but still incredibly beautiful. Her breathing is normal. Her cloud of blonde hair floats everywhere, while her deep blue eyes track across the group, lingering no longer on Nadec or Kimroc than on anyone else. She smiles wearily, then calls emphatically, "Avian! Avian! Avian, my one true love, where are you?"

THE NEW VESNA

BY PRONOUNCING VESNA'S name as both halves in the hymn, Lady Frida has reunited Vesna's body and her mind. Vesna is as she was before her father unwisely swore to the might of Arioch.

At her words, her father cunningly caresses her hair and tells her that a year has passed. The monk Avian has departed on a long pilgrimage to save his own soul, and will not return. "I



VESNA'S INTENDED FATE

have given your hand in marriage to worthy Nadec Ascand, heir in this city to a great fortune. Nadec and his friends succeeded in the quest to find the magic that freed you, my dear."

Vesna bursts into tears and pleads that Anma, her maid, is shown in. Feadio shakes his head. "Anma died of grief for you last winter. There have been many changes. Even I, high priest of Law, am not the man I was." He bids Vesna sleep, saying that he will talk with her in the morning. Feadio has moved to the room next to Vesna's; there he conducts her and places her in his bed. She soon sleeps.

CONFERENCES

Feadio and Nadec discuss the wedding behind closed doors. Nadec thinks that Vesna will need months to recover before she is ready to wed. Feadio vehemently disagrees, saying that the wedding must be tomorrow afternoon. He keeps repeating, "The sooner the better, the sooner the better," in a manner so horrible that Nadec suspects the old man's sanity. Nadec leaves, however, for it is traditional in Ilmar that the bride must conceal herself until the wedding oath is sealed.

Despite what he has seen, Nadec is unable to imagine that a high priest of Law could go mad. The adventurers have fulfilled their contract with him. He asks them to come to his home to be paid off, and invites them to the wedding. Then he wakes up his favorite tailor. There's lots to be done by tomorrow.

The adventurers have had several clues that things are very wrong in the Feadio villa. Now they must decide if they want to rescue Nadec from himself one more time, and make a success of all of the time spent on the quest. Essentially they can choose to immediately reenter the villa and steal away with Vesna, take a little longer time and attempt to gain aid from Law and Ilmar and arrest the mad high priest, or politely await the wedding tomorrow and hope for the best.

When Nadec returns home, Sir Areehn, Nadec's father, welcomes his son with open arms and congratulates him upon the completion of his quest. This is the first time his boy has proved himself a man of the world, and he is proud. He also informs Nadec that Kimroc du Feadio has gone insane, and is about to be relieved of all powers and duties concerning the Church of Law. This should confirm the adventurers in their proper course, Vesna's immediate rescue. Though the Ascand and Feadio villas are somewhat apart, they can easily run there in twenty minutes or less.

THE FATE OF VESNA

Kimroc du Feadio poisons his sleeping daughter at midnight, and immediately begins stuffing and mounting her body in anticipation of the wedding the following afternoon. His practice on Avian, on the servants, and on a few handy passersby now serves him well. He works quickly and decisively, and he is justly proud of his new technique for quick-curing human skin.

Feadio insanely believes that he can preserve Vesna's beauty for all time, and that this is the only way that her soul can be kept pure. A pure soul allows her to become one with the perfection of Law, the Holy Bridegroom Three Times Three. Feadio never understands that he is doing the work of Chaos. By the wedding, when he wheels in her robed and ghastly shell of skin and hair, the Dukes of Disorder irrevocably rule his heart.

Until midnight, Nadec and the adventurers can save Vesna at little effort. Of its residents, only Feadio and his daughter remain alive in a villa that has become a grotesque tomb. Vesna sleeps, and Feadio is too insane to offer more than token resistance. Kindly gamemasters might have Captain Sevik effect the rescue, if the adventurers do not. Of course, even Nadec can achieve this rescue by himself, so the gamemaster may freely choose Vesna's fate.

INTERVENTION

FROM THE TIME THAT THE adventurers notice Anma's hand extending from behind some tapestry, they have it in their power to rescue Vesna. It can happen that afternoon, or any time before Feadio poisons her at midnight.

Let them begin by discovering Anma, and then exploring the ground floor and cellar of the villa. They locate nine more stuffed humans, either fully mounted or precariously propped against corridor walls or tilted stiffly against chairs like toppled cactus plants. Avian, in his russet-brown robes of Law, should be the last discovered. When the group has seen the taxidermy and the taxidermy studio in the cellar, they can race to Vesna's sleeping form to defend her against Feadio.

There, his dream imperiled, Feadio advances with a scalpel. As they wish, he may be captured and imprisoned, or killed out of hand. Only a fumble by an attacking or capturing character gives this relic a chance to hit, but a successful blow would make a fitting final amusement for Ariocho.

VESNA'S FUTURE

If rescued at the cost of her father's life, Vesna cannot forgive Nadec or any of the adventurers, for Feadio was so feeble and maddened that he could have been captured at little risk. She marries later, perhaps unhappily to Bahar Sevik or someone like him, but never to Nadec Ascand.

If her father is saved and imprisoned, he dies within a few weeks. His poor Vesna is now doomed to decay a minute at a time into old age, infirmity, wrinkles, and pain. Vesna, saddened for him and longing for Avian, gradually turns to the example of the Lawful Champion Frida, who gave her life that Vesna might be saved. In payment, Vesna dedicates her life to Theril as Frida did, and never marries. In a trunk she keeps the taxidermied Avian, whom she never stops loving.

THE WEDDING

IF THE ADVENTURERS AND Nadec do nothing, they dress in their best clothes and return to the villa the next day. A few of the Ascands, a few representatives of Law, and a few important city leaders attend; the wedding date is set too early and too poorly announced for many to come.

The marriage ceremony is led by Kimroc du Feadio, in the main hall, dressed in white with the upward-pointing arrow of Law embodied on his chest. His manner is gracious, his speech powerful and pompous. Feadio asks the bridegroom if he intends to love and care for the Lady Vesna du Feadio in need and lust for eternity. The young man agrees loudly.

"So too does Vesna du Feadio, by whose hand I give into yours," the father says with a broad smile, and moves aside the white curtains veiling the standing bride. The tug on her hand brings her forward, for the mount is wheeled. "You may kiss the bride."

Nadec gives one long look at her motionless stitched face and dead glass eyes, and faints straight away. Pandemonium follows as the stuffed and mounted truth sinks in. Kimroc du Feadio smiles proudly. He allows himself to be led away, for his dream is completed.

CONCLUSION

WHETHER VESNA SURVIVES or Nadec achieves his heart's desire, the Ascand family sees that the adventurers are justly paid, according to the terms outlined at the beginning of the adventure. If the adventurers aided in saving Vesna, Nadec gives each adventurer ten silvers, a small fortune. Then also, their reputations spread, and those with allegiances are feted by those locals important to the ways of Chaos, Balance, or Law, respectively.

The adventurers probably have been given a few allegiance points during their quest. If they failed through inaction to save Vesna, each adds one Chaos and one Law, and loses three Balance points, even if the Balance number of an adventurer lowers into minus points.

If they saved Vesna by themselves, give each three Balance points for natural behavior.

If they sought out the approval of governing or church authorities before rescuing Vesna, give each two Law points for deferring and one Balance point for following through. ■



AMULET WITH PHALKNAP THE DEMON

FOUR NEW LAWFUL SPELLS

CONTRIBUTE TO TRUTH (1) — Range is sight. Lawful. The caster overcomes the target by receiving a successful POW:POW Resistance Table roll. With a successful cast, the target feels he or she must tell the truth in response to a question, or else must look away and remain silent. The target has no sense that he or she can mislead or tell an outright lie unless the spell accompanying that question has failed.

If the target answers, he or she tries to answer as fully as the question demands, but never more than a few sentences. Follow-up or new questions require new casts of the spell and the sacrifice of another magic point for each.

LAWFUL SLEEP (1-4) — Range is sight. Lawful. Concentrating upon an image symbolic of Law, the caster attempts to force the nearest person to fall asleep immediately for 20-CON minutes. The target can resist the spell by receiving a D100 roll of CON x3 or less. Each additional time the spell is cast on the same target, increase the CON multiplier by one, to x4, x5, and so on. Failing, the spell may not be recast on that target for 24 hours.

During sleep, those with Law as their highest allegiance points experience dreams of hopeful perfection and glory. Those with Balance as their highest allegiance experience threatening dreams that cause them to sweat and murmur piteously. Those with Chaos as their highest allegiance scream horribly, plead endlessly, and awake bewildered and unable to act during that combat round.

THE TRUTH OF LOVE (3) — Range is sight and hearing, a maximum of 100 yards. Lawful. Only those with allegiance to Law can learn or cast this spell. Matching magic points against magic points on the Resistance Table, the caster causes the target to express or realize that which is dearest to him or her: a person, an animal, honor, decency, money, fighting, an allegiance, getting drunk, Law, Chaos, and so on. Once the person has expressed that love, he or she is unable to think of much else until Undo Magic or similar effects erase the compulsion. Adepts of Lady Theril are taught this spell.

WILL OF THERIL (4) — Range is sight plus hearing; assume 100 yards maximum in open terrain. Lawful. The target must have at least INT 1. Resolve the spell on the Resistance Table, POW of the caster against the target's INT.

The spell cast, the caster sings a few lines of a song, or plays a few bars of music upon an instrument that can carry a melody. When the music begins, the target feels a sudden compulsion to dance and, if succumbing to the spell, dances beautifully for ten combat rounds. The dance ended, he or she feels calm, refreshed, and of even temper. Anger, hatred, lust, disdain, and similar passions disappear for another ten combat rounds. At the end of that interval all components and expressions of the original personality return.

This spell taps deep levels in perceptive targets, who remember a total joy of expression perfectly tempered by an absolute discipline of form and movement. Adepts of Lady Theril are taught this spell. Undo Magic can defeat it.

STATISTICS

HERE FOLLOWS STATISTICS for the continuing individuals in this scenario. Statistics not here are found with the relevant incidents in the body of the adventure. For city guards, barbarians, etc., consult the Young Kingdoms Digest in the Elric rulesbook.

NADEC ASCAND, AGE 26, HEIR TO SIR AREEHN ASCAND

Chaos 4, Balance 25, Law 30
 STR 12 CON 14 SIZ 13 INT 15 POW 10
 DEX 11 APP 15 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4.

Weapons: Dagger 61%, damage 1D4+2+1D4
 Short Sword 44%, damage 1D6+1+1D4
 Small Shield 45%, damage kb+1D3+1D4

Armor: 1D6-1 (with or without helm), soft leather.

Skills: Art (Conversation) 96%, Art (Courtly Manners) 104%, Art (Declaim Poetry) 67%, Art (Formal Dance) 73%, Art (Play Lute) 82%, Art (Song) 69%, Art (Tell Story) 58%, Evaluate 66%, Insight 21%, Love Vesna 70%, Oratory 85%, Ride 39%, Scribe 76%, Swim 41%, Young Kingdoms 27%.

ILMIORAN CAVALRY, CAPTAIN SEVIK'S FINEST

A group of devoted and powerful soldiers, impressive in size and appearance. They are fiercely loyal to the Captain, as he asks nothing of them he is unwilling to do himself.

There are twenty riders in his squadron. All are provided below. As they die, cross them off. An early encounter with the full troop is deadly, but the perils of the journey whittle them down.

Damage Bonus: +1D4.

Weapons: Lance 90%, damage 1D8+1+3D6
 Small Shield 85%, damage kb+1D3+1D4, 20 hit points
 Broadsword 80%, damage 1D8+1+1D4
 Hunting Bow 75%, damage 1D6+1+1D2

Armor: 1D8+1 (helm on), half-plate.

Skills: Dodge 50%, Physik 40%, Ride 90%, Search 60%, Track 40%.

soldier	STR	CON	SIZ	DEX	POW	HP
#1	14	16	12	11	13	14
#2	16	16	14	11	15	15
#3	15	15	16	15	10	16
#4	13	17	12	10	14	15
#5	17	17	15	9	11	16
#6	14	15	14	14	12	15
#7	13	12	17	12	8	15
#8	16	14	15	14	10	15
#9	17	18	13	11	14	16
#10	15	13	14	14	13	14
#11	16	15	15	11	12	15
#12	18	14	12	13	16	13
#13	13	16	14	12	13	15
#14	14	18	15	11	11	17
#15	15	17	13	12	14	15
#16	14	12	16	14	11	14
#17	16	11	15	10	9	13
#18	13	12	17	12	11	15
#19	15	15	15	11	8	15
#20	16	13	12	13	11	13

BAHAR SEVIK, AGE 34, CAPTAIN OF CAVALRY

Chaos 19, Balance 20, Law 25
 STR 17 CON 17 SIZ 16 INT 14 POW 11
 DEX 12 APP 9 HP 17

Damage Bonus: +1D6.

Weapons: Lance 147%, damage 1D8+1+3D6
 Broadsword 126%, damage 1D8+1+1D6
 Small Shield 118%, damage kb+1D3+1D6, 20 hit points
 Hunting Bow 107%, damage 1D6+1+1D3
 Dagger 94%, damage 1D4+2+1D6
 Brawl 93%, damage 1D3+1D6
 Wrestle 89%, damage special

Armor: 1D10+2 (helm on), Young Kingdoms plate.

Skills: Bargain 51%, Climb 76%, Common Tongue 70%, Dodge 96%, Jump 92%, Listen 101%, Love Vesna 95%, Natural World 54%, Navigate 80%, Oratory 67%, Physik 84%, Ride 153%, Search 99%, Swim 77%, Throw 74%, Track 85%, Trap 63%, Young Kingdoms 43%.

KIMROC DU FEADIO, AGE 65, INSANE FATHER OF VESNA AND ILMAR'S HIGH PRIEST OF LAW

Chaos 88, Balance 8, Law 91
 STR 10 CON 11 SIZ 9 INT 21 POW 18
 DEX 10 APP 12 HP 10

Damage Bonus: none.

Weapons: Dagger 46%, damage 1D4+2

Armor: none.

Spells: none.

Demons & Elementals: none.

Skills: Common Tongue 105%, Craft (Taxidermy) 64%, High Speech 15%, Insight 33%, Listen 51%, Love Vesna 164%, Million Spheres 4%, Natural World 76%, Oratory 128%, Physik 95%, Potions 65%, Ride 35%, Scribe 110%, Search 45%, Unknown Kingdoms 15%, Young Kingdoms 51%.

LADY VESNA DU FEADIO, AGE 20, SAURIAN TRANSFORMED BEAUTY

These entries reflect Vesna under the effects of Arioch's curse. Morose and hopeless, she does little but lie on her bed. If attacked, she would desperately defend herself.

Chaos 15, Balance 18, Law 25
 STR 16 CON 37 SIZ 19 INT 15 POW 13
 DEX 3 APP 1 MOV 2 waddle HP 28

Damage Bonus: +1D6.

Abilities: Carapace, 1D6 toad-like skin.

Claw: at 60% damage 1D8+1D8

Skills: Catch Flies 36%, Eat Rats 66%.

Need: to be returned to human form.

LADY VESNA DU FEADIO, AGE 21, RESTORED BEAUTY

These statistics show Vesna in human form, once the effects of the curse are lifted.

Chaos 15, Balance 18, Law 25
 STR 9 CON 11 SIZ 12 INT 15 POW 13
 DEX 14 APP 21 HP 12

Damage Bonus: none.

Weapons: none.

Armor: none.

Skills: Art (Conversation) 67%, Art (Formal Dance) 81%, Common Tongue 75%, Craft (Tapestry) 92%, Indistinct Craving for Flies 03%, Love Avian the Pure Forever 95%, Natural World 44%, Oratory 58%, Scribe 70%, Young Kingdoms 38%.

ULAN-A-MEDOR, AGE 29, TREACHEROUS GUIDE

Chaos 29, Balance 17, Law 23

STR 14 CON 15 SIZ 11 INT 16 POW 13
DEX 11 APP 13 HP 13

Damage Bonus: +1D4.

Weapons: Desert Bow 129%, damage 1D8+2+1D2

Scimitar 103%, damage 1D8+1+1D4

Buckler 98%, damage KB+1D2+1D4

Beetle Pike 86%, damage 1D10+1D4

Dagger 84%, damage 1D4+2+1D4

Armor: 1D6-1 (cap on), Soft Leather.

Skills: Bargain 52%, Common Tongue 39%, Dodge 88%, Evaluate 44%, Hide 69%, Insight 38%, Jump 85%, Lesh 80%, Listen 64%, Move Quietly 82%, Natural World 57%, Navigate 71%, Positions 20%, Ride Camel 114%, Ride Horse 46%, Search 70%, Track 92%, Unknown Kingdoms 24%, Young Kingdoms 33%.

LADY FRIDA, AGE 347, TROUBADOUR CHAMPION OF LAW

Because of past and present services, Lady Frida has important relationships with several Beast-Lords, including Meerclar and Fileet.

Chaos 49, Balance 87, Law 275

STR 12 CON 13 SIZ 14 INT 22 POW 18
DEX 15 APP 19 HP 14

Damage Bonus: +1D4.

Weapons: Broadsword 175%, damage 1D8+1+1D4

Full Shield 149%, damage kb+1D4+1D4

Desert Bow 61%, damage 1D8+2+1D2

Dagger 59%, damage 1D4+2+1D4

Armor: 1D6-1 (no helm), Leather.

Spells: Bonds Unbreakable (3), Brazier of Power (4), Contribute to Truth* (1), Field of Law (4), Flames of Kakatal (4), Gift of Grome (4), Heal (2), Lawful Sleep* (1-4), Make Whole (3), Membrane of Law (3), Midnight (1), Summon Elemental (1), Truth of Love* (3), Undo Magic (1-4), Will of Theril* (4), Wings of Lassa (4). Gamemaster may add enchanted items as he or she sees fit. * new spell. See nearby box for summaries.

Skills: Art (Lute) 261%, Art (Singing) 173%, Art (Harp) 117%, Climb 93%, Common Tongue 110%, Insight 175%, Lesh 25%, Listen 98%, Melnibonéan 12%, Million Spheres 12%, Mong 40%, Move Quietly 121%, Natural World 288%, Physik 82%, Scribe 59%, Search 144%, Track 163%, Unknown Kingdoms 116%, Young Kingdoms 148%.

URION, LADY FRIDA'S WOLF COMPANION AND PURE LOVE

STR 16 CON 18 SIZ 13 INT 4 POW 18
DEX 16 MOV 12 run HP 16

Damage Bonus: +1D4.

Weapons: Bite 85%, damage 1D8+1D4

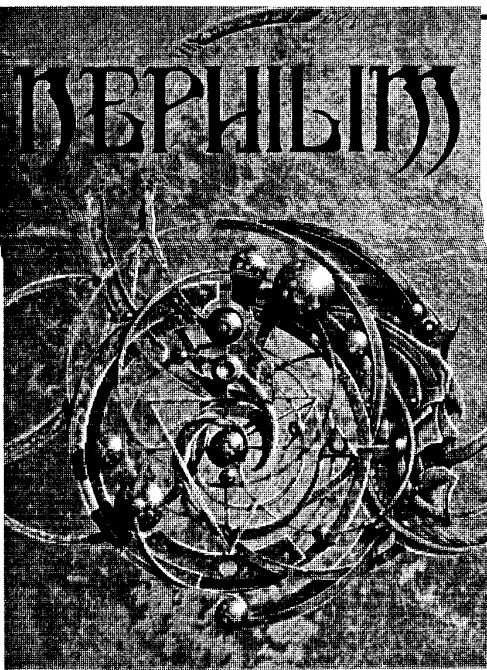
Knock-back 95%, damage 1D4

Armor: 1D2, thick fur.

Skills: Dodge 124%, Jump 85%, Listen 190%, Obey Frida 161%, Scent/Taste 340%, Track 160%. ■



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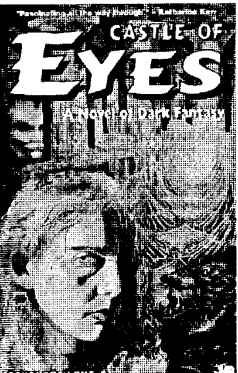


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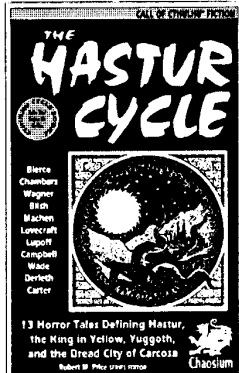
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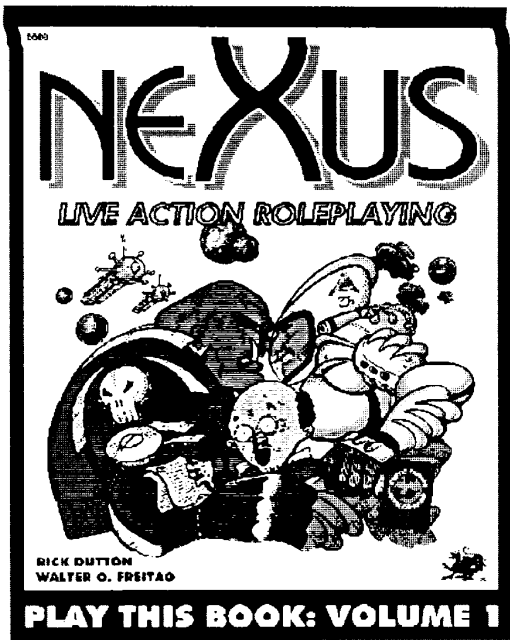
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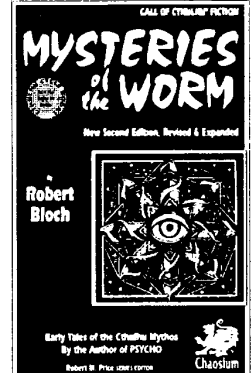
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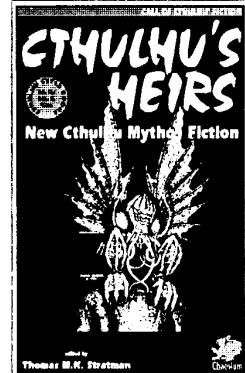
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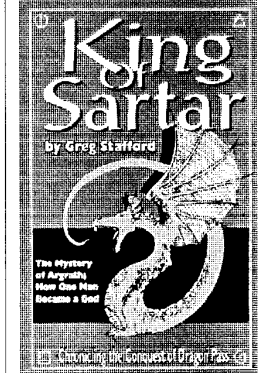
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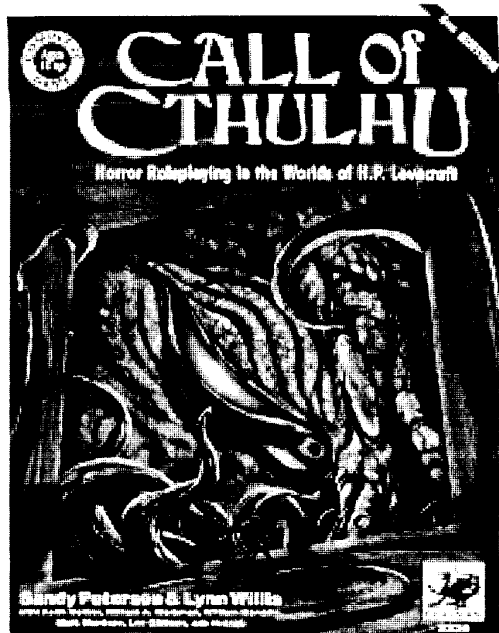
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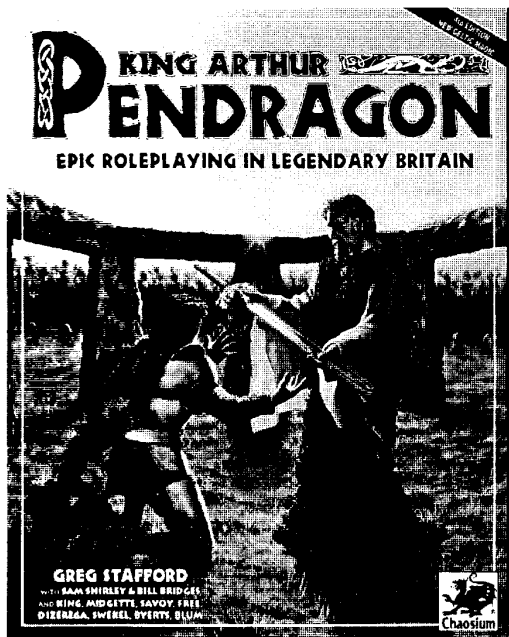
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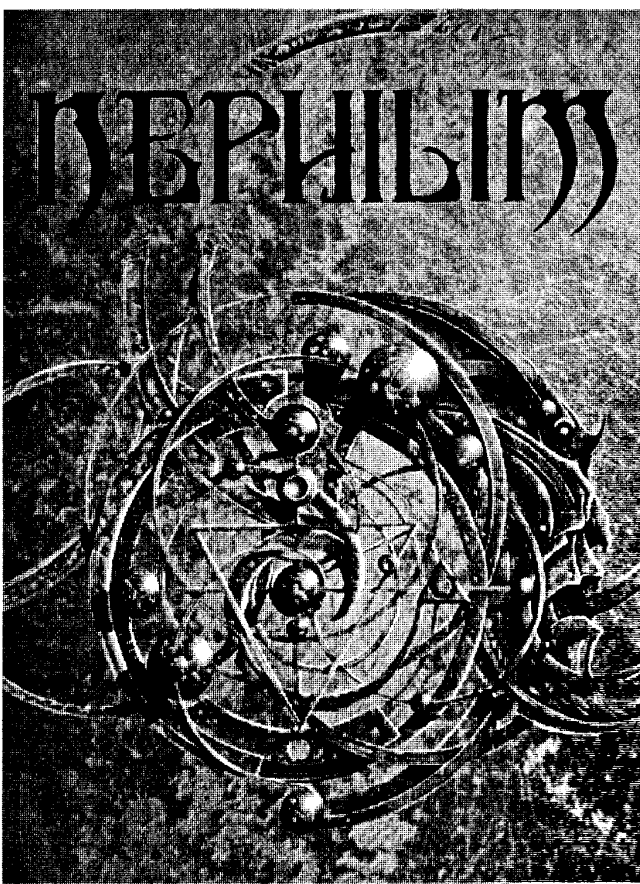
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