

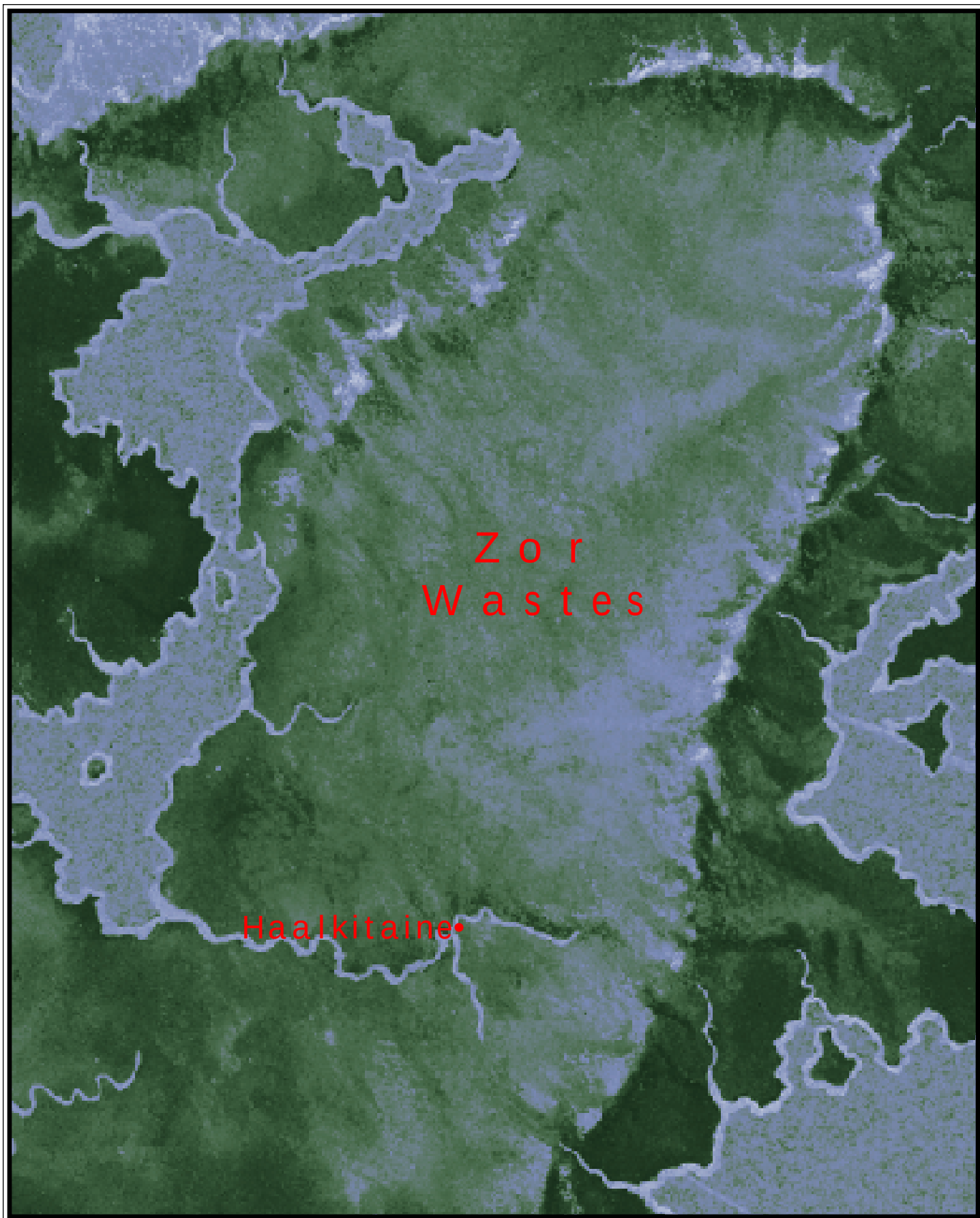
• PART VII • THE ZORIAN WASTES

There was a light like a thousand suns rising suddenly, but it was in the north, not east over the mountains. I turned away from the brilliance, but a moment later I was assaulted by the sound—and a hot wind which nearly knocked me to the ground. I did not realize it then, of course, but I had just seen the end of Zor.

Ilmaris Terisonen
4980 Second Era



he kingdom of Zor was the proudest of the six realms granted enchanted crowns, and not coincidentally the first to fall. Her population made up almost entirely of Talath peoples, Zor was a vast land of fertile fields and rich mountains. Now it is the most complete wasteland on Jaiman. The heart of the realm, once a region of rivers and rolling hills, is now a plain of dry and cracked earth. In the very center, where the capital city of Verzor once stood, is a huge crater hundreds of feet across, surrounded by an expanse of black glassy slag extending for miles. No sign of this glorious people remains, and no one enters this waste: legends say that those who venture too far into the waste return only to grow sick and die of an incurable malady.



• Northern Rhakhaan & Zor •

SURVIVORS OF THE FAIRWIND

Name	Lvl	Hits	AT(DB)	Sh	Gr	Melee Ob	Missile Ob	Mov
Jak Bralek (Second Officer)	3	32	1(5)	N	N	60 broadsword	—	5
Shay Fighter, Age: 28 Eyes: grey Hair: brown Build: medium Height: 6' 1" Skills: Swim35; Brawl20; Ldrshp10; Nav20; Sail45; WeathWatch25.								
Kort Vartase (Crewman)	2	27	1(0)	N	N	55 shortsword	—	0
Shay Rogue. Age: 22 Eyes: blue Hair: light brown Build: stocky Height: 5' 8" Skills: Swim10; Brawl10; Nav15; Sail25. BROKEN RIGHT ARM								
Arec Ul'thonn (Crewman)	2	25	1(10)	N	N	40 shortsword	—	5
Shay Fighter Age: 19 Eyes: brown Hair: brown Build: medium Height: 5' 10" Skills: Swim20; Sail25. SPRAINED ANKLE								
Puck Sanja (Crewman)	1	18	1(10)	N	N	25 dagger	—	10
Shay Fighter Age: 17 Eyes: grey Hair: blond Build: slender Height: 6' 0" Skills: Swim30; Sail25.								
Alia Nanar (Passenger)	2	24	1(0)	N	N	—	—	10
Laan NoProf Age: 27 Eyes: blue Hair: blond Build: slender Height: 5' 5" Skills: Ride25; Swim5; Dance25; Music15; Sing10.								
Batshi Nuoren (Passenger)	2	21	1(0)	N	N	5 dagger	—	5
Laan NoProf Age: 24 Eyes: hazel Hair: blond Build: slender Height: 5' 3" Skills: Ride; Act10; Cook20; Dance25; Music5; Seduct10; Sing.								
Iorak Halsinjen (Mrchnt)	5	35	1(0)	N	N	45 dagger	—	0
Laan Fighter (Merchant, RMC II) Age: 45 Eyes: grey Hair: grey Build: medium Height: 6' 0" Skills: Ride40; Act30; Admin15; Appr68; Brib30; Diplom16; Gamb120; Trade85.								
Daav Halsinjen (Mer. Son)	1	18	1(10)	N	N	15 dagger	—	15
Laan Fighter Age: 14 Eyes: grey Hair: blond Build: slender Height: 5' 0" Skills: Climb15; Ride15; S&H20; Swim5; Acrob5; AthlG15; Sing20.								
KEY: See page ???								

1•TREK THROUGH THE WASTES

The temperature is 50° F, though it seems warmer under the bright midday sun as the characters assess their situation. The ship is completely destroyed. Captain Tenak is dead along with his first mate, and all but three of the crew. The two women passengers are alive, but their bodyguard is dead, the jewel merchant and his son are alright, but the Shay couple are dead.

The dead must be buried and then what can be salvaged taken from the ship (hopefully some food and water). Then someone must take charge of the group. Jak (the second mate) will do so unless he gets a serious challenge.

GM Note: Remember that the PCs have no way of knowing where they are! They could be in the East for all they know. By midafternoon, one of the crewmen will be able to tell that they appear to be in a latitude somewhat north of where they were, but he's not sure.

■PC Roll: *Very Hard* (-20) to determine approximate location. Use *Navigation* skill; otherwise -25. Modified 100+ means that location established in north-central Jaiman. If no one figures it out, someone may try again at night using *Stargazing*.

Assuming that they figure out where they are, it would seem logical to head south towards Rhakhaan. They do so, walking for the rest of the day without seeing any sign of habitation or other life except for an occasional high-flying bird and some dry scrub. As night begins to fall the land will become more like dry, cracked earth than desert sand, and the plantlife somewhat more common. A few twisted, dried out skeletons of stunted trees even begin to appear.

Then someone will hear a howling in the distance, like that of a hound or wolf.

ENCOUNTER: RURAL ZORIANS

The group is nearing exhaustion as night falls. The temperature swiftly begins to drop towards freezing, and a biting wind picks up, so Jak suggests they stop soon.

■PC Roll: Everyone make an *Extremely Hard* (-30) *Perception*, the Elves adding +50 because of their night vision. The first to make their roll sees what appears to be a small ruin to the west.

Jak proposes they head toward the ruin, hoping it will offer shelter. It is farther than it seems, however, and fifteen minutes later, they have not reached it. The howl of dogs is heard again, this time closer, and from the north. Eventually, however, a low wall of tumbled rocks begins to rise out of the earth nearby. The group follows it, and comes to what appears to have once been a cluster of farm buildings.

■PC Roll: Everyone make a *Perception* roll again, *Very Hard* (-20), the Elves adding +50 because of their night vision. Everyone who succeeds: at various times as they approach the ruin, they think they see movement out of the corner of their eye. Those who rolled over 130 also have a feeling of being watched.

If the group is carrying torches or other lights, they enter the most enclosed structure (looks like a stable; the house is nothing but a pile of rubble) and find it empty. If they carry no lights, the Elves will see a huddle of creatures in a corner. Upon closer observation, they appear to be humanoid creatures like gnomes (they are mutants of Dansart). There are four of the creatures, who will snarl and reach for their clubs. If anyone lights a fire or casts a light, the poor creatures will immediately flee. If not, they will fight until they realize that they are outgunned, then flee. The characters can then settle-in as best they can. A fire is highly recommended, for warmth as well as to keep away the mutants. There is wood to be found in the ruins (mostly pieces of the house). There is virtually nothing to be found for food.

The howl of dogs is heard again, from the north and then answered closer from the west.

ENCOUNTER: THE HOUNDS OF DANSART

Hounds of Dansart close in on the group. The hounds are hungry, but fear fire. Meanwhile, the temperature drops to well below freezing. As the night passes, the howling can be heard periodically, soon all around the ruins. Then it will stop abruptly.

■ **PC Roll:** Anyone who ventures outside of the distracting glare of the fire to take a look around can make an *Extremely Hard* (-30) *Perception* roll (Elves at +50); success means they see a large, wolf-like dog either circling the area about 100 feet away, or just sitting out in the dark, watching them.

■ **GM Roll:** Roll D100; if over 70, the hounds will wait until they think the time is ripe, then six of them will attack. Four others wait in the shadows. Roll morale rolls during the fight. At any time after about midnight, if someone ventures out of the circle of light offered by the fire, there is a 20% chance they will be attacked. If the leader and or any three dogs are killed, they will flee.

Morning dawns clear, and far to the southwest everyone can see the gleam of something to the southwest. It looks like a city. Far to the west can be glimpsed the Grey Mountains. There is no sign of other dogs.

2•THE RUINED CITY

It is thirty miles to the city, so even moving at a good pace the group will not make it before nightfall. As they approach in the dying light, however, it becomes clear that what was once a good-sized walled city is now in ruins. A dry riverbed meanders from west to east. As the players may be debating whether its safer to enter this strange place or to remain out on the plain with no shelter, they hear wolves howling again.

ENCOUNTER: CITY DWELLERS

Assuming the group decides to enter the city, they have an experience similar to what happened at the farm ruin: a sense of

being watched. If they remain in the wilderness outside, they will probably be attacked by the wolves again.

■ **PC Roll:** Everyone make a *Perception* roll again, *Medium* (± 0), the Elves adding +50 because of their night vision. Everyone who succeeds: at various times as they approach the ruin, they think they see movement out of the corner of their eye. Those who rolled over 120 also have a feeling of being watched. This feeling increases as they get deeper into the city, until it is overwhelming.

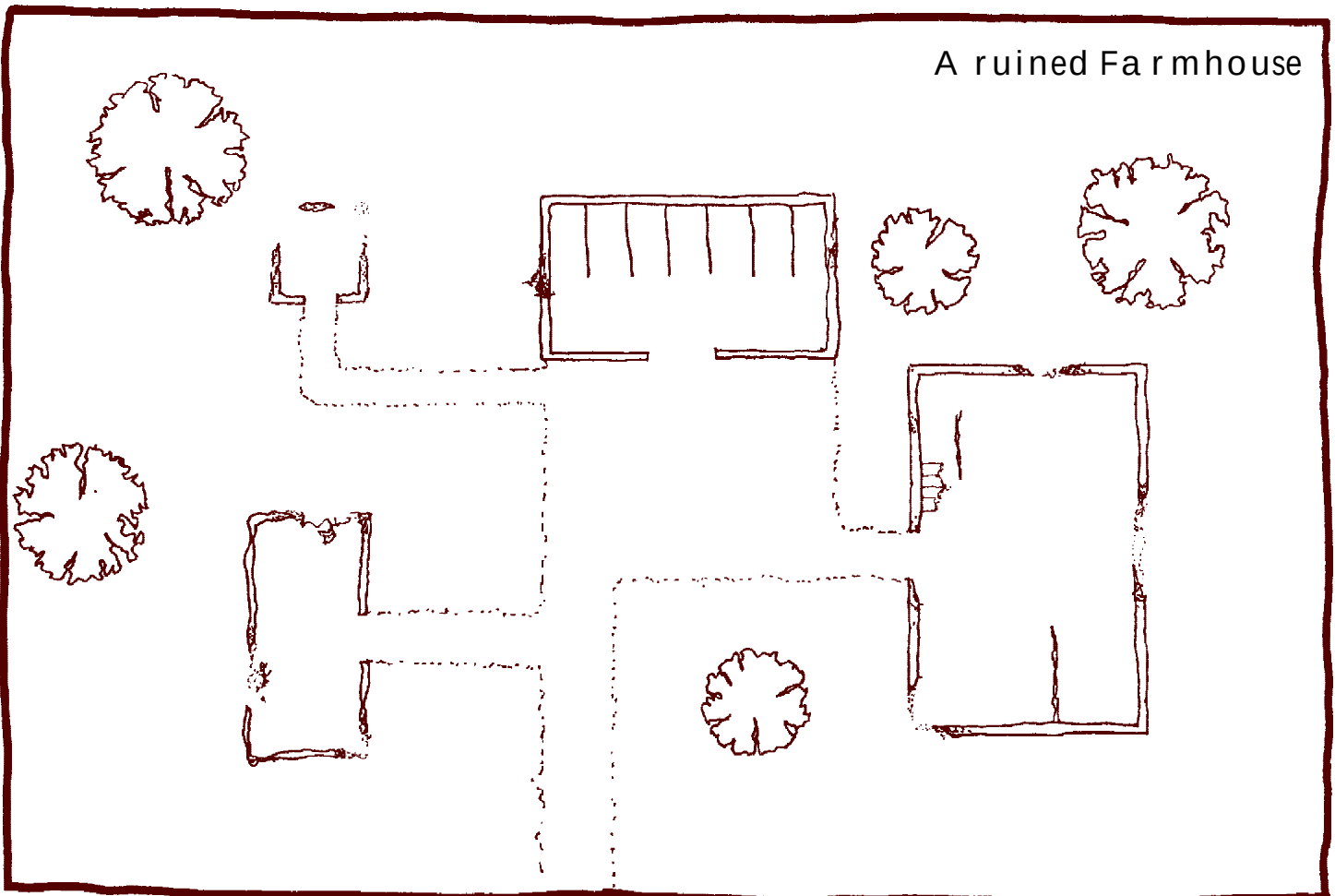
THE CITY DWELLERS

These are descendants of the original Zorians, but virtually all of them have suffered radiation poisoning and random mutations. (The PCs will not be in central Zor long enough for it to affect them.) As a result, they are often hideously deformed creatures with minimal intelligence (but all possess a certain animal cunning). They have fallen to this barbaric state, sometimes reduced to cannibalism to survive. They are jealous of 'normal' humanoids. Almost all are blinded by even dim light, so they hide underground during the day.

Some of the least severely damaged have been recruited by the Dragonlord Sulthon Ni'shaang for his army, but they do not make a very effective organized force. They roam Zor in packs, each with a ruthless leader. They fear the dogs—and the Messengers of Ulkaya.

■ **PC Roll:** During each watch, a PC making a successful *Medium* (± 0) *Perception* roll will sense a growing ring of city dwellers lurking just beyond the firelight. Beyond the walls of the city, dogs are circling, and every so often an encounter between dog and 'human' can be heard: a snarling and wailing, normally ending in a choked humanoid cry.

As with the wolves, the city dwellers might grow impatient for a meal. As the night wanes, they may grow bold.



■ **GM Roll:** A successful *Extremely Hard* (-30) morale roll means the city dwellers decide to attack. Three will charge forward with buckets of dirt and try to put the fire out. It is unlikely that they will be completely successful, but they might put a dent in it. They are at between -20 and -100 for activity depending on how bright the light is.

ENCOUNTER: THE MESSENGERS OF ULKAYA

There seem to be endless numbers of the creatures, and even as the PCs dispatch them, more arrive. It looks hopeless. Then, there is a loud, piercing whistle from outside of the city, and the mutants hesitate. Then can be heard the sound of hooves, accompanied by the howling bark of several dogs. Six riders appear astride huge warhorses. They are holding aloft torches in hands which look like claws, and their helmets are made to look like the heads of snarling dogs. They are the Messengers of Ulkaya.

The city dwellers flee, and some of the riders pursue them, hacking the mutants down as they run. The dogs with the Messengers are much larger and healthier looking than the wild beasts of the plains. They are also well trained, circling the group and watching them closely.

After the city dwellers are driven off, three of the Messengers dismount. One—clearly the leader—says “You are prisoners of the Lord of Dansart; throw down your weapons. Do not resist, and you will not be harmed.”

GM Note: These riders are truly fearsome. There is little question that they could easily best the PCs, even without the help of their dogs. At no time does anyone see the face of any of the Messengers. If there is any question of compliance, perhaps one of the NPCs (one of the crewmen) attempts to fight back; he is killed in cold blood, probably a dagger in the chest. This should squelch any ideas about resistance.

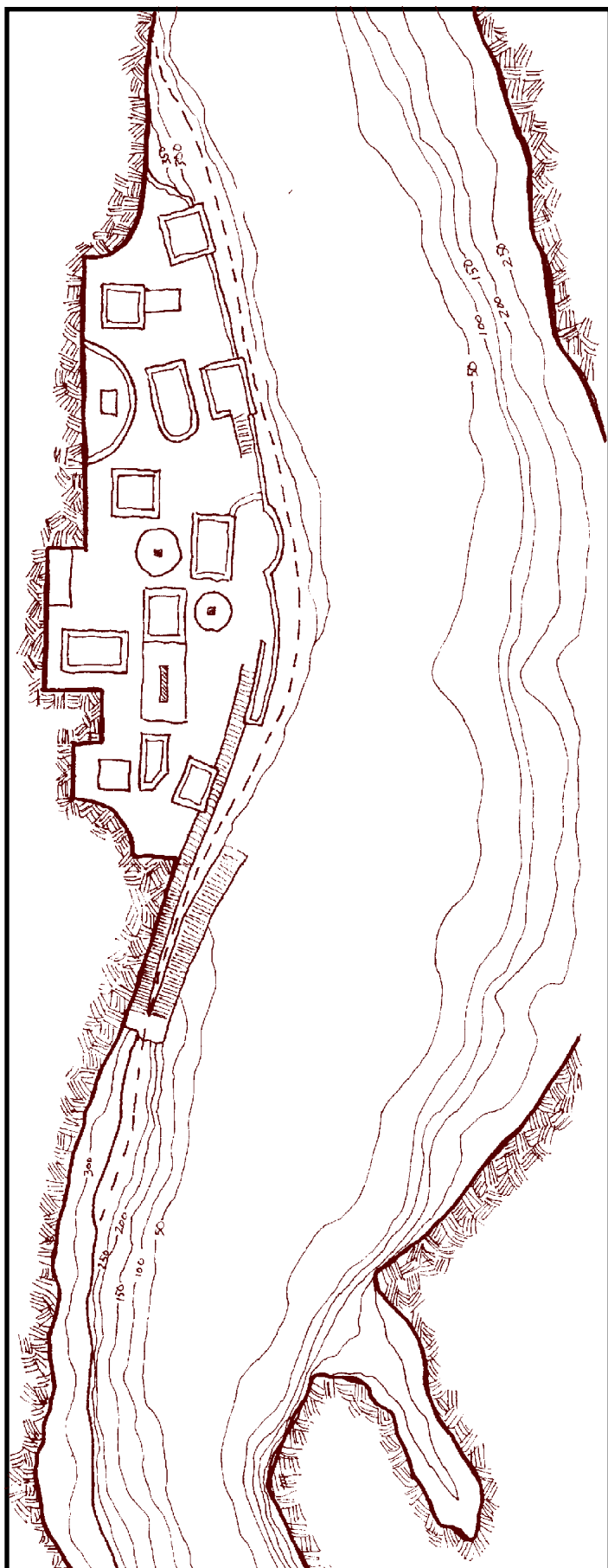
Assuming the characters comply, one of the other Messengers pulls out a pouch of herbs and ministers to any characters who are seriously wounded and who cannot be helped immediately by the other PCs. A third Messenger gathers up everyone’s weapons and any other items which look threatening. The Phoenix pendant is taken, but the Messenger knows better than to touch Morden’s Focus Crystal. Instead it is placed in a small pouch (lined with a mesh of Kregora) while still around his neck. When everyone is able to walk, they produce manacles and ropes, and the prisoners are bound in a line. As the sun rises, the march west to Dansart begins. All spell users except the Healer find that their Power Points are drained (the manacles are laced with Kregora).

3•DANSART

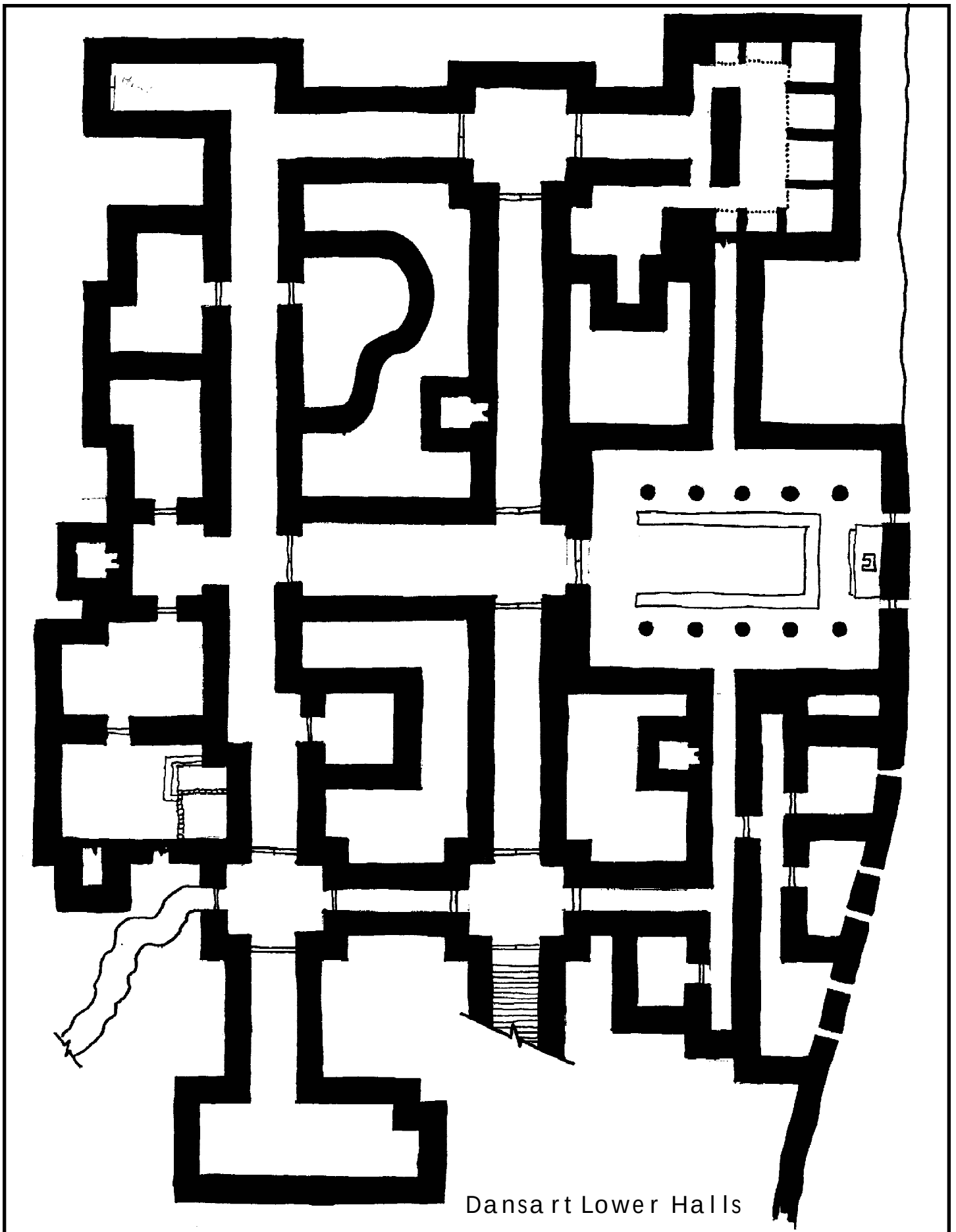
For three days the characters are kept to a gruelling pace, given short rests and iron rations if their own food gives out. The women passengers might falter at some point; either they are mercilessly dragged along, or completely bound and thrown over a horse’s back.

At night, the dogs protect the camp perimeter, and the Messengers seem to take turns on ‘watch’ while others lie immobile for 2-3 hours. The Messengers are inhumanly efficient; they do not joke or laugh or carry on any unnecessary conversation; it is as if they are not really human (they are, but are under powerful enchantments). Each has a pet owl, tan or white, which rides on his shoulder or flies as scout. Any two or three owls are gone for hours or even days at a time.

The ground begins to rise in a broken shelfland, the plateaus separated by dry riverbeds. There is little or no vegetation, and the group is not harassed by dogs or mutants again.



The Citadel of Dansart Exterior



THE CITADEL OF DANSART

Late afternoon of the third day, the group is proceeding along a riverbed, the cliffs rising in hundreds of feet of sheer rock on either side, when the procession stops. The leader pulls out a small horn and blows an eerie note like the one heard before, but this one rises and falls in some sort of signal. A moment later he is answered from above; it echoes across the cleft as the march resumes, and then as they come around a gentle curve, the group sees their destination. Carved into the side of the cliff face is a cut-out, and into this sheltered niche is a cluster of structures. Red lights gleam in several windows. At the base of the cliff is a stairway, also carved out of the rock, which switches back and forth, up a dizzying height of over two hundred feet to the citadel above.

4•THE DUNGEONS

The group (PCs and NPCs) is led up and into the complex—which appears to be deserted—and back down stairs and into what appears to be a dungeon (see layout). Their shackles are removed and they are placed in a cell. Their items are laid out in a cell across the hall. Across the hall a young man is chained to the wall in his cell. His chains are long enough for him to eat, but just barely.

They remain in the cell for a day or so, tended by regular-looking (though uncommunicative) guards.

GM Note: There are no opportunities to escape during this period. Food is passed into the cells through slots; the locks are all Extremely Hard (-30) even with tools to pick, and there are always at least two guards in sight. When the doors are opened, the four big guards are there. The leader of these guards carries the keys.

The PCs have a chance to talk to the young man chained to the wall across the aisle if they wish. (This would be a good idea, since he turns out to be their escape route). He will be willing to tell them that he is a Loremaster, and that he might be able to help them escape once they are out of their cells, and maybe that they would be rewarded for helping a Loremaster out in a pinch. It's up to the PCs whether they believe him.

THE LOREMASTER APPRENTICE

The man across the hall is Sæn Alyster, a Loremaster Apprentice (apprentices are normally sent on low-risk, tedious errands like research, messenger duty, etc). However, Sæn was returning from a visit to Zener Morndaak in Tanara, having delivered a message from his teacher Vurkanaan Tyes, when he noticed some very unusual activity about a tumble of ancient ruins. His curiosity was his downfall, for the ruin was an ancient place of darkness, and through it he was trapped by the Messengers Ulkaya.

He was brought here and questioned, but revealed nothing of importance. The High Priest has been thinking on the most interesting torture methods, on the assumption that he will learn nothing and so planning for maximum entertainment value.

SÆN ALYSTER

Age: 30 (Appears ≈ 20) Eyes: Hazel. Hair: Black with a few grey. Build: Slender. Height: 6'4". Race/Sex: Iylar(Loar)-Laan/M. Skin: Fair. Demeanor: Friendly, though somewhat narcissistic and moody. Dress: Brightly striped tunics, brown leather coat and pants. True Nature: Well-intentioned. Home: Eastern Falls region of Rhakhaan/Karilôn.

Sæn is a very intelligent young Loremaster, but unfortunately his ambitious nature got him into some trouble. In his

eagerness to discover more about the Priests Arnak, he fell into a trap set by Osaran.

Hits: 104. Melee: 125bs. Missile: 98lb.

AT(DB): 1(80). Sh: (Y*). Gr: N.

MovM: +20. PP: 36 (x 5)=180.

Lvl: 12. Profession: Essæne Bard. Stats: St-89; Qu-98; Em-100; In-56; Pr-91; Ag-93; Co-75; Me-89; Re-67; SD-88. AP: 92.

Skill Bonuses: Amb±6; Climb35; Perc70 PickLock45; Ride40 Rune32; S&H88; Swim25; Track15.

Act20; Brawl20; Brib15; Cook30; Dance42; DetTrap20; Diplom29; DragLr15; DrugTol20; 1stAid20; Forage48; Seduct45; SenseRealWp40; Subdu36.

Languages (S/W): Dyar(6/4); Erlin(10/10); Iylar(8/9); Rhaya(9/9); Shay(7/5); Kugor (2/2)

Spells: Base Spell OB: 24. Loremaster Base Lists *Lost Lore*, *Word Lore*, *Lore Mastery*, *Living Lore* to 10th, *Transport* to 15th; Bardic Base *Controlling Song*, *Sound Control*, *Sound Projection* to 10th, *Open Essence Unbarring Ways* and *Closed Invisible Ways* to 10th.

Sword: a Saren: katana-like sword made and used by the Loari Elves. See the *Fantasy Weapons Chart*

Ring: x5 PP enhancer for Bards, also adds +40 to DB

Kynac: One of the Dúranaki throwing weapons, given to him by T'kaal Arain as a gift two years ago. He knows how to use it.

Pouch of Herbs: 5 derrick, 1 somiren, others as GM desires (within reason)



PRISONERS TAKEN

After about a day of imprisonment, four new guards enter the dungeon: these are huge Laan warriors, with golden molded breast-plates and greaves, red kilts and gold swords. They take one of the ship's crewmen and one of the two women passengers. A day later, the guards return and take the other woman and the son of the merchant, refusing to speak or answer any questions. Then, just an hour after the woman and boy are removed, the guards return.

5•THE HIGH PRIEST

The lead guard informs the group that they are to have an audience with the Lord of Dansart. Two of the group are asked to represent them. The characters have one minute to decide, after which either they must present their representatives or two are randomly chosen and seized from the cell.

The two are chained at the wrists and led down a different corridor, past several rooms (see layout) and to the Audience Hall of the High Priest.

ENCOUNTER: THE HIGH PRIEST

The audience hall is a rectangular chamber with a double row of columns running the length of the room. Golden screens and statues are scattered about the chamber. At the far end of the room, sunlight filters in through two high translucent windows. Lamps of crystal provide additional light. The columns are of gold, and even the barrel-vaulted ceiling appears to be leafed in pure gold. Water in a U-shaped pool is constantly moving, supplied by a hidden spring. Reflections from this pool cast flickering lights across the ceiling.

There are three sets of doors, set in the west, north and south walls. On the east side, on a four-step dais, is the throne of the Priest. This huge chair appears to also be fashioned of flat, overlapping rectangular gold plates, and covered with rows of rivets. The arms are shaped to resemble large, vicious-looking dogs. Two huge *real* dogs lie at the foot of the dais.

In the throne sits Osaran, resplendent in a shimmering tunic and beautiful gold jewelry. He looks like a young virile god, and that is his intention.

.I.OSARAN

Age: 500 (Appears ≈20) Eyes: Hazel (sometimes amber). Hair: Blond. Build: Muscular. Height: 6'4". Race/Sex: Iylar/male. Skin: Fair. Demeanor: Charming Dress: Golden yellow tunic (sometimes with breeches), glittering gold jewelry. True Nature: Cruel. Home: Tower of Dansart, Eastern Zor.

Osaran is handsome, brilliant, and unspeakably evil. His soul belongs to the Iron Wind (and so the Unlife), and his cruelty knows no bounds. He administers physical and emotional pain for no reason, kills merely to kill, and destroys things because they exist. He is charming and seductive, however, and that is what makes him truly terrifying.

Hits: 180. Melee: 160bs. Missile: 120 Netherbolt. (100' or using the sword at 300')

AT(DB): 11(50; -150 deflect/bladeturn). Sh: (Y*). Gr: N/A.

MovM: +35.

Lvl: 45. Profession: Sorcerer. Stats: St-91; Qu-101; Em-100; In-102; Pr-101; Ag-99; Co-97; Me-95; Re-94; SD-91. AP: 102.

Skill Bonuses: Amb ±8; Chan90; Climb80 Perc150; Ride90; Rune110; S&H100; S&W120.

Act120; Admin100; Animal115; Chem50; DemnLr45; Diplom75; Disguis; 80 Ldrshp112; PwrPercep90; PubSp85; RMas90; Seduct120;

SenseRealWp;80

SpellM90; Stra&Tac.95; WeathWatch70.

Languages (S/W): (All)

Spells: Base Spell OB: 45.

Directed Spell OB: 90 (Netherbolt; Desert Curse).

All Base Sorcerer to 30th. Evil CLeric Dark Channels and Curses. All Magician Open and Closed. PP: 3x45 (x8)=1080

Blade of Shadows: A Sorcerer's blade, it is +30, of clear laen with hilts and guard of gold and silver alloy. When it is drawn by Osaran, the blade and clear pommel gem turn black. Some powers noted below with an asterisk (*) indicate what the wielder must do should he fail his RR vs being dominated by the sword. Osaran is in complete control of the weapon and need not worry. Note powers listed below which are not in the *Atlas Addendum* as well. (For more on weapon domination, see *Emer Atlas Addendum*, p 60.)



1. +30 sword (can be used either one-or two-handed without the usual bastard sword penalties).
2. The sword is *Of Slaying* all foes.
3. Wielder cannot be stunned while using the sword.
4. Wielder may "Call the Dark Essænce." By uttering these words, he channels raw Essænce through the sword (and drains 10 Temp Con points until he rests; he requires 1 hour of rest/sleep to regain each Con point). The effect is a *Nether Bolt*, 300' range, 3x hits. He may acquire skill with this attack.
5. All non-evil spells cast on the holder while the sword is drawn must make a RR (at caster's level) vs 50th level. If they fail by more than 50, the caster must make a spell failure roll (otherwise, the spell simply fizzles, absorbed by the blade).
6. The blade makes an eerie metallic humming sound near priests of Orhan or other powerful 'good' beings such as Loremasters.
7. In a melee, wielder must use full OB.*
8. In a melee, wielder must fight until all foes are dead (incapacitated).*

Dagger of Elfslaying: +30, if the attacker gains a critical, he rolls an additional Slaying critical, adding +10 for every crit level above an "A."

Desert Robes: Wearer is immune to natural hot and cold, casts invisibility 8x per day, adds +100 to hiding at all times, will automatically *Deflect* and *Bladeturn* up to 8 missile and melee attacks a day.

High Priest Ring:

1. x8 PP Enhancer
2. Allows wearer to cast four Netherbolts 200 feet each day.
3. Allows wearer to read any written text at 8x normal speed, even if he has never seen the script of the language before.
4. Allows the user to speak Dyar, Erlin and Iylar (the three main Elven tongues) and Arcane tongues with fluency.
5. Protects wearer as AT 11 (-50).
6. Summon and control all dogs within 100 miles.
7. Opens all doors in Tower of Dansart.
8. Controls Weather within 100 miles.

GM Note: This ring is Very Evil; see page ??? for rules on using evil items

As the prisoners enter the room, there is a willowy half-elf standing nearby; he is wearing full-length robes of deep red trimmed with black, and a round metal brooch with a glittering sliver of crystal set in it.

Also present is the son of the jewel merchant and the younger of the women. Both are clothed only in rags, bound by heavy chains to great rings set into the sides of the throne so they are forced to kneel right next to the Priest.

Flanked by guards, the two PCs are brought before the High Priest. He smiles warmly and says "Who do we have here?"

The lead guard says, "Representatives, as you requested, Your Eminence."

For about fifteen minutes, the High Priest will make small talk with the two PCs, asking them how the weather was in Nomikos, did they like dogs, if the food was acceptable. He will ignore or seem to misinterpret sarcastic or hostile responses, instead going off on a monologue about desert sunsets.

During the interview, the Osaran takes the woman's manacled hand nearest him and seems to gently rub and caress her fingers between his hands, then, as he questions them, he begins to break her

fingers, joint by joint. He does this idly, almost as if someone would toy with a bauble. (GM: this should be a particularly disturbing sight: a handsome, innocent-looking Elf is sadistically torturing a helpless woman and his face betrays only a certain serenity...) The woman shrieks and cries out the first time; by the third she is reduced to sobbing. He ignores her. The boy looks on in horror. If the PCs ask him to stop or even comment on his cruelty, he calmly tells them that it is of no concern of theirs. Eventually, the woman passes out from the pain and he flings her ruined hand aside. A moment later he places his hand on the boy's head and begins to very gently stroke and fondle his hair and neck. The boy trembles visibly but makes no sound.

If the PCs ask any questions, they are ignored. If they become physically resistant or abusive, one of the guards cuffs the offender with a gauntleted hand, delivering 2-20 hits and facial cuts.

After finishing a particularly long ramble about dog training, Osaran will lean forward just a bit and ask "I don't suppose either of you heard anything about a place called the Gryphon College while you were at Nomikos, did you?"

★o matter what either PC says (including nothing), he will lean back and sigh, saying "I was afraid of that."

The Priest Dansart does not speak for several more minutes, but continues to idly stroke the boy's hair. The boy is silently whimpering and tears stream down his cheeks. Then the High Priest turns to the half-elf still in the shadows and asks, "Well, what should I do with them, Vaag t'Kang?"

T'Kang shrugs. "I would slay them now, Esteemed One. They trouble me. I would also dispose of that Loremaster."

"But they could prove entertaining... even useful." Osaran ponders for a moment more then stands up, gesturing casually to a guard. "Return them to their cell. I will decide what to do with them tomorrow."

As the pair are led away, they hear Osaran say to his guards: "Dispose of that woman, but bathe the boy and bring him to my chambers." Then: "T'Kang, I'll see you at dinner this evening."

6•ESCAPE FROM DANSART

It is clear that the group needs to escape from Dansart that night, or they will most likely die. However, opportunities fail to present themselves. Late in the evening, there is a sound of dogs howling somewhere in the complex, then it fades. A few moments later, Vaag t'Kang comes down the steps to the cells. With the wave of his hand, the two guards in sight fall asleep. He plucks the keys from a pocket and goes directly to the cell holding the PCs. He approaches the bars and whispers: "Osaran has gone out on a hunt; you must try to escape now!"

If asked why he is helping the PCs, he will answer. "I have my reasons. Waste no more time!" Then he will slink away, vanishing into the shadows.

GM Note: Vaag t'Kang is not letting the PCs go because he is a nice guy. He is an Adherent of the Jerak Ahrenreth and though he was in Dansart seeking an alliance of sorts, he also has a separate agenda. This is an unusual group with unusual items (though even he does not guess the nature of the Phoenix). He has used his crystal brooch to cast a Mind Typing on Terek and Morden so that they can be traced later. He is letting them go so that they might lead him to secret places.

There is no way to undo a Mind Type except by destroying the being or item which did it, or somehow erasing the memory. The other defense is to use blocking spells or items.

The guards keys open the cell holding the items, and Sæn's cell also, if they decide to bring him along. The cell holding the items has

some additional valuables the PCs might want to take along if they have time: sacks containing 2,045 in gold, a wood box holding five pouches, holding a total of 6,240 in gems. There are no magical items or other equipment.

Barely do the characters get out of the cell block, however, when the merchant insists on looking for his son. Before anyone can stop the merchant, he bolts down another hall. He is seen almost immediately and the alarm is raised.

They flee down corridors and fight the rather impressive guards. But if Sæn is with them, he will have told them about the Portal. Hopefully they can make their way to that, because there is no other way they can get out of the tower and escape into the desert.

THE PORTAL

Sæn can *Sense Reality Warp*, and when he was brought in he detected a latent portal. Once he is free again and can scout around, he will be able to track it down.

Sæn will take an herb from his pouch (Somiren), allowing him to instantly regain his PPs for the day. He must hold in reserve 15 points to overcast *Open Portal*, though he does not know where any other portal is (except shielded Loremaster Portals on Karilôn), so things will be rather random. He will take the extra rounds if at all possible to improve his chances.

They arrive at the doors, and someone must pick the lock; meanwhile and anyone with *Sense Reality Warp* can see an odd wavering about the doors. They open onto a circular doorway—sealed over by stone. But no one should be disappointed; the portal is there if Sæn can open it.

As the guards close in, one or more crewmen might want to do something rashly brave. Then (hopefully) Sæn opens the portal and they tumble through.

There is some vertigo, a sense of falling, then *splash!* They tumble into a foul-smelling pool, seemingly underground...

7•INTO THE UNKNOWN

The group is standing (or sitting) in about two feet of cold, foul-smelling water, in a T-intersection of 5' diameter tubular corridors (everyone has to stoop). It is almost completely dark, the only light provided by some eerie green luminous lichens growing on the top of the tubes. Rats can be seen (and heard) scuttling about the tubes, disturbed by the sudden new arrivals.

What would be the fourth corridor is the Portal—which Sæn will promptly close as soon as everyone is through. He will say that he *thinks* that they can't be followed, but they should get moving anyway. Of course, they have absolutely no idea where they are. (They are in fact in an ancient sewer. Sæn suspects this is the case, and may or may not share this suspicion.)

■ PC Roll: Terek should make a Medium (± 0) *Perception* to notice that his Phoenix Pendant is glowing dimly. It will glow slightly brighter as they continue.

If no one immediately tries to take charge, Sæn will start marching down the left corridor. He will mention that there seems to be a breeze blowing in that direction, though the water is flowing the opposite way. They slosh along for nearly an hour, then come to a juncture of four of the corridors, the one to the left sloping up and dry, while the one to the right and flow into the one through which they came. Most importantly, the juncture seems to have no ceiling; and the air is going up! A moment of looking around will reveal an iron ladder extending out of the wall. An escape!

THE WAY EAST

Just as the group begins to climb, the Phoenix Pendant bursts into bright light and actually pulls on its chain—towards the dry corridor. The group is tired, without Power Points, possibly has wounded members, and has found what may be an escape to civilization. Then suddenly this guy's pendant starts pulling on him. What to do? If they go up the corridor a bit, they come to an iron gate blocking off the tunnel. It is locked rather securely.

GM Note: Should the group start sounding like they might actually want to venture up the corridor, try to discourage them, using Sæn and the other NPCs: "Let's at least climb up the shaft and look there first!" If that doesn't work, try suggesting a vague sense of lurking evil down the corridor. The point is, they're not ready for this quite yet, and it's not going anywhere anyway.

At last, hopefully, the group makes the climb up a thirty-foot shaft. As they approach, the lead climber can see stars peeking through a grate. At the top is a heavy grille, but anyone with a St of 80+ can thrust it aside. They emerge up through a grate in the center of the Avenue of Kings in Haalkitane. It is the middle of the night, and for once it isn't raining.

• PART VIII •

HAALKITAINE

Of course, it was raining.

Above Haalkitaine City the sky was flat and grey, a dirty ceiling dripping sooty water onto a filthy city. At the center of this sprawling mass of black stone towered the Rhakhaanian Imperial Palace compound; Ren caught glimpses of its towers as he wound his way up along narrow streets towards the enclosure. The palace was like a mirage, though: the distance deceptively great though it seemed to loom over every intersection. The mist only added to the insubstantial appearance of the structure.

It began to rain harder. Ren pulled his hood over his head, scowling unconsciously at the weather.

They say it always rains in Haalkitaine...

A beggar—a short old man wrapped in burlap and wearing no shoes—staggered out of an alley and held out a deformed hand. “Got a copper for a poor old man?” He asked in broken Shay, exposing a few rotten teeth. He reeked of urine. Ren handed him a silver piece, a coin worth a hundred coppers. “Oh, thank you sir!” The man trembled with amazement. “If there’s anything I can do for you—”

“Yes: tell me the shortest route to the Palace.”

The man’s eyes went wide and his mouth formed an unvoiced gasp. “I thought you looked like royalty, sir!” Then he seemed to notice Ren’s upswept, slightly pointed ears for the first time. “An Elven Lord you must be! I beg your pardon! Turn left there by the vegetable cart, then the second right, then right again. You’ll be on the Sunset Avenue, straight to the Western Gate.”

“Thank you.” Ren turned to go as the man grovelled.

Yet Ren Thraysk was in no hurry to get to the Palace. There (no doubt) waited

fawning aristocrats, haughty bureaucrats and surly, dull-witted, inbred royalty. Most either mistrusted people like Ren or feared them, or simply tried to dismiss them as irrelevant—most of the time. When there was the rare problem that no king could dispose of with an execution order or a well-equipped army, then pride was reluctantly swallowed and one of Ren's kind was called-upon.

One of his kind... there were days when he hated being a Loremaster; those days seemed to become more frequent with the passing years. A pity Loremasters weren't often accorded the same respect as the Navigators, a guild who had honed their arrogance into a fine, razor-sharp tool. Ironical, since the Navigators were a godless little coven who worshipped only the almighty coin, while the Loremasters toiled for endless centuries to sustain the few pockets of civilization existing on this tortured world.

Ren wondered if Tar-esiir would be there. *Actually, he's not as bad as some other Navigators I've met.*

At least the beggar's directions were correct, for Ren turned the last corner and found himself on a wide avenue sloping gently up and eastward to the granite walls of the Palace. Trudging up the rain-slimed cobbles, he cursed Randae Terisonen not for the first time. *I never did get a satisfactory answer why I had to suddenly step into this mess at Haalkitainne. What is Randae up to that's so much more urgent? Or maybe he was censured for breaking the Code again.* Ren smiled ruefully. He had been called in more than once for bending the meaning of the Loremaster Code himself, and did not envy Randae having to face the Council.

A looming presence of darker grey... the outer portal grew more imposing as it solidified through the mist. The flanking towers must have been fifty feet tall. Certainly a suitable entrance to the palace of the greatest empire on all of Jaiman. Ren Thraysk was not impressed.



Haalkitainne has stood for over ten thousand years, an ancient city by any definition. Over the centuries, it has grown to represent the essence of stability and reason in a continent frequently sundered by war and fragmented by anarchy. But now even Haalkitainne is troubled. Rumors of new wars, a rebellious usurper to the north, discontent in the provinces, and tales of the return of old evils have the city in turmoil. The veneer of culture and sophistication remains, but underneath churn deep-seated fears.

The group crawls out into the street, possibly given a disparaging glance or two by the few passers-by at this hour. They might even run into a constable, who will want to know just what they are doing in the sewers of Haalkitainne in the middle of the night. A small bribe should take care of him.

Sæn announces his intention to go to the nearest inn he can afford, have a bath and an ale, and go to bed. Then he'll have an appointment at court. He does remind the PCs that he owes them something and asks that (should he not see them before then) to ask for him at the palace at the stroke of the third Quintar the next day.

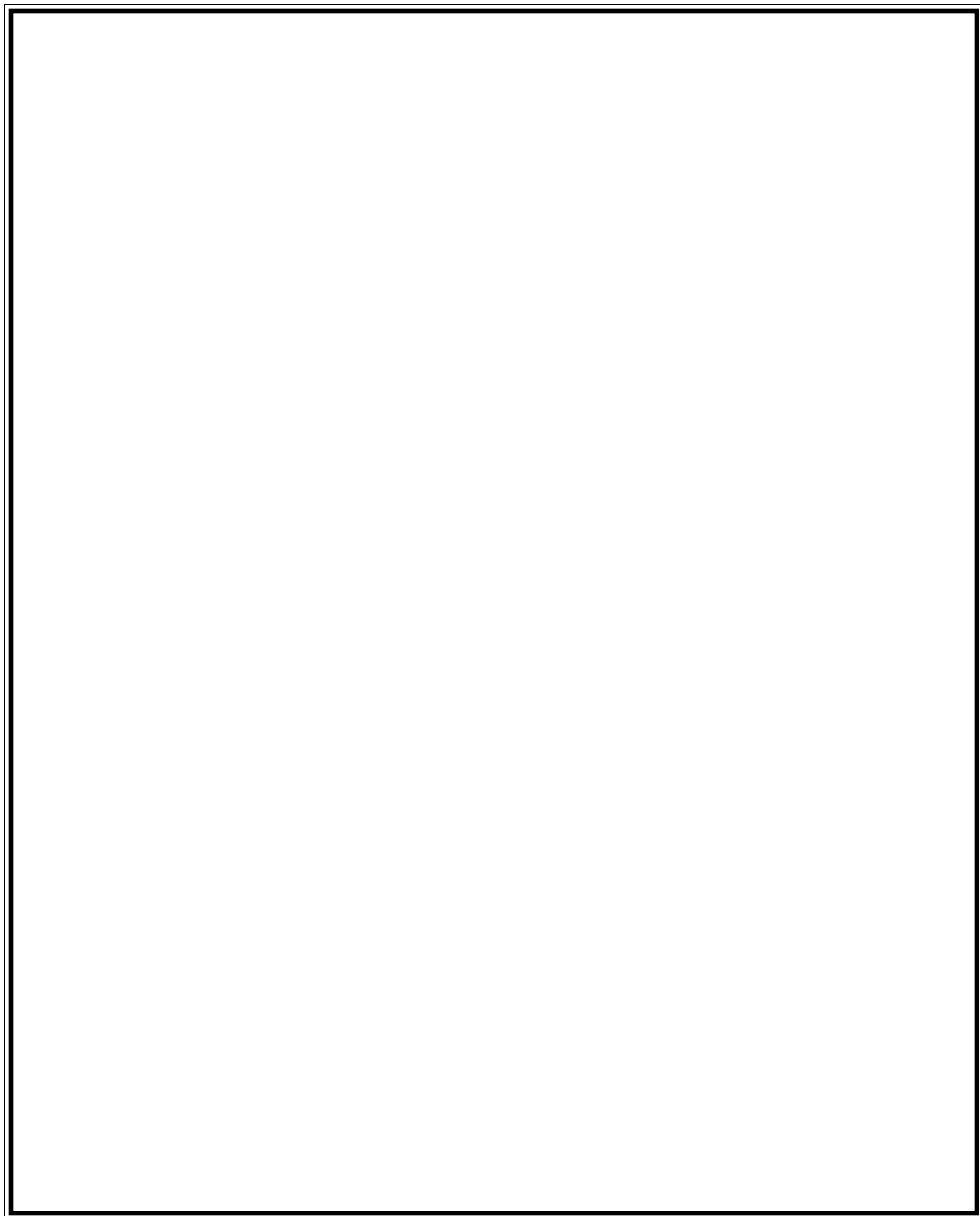
GM Note: Of course, if Tyrus Faslorin is with the group, he could just stay at the Palace, and if he makes enough of a stink, could get rooms for everyone else. However, he might be inclined to be discreet, as that sort of behavior is frowned on.

At this point the group will probably break up; the NPCs (whomever is left—perhaps a couple of crewmen) will try to put their lives back together. The PCs might want to clean up and get some rest and healing before their meeting the next afternoon. And hopefully Terek will want to head back into the sewer after a few days off in the capital of Rhakhaan.

1•THE HAALKITAINE COURT

Chances are, aside from a possible quick visit to a healer or herbalist, the group won't have much free time before their visit with Sæn. It is hoped that they will be punctual.

Haalkitainne Palace is a cheerless, imposing structure on the



• Haalkitaine •



• Central Rhakhaan •

outside (and much the same on the inside). Built of huge granite blocks, it is a mazelike jumble of towers, parapets, echoing halls, drafty chambers and twisting stairways. It stands against the steep flanks of the Grey Mountains, with the city sprawling out in the other three directions. The main gate is 50 feet high, and features a drawbridge over a deep moat, huge doors 6" thick, two portculli (to enclose a 'death cage'), and an inner door. Normally, though, all of the doors are open and four guards in the Phoenix livery are the only defense.

They are greeted coolly at the gate, but their name is on the roster and a page is assigned to lead them to Sæn's chambers (it would seem that the Loremaster Apprentice has friends in high places).

GM Note: again, If Tyrus is there, he will be recognized, and in this case, very likely just ask where Sæn is staying (The Cypress room, Ralga's Tower). He is quite capable of leading them there,

SÆN SAYS GOODBYE

The route takes the characters through the palace, and they pass dozens of servants, bureaucrats (all of whom will sneer at the roughly-clad strangers until they see Tyrus, when they will suddenly start fawning), and nobility, who will greet Tyrus coolly, and ignore the rest.

Sæn is lounging in his suite, apparently writing a letter. He offers them drinks, then thanks them again for helping him escape. He says that his master has given him something he wants to offer to them as a token of his appreciation. He produces a silvery coin, with arcane symbols on one side, and a Gryphon on the other. He explains that is actually a one-use portable Navigator obelisk. You hold it in your hand, summon a Navigator, and he will transport the group to a safe place free of charge.

GM Note: The players must be discouraged from using this item—unless absolutely necessary—until the appropriate time (when they are trapped in the ice cave in Tanara). If something goes terribly wrong before then (like the Doombringer is about to slay everyone), obviously it would be better for the PCs to escape with some story disruption than to have the entire campaign collapse. If the coin is used prematurely, (see page ??? for the appearance of the Navigator, etc.) then the GM will have to make contingency plans.

He won't be able to answer most questions the PCs ask, either because he isn't permitted to tell, or just doesn't know. He seems a bit torn, though, if the characters start asking him difficult questions, and might provide a few kernels of useful data. He will tell them where the Loremaster Zener Morndaak lives, even drawing a simple map of Tanara

With that he says farewell, as he has to pack up soon.

2•TIME IN THE CITY

After leaving the Palace, the group might want to take a few days to rest up, buy and sell, etc. Haalkitane, while not quite as cosmopolitan as Lethys, does have a lot to offer. Soon, however, the group will again want to resume their journey to Tanara. But first, a short side-trip back into the Sewer.

GM Note: be sure to keep up with the future events timeline (see page ???) while the PCs are here.

Tyrus might visit his family, and his father urges him to leave soon. There is only gossip and trouble here and he would be safer on the road for a few months.

3•RETURN TO THE UNDEREARTH

Re-entering the sewers is easy (though they may get a few strange looks from passers-by), and the gate appears unchanged since they first found it.

Labyrinth Map--GMs you are on your own

■ **PC Roll:** An examination under better light—and a successful *Hard* (-10) Perception—reveals that the workmanship of this tunnel is slightly different from the others, and there is no evidence that it was ever a sewer drain, though it was built to look like one. In addition, a successful *Medium* (±0) *Stone Lore*, *Stone Evaluation*, *Engineering* or *Architecture* roll will reveal that this tunnel is even older than the sewers, by several thousand years (the sewer is about 3000 years old). The workmanship is excellent, the stones fitted without mortar.

■ **PC Roll:** The lock on the gate is *Extremely Hard* (-30) to pick, though oiling it and cleaning it first will reduce it to -10. It does not appear to have been operated in many years, and though the metal of the gate appears to be some sort of non-corroding alloy, it has gathered dirt. Upon close inspection, the gate is a beautiful construction, the metal wrought with care.

Through the door, the passage enlarges to about twenty feet high and 25 wide, with a barrel-vaulted roof. It begins to descend again, and from what they can tell, the group is heading due east, and continue to do so for about fifteen miles. They must be under the very heart of the mountains. The air is not stale, and in fact there is a light, cool breeze from the west.

The further east they go, the brighter Terek's pendant glows. All the while the temperature remains the same (the typical underground ≈55°F) and the corridor continues basically level. Then they arrive at what appear to be a set of stone doors closing off the end of the corridor. They swing outward, but are held shut by a rather elaborate lock which sends iron bars sliding in and out of sockets in the floor and ceiling; the bars are spring-loaded. The doors can be easily opened from this side. These doors are also very old.

■ **PC Roll:** This set of doors will swing shut a minute or so after they are opened, and the bars will lock. It is a *Light* (+10) maneuver for anyone who examines the door closely to notice this; *Very Hard* (-20) for anyone who just passes through. The doors can be propped open. The doors have a lock on the other side, but it would be *Sheer Folly* (-50) to pick.

Beyond the temperature is noticeably warmer. And the PCs may notice a slight sulfur smell. The corridor continues for about 100 feet, then ends in an octagonal room about 30 feet across. Directly ahead is another set of stone doors, the Sheer Folly lock facing the PCs this time. To the right is another corridor, but the ceiling has collapsed about twenty feet down the passage, sealing it off. and a tunnel of a very different nature takes over. Another passage goes to the left but stops about fifty feet down in a dead end. However, in the wall ahead and to the right (between the locked doors and the collapsed passage) a new tunnel seems to have been 'dug.' It is more like a rough-hewn tube, with a flattened floor of dirt. This rough-cut tunnel appears to have been made in the last few hundred years. Soon after it leaves the octagonal chamber, it curves so that it is headed due east (parallel to the corridor with the doors, presumably).

ENCOUNTER: CREATURES OF THE DEPTHS

The labyrinthine sewers and tunnels under Haalkitain contain more than the usual retinue of rats and other vermin. They connect to a maze of passages much older—and more dangerous.

■ **Roll:** Anyone with *Detect Ambush* should try to do so at -20, and a Mentalist with *Detect Presence* who is alert will detect dozens of unusual presences seemingly in the walls themselves.

At this point, two things happen simultaneously:

1. Terek's glowing pendant bursts into bright light and jerks towards the left dead-end, and—
2. Dozens of bizarre creatures seem to leap out of the very walls, attacking the players with glistening teeth and claws.

UTHGOOL

These small creatures—between 2 and 2½ feet tall, are incredibly vicious, aggressive beasts resembling tiny humanoids. They have the ability to merge with stone and so lie in ambush. They have large eyes which glow a sullen red, huge mouths filled with pointed teeth, and clawlike hands. They are only semi-intelligent and will fight until all are dead.

GM Note: the chart lists 12 Uthgool; use more or less as you see fit so that the beasts will prove a challenge for the group without overwhelming them.

After the Uthgool have been dispatched, the Phoenix Pendant still glows, and will almost pull Terek towards the dead-end corridor. Careful inspection will reveal that this tunnel section is f

■ **PC Roll:** A *Hard* (-10) *Perception* reveals a seam running vertically across the set-stone hall, about ten feet from the end. The corridor does not dead-end at all; in fact the last ten feet are a sliding passage which shifts laterally twenty feet, revealing a new corridor. A successful *Medium* (±0) *Locate Secret Opening* will reveal a movable stone which triggers the sliding action (those without the *Locate Secret Opening* skill must roll at -25 or use *Perception* at -25; this should be a general rule if using *RMC II* skills; even if not, *Perception* rolls for secret openings should be at -25 from the difficulty noted here for *LSO* skill).

ENCOUNTER: THE VAULT OF THE SWORD

The sliding corridor grinds to a halt, revealing a passage beyond. There are side passages to the left and right, and the corridor continues on for a short way before ending in what appear to be frosted glass panels. From the right corridor a red-gold glow can be seen. When the group reaches the juncture, they see that the glow is filtering through a set of frosted glass panels, etched with a huge, intricate symbol of the Rhakhaan Phoenix. The glass panels would appear to work like sliding doors, as they are set in a track and split down the middle to slide into wall pockets. A check at the opposite side corridor reveals an identical set of doors, but it is dark inside. At the end of the hall is the same situation: glass doors, dark inside.

■ **PC Roll:** These doors are not glass, but læn, a glassine substance which is virtually indestructible. It will not break, melt or crack. These doors are magically locked, requiring either a successful *Opening* spell at -100 or an *Insane* (-100) *Lock Pick*. Much simpler would be to simply touch the doors with the Phoenix Pendant (GMs, try not to give any hints!). When the doors are touched, a glow spreads from the Pendant orb to the seam between the panels. Then they part smoothly with a breath of air.

THE VAULT LAYOUT

A short stairway descends into the room. On the two side walls are large Phoenix images which look like stained glass, illuminated from behind. On a platform at the end of the room, surrounded by four columns of white marble-like material (actually white eog) is a small black stone pedestal. Inserted point-down into the pedestal about halfway up the blade is a beautiful sword, glowing brightly.

One assumes that Tyrus will take the sword. It slides smoothly out of its receptacle (it would do that for anyone), and the blade edge and pommel stone glow with a bright, coruscating light for a moment after he draws it (it does that only for an heir to Rhakhaan). It communicates its powers to Ty empathically, also transmitting a feeling of satisfaction at being held by a true heir—a feeling which would be enhanced by attunement.

THE PHOENIX SWORD

It is a two-handed sword of gold, with an edge of clear, amber læn. In the pommel is a yellow topaz orb—receptacle of the sword-soul.

POWERS:

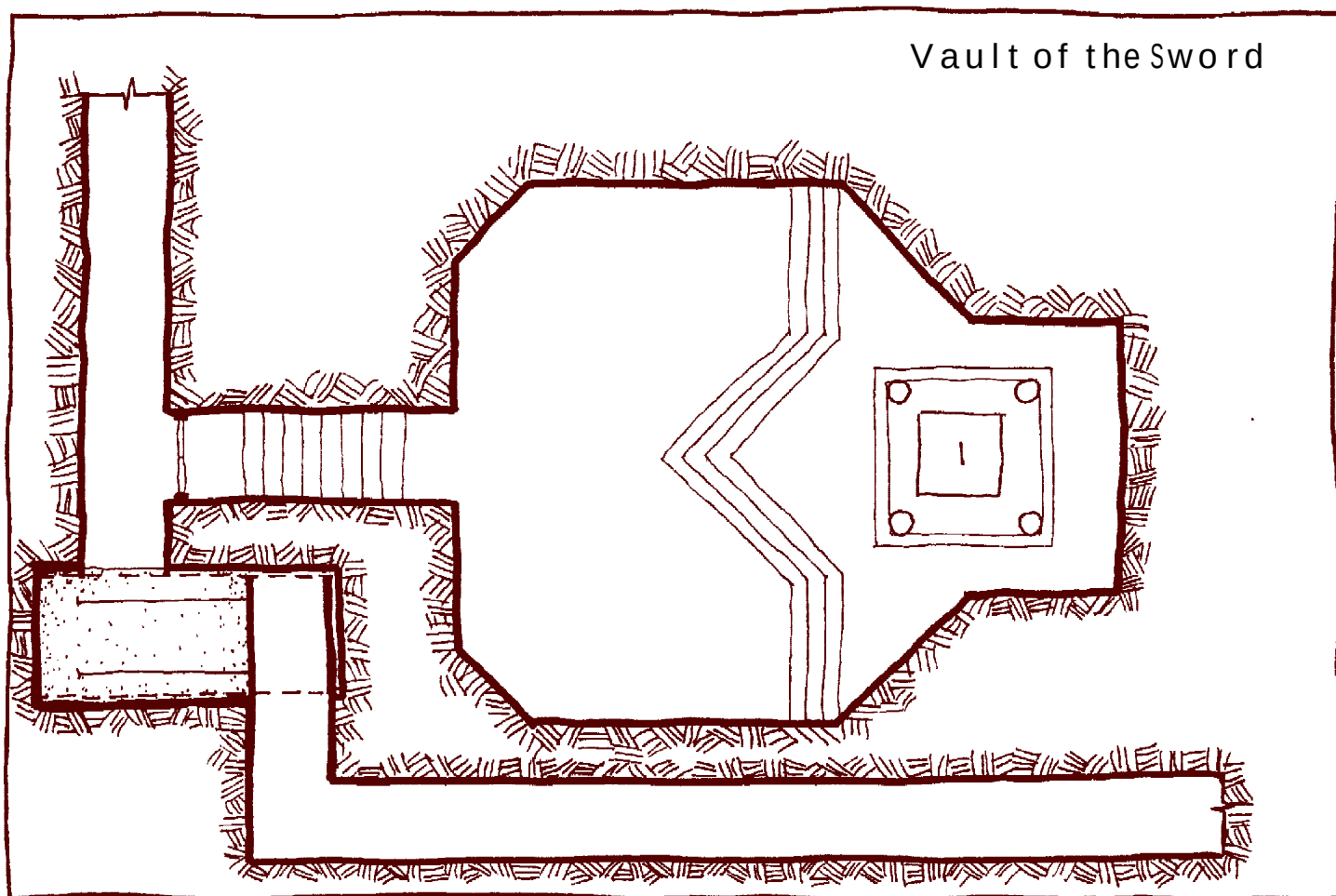
1. +35 to hit, 2x concussion damage.
2. Flames on command, enabling the sword to deliver a Heat critical (of same intensity) in addition to any other.
3. Unleash the Absence of Cold (as Fire Bolt 200', x4 damage, Heat Critical, 2x per day). It is a stream of intense heat, like a flamethrower—rather different than the beamlike pendant power. Can be devastating to physical objects as well.*
4. *Of Slaying* creatures of Cold (Ice Elementals, Cold Drakes, Ice Trolls, etc. This includes Oran Jatar, though remember that he is a *Large Creature* while in human form and *Super-Large* when a dragon; still a tough customer).
5. *Of Changing*: will become a dagger, broadsword or two-handed sword at will.
6. Will come via safe Teleport from up to 400 miles away.*

* Available to the attuned owner only.

GM Note: This sword is obviously quite powerful. It is suggested that even Tyrus can only access rudimentary powers (size changem OB) until it is attuned. The GM may wish to further restrict its powers at this time by having it cursed. Perhaps it is locked in broadsword shape, and cannot unleash the Absence of Cold until the curse is lifted.

The other doors will open for the pendant also, revealing chambers almost identical to the sword vault. When the rooms are entered, the glass Phoenix panels on the walls glow dimly to illuminate the rooms. In place of the sword pedestal in these are similar platforms, but on top of one is a sculpture resembling a neck and shoulders (perhaps to hold a pendant) and at the end is a very abstract-looking bust, on which might sit a crown.

The more thoughtful player-characters might begin to wonder about the nature of these strange chambers. *Stone Lore*, etc. will reveal that it is several thousand years old, and might in fact date to the time when the artifacts were made. The workmanship is superb, and of course the use of such materials as læn and eog indicate a smithing skill lost to all but a very few. These vaults are miles back under the Grey Mountains; they are clearly not the 'vaults' under Haalkitain Palace where the artifacts are normally kept. How did the Phoenix sword get here? It was last officially seen in TE 4515, placed in the palace vault, but when it was fetched in 5899, it was gone, supposedly pilfered by subterranean creatures.



GM Note: This is in fact the original holding vault of the artifacts, constructed under Tethior's direction. There are five others, all deep beneath the original capitals. All of these vaults survive, even the one under Verzor, and some hold artifacts thought to be missing or destroyed Tethior (who now appears as *The Nameless One*) actually has been retrieving them and returning them to their original resting places. The Sword had been stolen by creatures of the Underearth, but he recovered it. Andraax also knows the sword is here, and will be aware that it has been removed. Even Andraax is not certain that the Nameless One is Tethior, but he is fairly sure. In that, he is ahead of just about everyone else. At some point he may move to stop Tethior's panic-causing predictions, but not yet.

There is nothing else to be gained here, so the PCs must return to the main corridor. They may go back the way they came, but if they start back down the corridor to Haalkitaine, they will feel a chill wind in their faces. Torches (and even the light of the Phoenix Sword if it is aflame) grow dim and flicker.

■ **PC Roll:** Everyone roll D100; all getting a number beneath their Temp Empathy get a feeling of dread, and begin to shudder with strange chills.

If the PCs insist on going this way, they will meet the Doombringer with possibly catastrophic results. If they flee onwards through the tunnels, they might forestall an encounter until they are near the exit. The Phoenix Pendant will glow more brightly if Terek holds it towards the east.

ENCOUNTER: TERROR IN THE DARK

If the group heads back west through the tunnels, they will run into the Doombringer about 7 miles from the sewers. If they head east, it will catch up with them less than a mile from the eastern door. In this way, they could conceivably flee and get outside.

The group enters the rough tunnel, which winds vaguely eastward for about a mile before opening into a cavern. Several tunnels open off of this one, but it is fairly clear that a large tube in the opposite side of the cave is the correct one (the Phoenix will point the way if there is any doubt). The PCs hear eerie sounds during this journey, but encounter no one. Constantly they feel the dreaded presence, seemingly coming closer and closer...

GM Note: The GM may wish to have additional encounters with underearth beings and creatures. We leave this up to you.

THE DOOMBRINGER

See page 71 in the *Master Atlas* (2nd Edition) for a detailed description of a Doombringer. It is essentially a spectral demon cloaked in lightning and shadow; its main weapon is terror. This Demon is similar to the one in the *Atlas*, except instead of the Open Mentalist and Essence lists, it has two Evil Mentalist Base Lists: *Mind Death* and *Mind Disease*. It is also only 10th level. As noted in the *Atlas*, all who see it must make an RR vs 10th level or flee in terror; however, anyone who fails by more than 100 merely loses consciousness.

If the holder of the Navigator coin tries to use it to escape, the Doombringer casts *Mind Blank* (or even better) *Forget* on her. The Doombringer will also cast a spell every round possible while trying to bring the PCs within 5 feet so its lightning attacks can be brought to bear.

Those who fail their RR flee in panic, meaning they run until they collapse; they cannot think rationally.

■ **PC Roll:** Each PC must roll a RR vs 10th level; use SD bonus. Failure means panicked flight. Failure by more than 100 means unconsciousness. Note that normally a panicked PC would not be able to stop and help a companion, but the GM may allow an additional roll with Em bonus to overcome their terror and drag an unconscious friend out. Ræk gains an additional +30 to this because of his naturally Empathic nature as a Healer.

4•FLIGHT INTO DAY

The tunnel ends, opening into a set-stone passage again. This passage continues east for 100 feet, ending in what appears to be a foyer fifty feet on a side. In the east wall is a thirty-foot tall door, beside it a lever. Even a panicked PC can pull the lever, which activates a counterbalance. The door, a monstrous stone slab, grinds slowly upward. A cool breeze blows in, and as the Doombringer approaches, they burst out into the open. A PC can pull the lever the other way and have time to get out, as the door takes four seconds to open or close. They emerge onto the Tanaran countryside. The Doombringer, its powers greatly restricted out of the tunnels, will not follow them outside.

If they wasted no time and stopped for no longer than an hour or so inside the tunnel, their underground journey took about 10 hours.

• PART IX •

TANARA

The sun had barely disappeared behind the Grey Mountains when Terek Al-Arain was out of the caves, flying across the hills astride his palomino. His Myri guards Kel and Renar were hard pressed to keep up, but the Dúranak slowed once he reached the Calgen river. Together this trio formed a *Thavan*, an elite fighting unit of the Dúranaki. While they were young (all merely eighteen), they were deadly accurate with the throwing *kynac*, and trained to kill in defense of their land. Kel and Renar, both strapping blond youths half a foot taller than Terek, were completely loyal servants to their Dúranak master, though to call them slaves was to oversimplify the relationship.

Over the centuries the Myri and Dúranaki evolved a race/caste system in which the smaller Dúranaki were the intellectuals, the artisans (and the masters), while the Myri did the manual labor. This has helped the Dúranaki to create a society of leisure and comfort, but the Myri have not shared in the full benefits of this arrangement. At one time, the Myri were actually ‘programmed’ into subservience through magic, but the Dúranaki learned that a Myr’s loyalty could be earned through kind treatment. Inequality continued however, and the Myri came to assume that this was their place in the world as intellectual inferiors to the cave-dwellers. In fact, however, they are just as bright as the Dúranaki, a fact that Terek Al-Arain has proved by teaching Kel and Renar to read. What Terek has done is forbidden, however, and soon the secret will be out, with serious repercussions for all three. But for now, something else was distracting the young Dúranak...

“What’s the matter, Terek? Kel reined in next to his master, who was still astride his horse. The beast stood patiently in a few inches of water at the river’s edge. Terek did not answer. He was staring down into the crystal clear water as it splashed over stones smoothed by eons of wear. Renar stopped his mount a few paces back, glanced at Kel, then began scanning the horizon. “Terek?” Kel asked again, tentatively this time.

“Don’t you see it? Terek glanced up at his friend, then quickly looked back down to the water.

Kel’s brow furrowed, and he peered into the shallows. “See what?” he asked finally.

“That glow!” The Dúranak slipped off his horse and landed in the icy water with a splash, seeming not to care that it would soak into his boots. He reached into the flow and pulled up a bauble on a chain. It glistened in the dying light, and for a moment Kel thought he saw a red sparkle... but he was amazed that Terek could have seen it even with his night vision.

The Dúranak was holding it close to his face for a closer look. “There’s something imbedded inside this little crystal globe... it’s really beautiful workmanship... I believe that it’s a Pheonix!” He smiled and hung it around his neck. “My lucky Talisman!”

Kel shook his head. “I don’t know, Terek. The Pheonix is not supposed to bring good luck.”

Kel was to be proven right.



land of narrow valleys, rushing streams, and convoluted coastline, Tanara embraces several cultures of unique character, segregated remnants of an extinct kingdom. The folding hills covered with heather and whispering evergreens shelter fertile lowlands. Among the inhabitants are the pale, nocturnal Dúranaki, the blond, athletic Myri, and the half-elven Sulini. To the south, a cruel society of red-skinned Y’kin are kept at bay by rough terrain and vigilant Myri.

The characters emerge from the underground passage at the west end of a steep valley. The serene valley is covered with about a foot of snow, untouched until the PCs blunder out onto it. There is a winding path leading down from this gateway, visible because of a row of stone posts along it (typical of Myri road markers, placed so the roads can be seen under snow).

GM Note: they are about thirty miles north of the Vale of Merisia. If you have the color map from Cloudlords of Tanara, see the ruin symbol; on the B&W key it is keyed #9, near the Vault of the Firesword.

Coincidentally, they are very near the house of Zener Morndaak (assuming they can get their bearings). If they miss the house, they will run into a Myri village called Talisen, and the friendly residents will send them back up the hill to the lakeside cottage. There is no Inn at Talisen, but the characters are told they are welcome to stay at any warm stable.

1•THE LOREMASTER’S HOUSE

Morndaak’s house is a low, rustic structure, with overhanging roofs and a large stone chimney. It sits near a lake about five miles wide,—still frozen over—and there are many tall pines about the house. But as the group approaches, there is a sense that there is something not quite right.

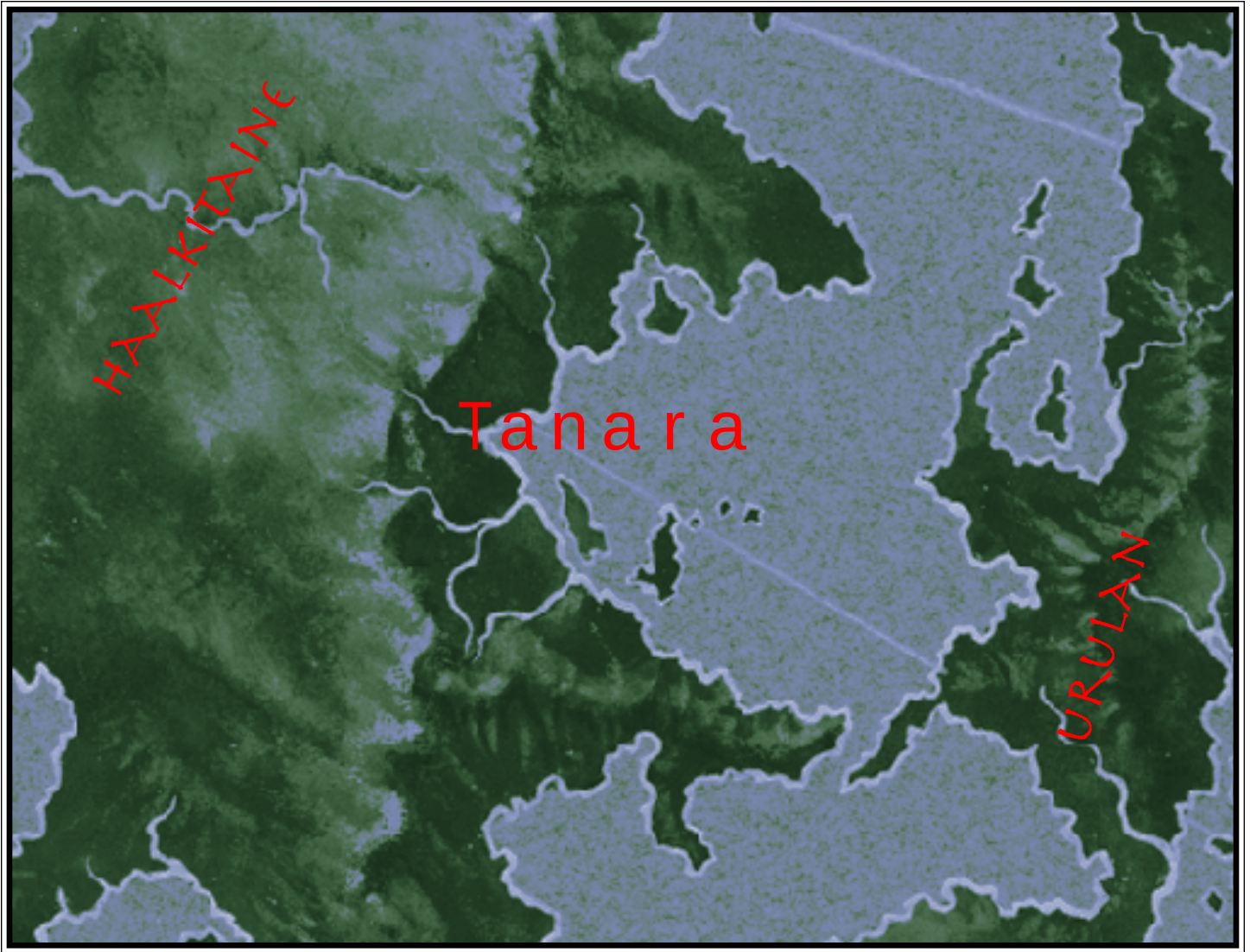
■ **PC Roll:** At about 100’ away down the road, roll a *Hard* (-10) *Perception* roll. Those successful get the feeling that something is wrong. No smoke comes from the chimney, and there are no lights within (even if it is day, the sky is probably overcast, and in any case some lights would be visible as they draw near). Caution would be advisable.

Fears are realized as the PCs reach the structure: the door stands ajar, and it is cold and dark within. Papers are strewn everywhere. Two Myri servants, a middle aged man and woman, are in the kitchen, their throats cut.

■ **PC Roll:** Those with any medical knowledge (Ræk or anyone with First Aid, etc.) may make a roll using appropriate skills to try to determine time of death. They have been dead less than a day; 16 hours in fact.

In the Library, Zener is found tied to a chair with leather thongs. He has no jewelry, weapons or other items on his person, and it looks like he was tortured to death. The room is in a shambles: books and papers everywhere.

They have only a few minutes to search the room, and in fact they find nothing of interest, until a voice from outside calls in Rhaya (the common tongue of Jaiman) “You are surrounded! Come out of the house with empty hands raised!” The tenor voice repeats the call in Erlin. Terek will know the accent to be Dúranak, and warn that the people outside are probably several *Thavan*, elite fighting groups not to be trifled with. He also knows in his heart that he is in deep trouble, but there is no escape from the *Thavan*.



• Tanara •

2• “IT MUST BE A MISUNDERSTANDING...”

Should the PCs try to check out the situation, they can look out the windows and pretty easily see at least 7 or 8 figures around the house, some are Myri, the others Dúranaki.

One assumes the group files out peacefully. The lead Dúranak and speaker, Ranzi, looks surprised at the makeup of this party, especially Terek, but says nothing.

Their weapons are confiscated (no other items are, however), and two of the three Thavan stand guard while Ranzi and his guards go into the house. One of the other Dúranaki—L'tanak—was an acquaintance of Terek, and speaks to him in the Dúranak tongue. He is not hostile, but not very friendly, either. Other than this conversation, the Thavan will not speak to the PCs. “Brother-exile, you should not have come back.” If pressed about why they are here, L'tanak will say “The Loremaster sent a mind-call for help to T'kaal a day ago; we came as soon as we could. I hope for your sake you had nothing to do with harming him.” One assumes that Terek makes a vehement denial.

A moment later, Ranzi emerges, a grave look on his face. He addresses Terek. “Your name and family, and what do you know of the Loremaster’s death?”

Before Terek can answer, L'tanak tells Ranzi that he is Terek Al'Arain, the one exiled for teaching the Myri to read (exile doesn't happen often). Ranzi's Myr guards glance at each other, but the other Myri show no reaction (the younger Myri don't speak *Ranaka*, the Dúranaki tongue). Ranzi says, “Doubly bad for you, Terek Al'Arain.” Then he turns to the rest of the group and asks everyone's name and their reason to be in Tanara. One assumes they tell essentially the truth: to see Zener Morndaak. He seems unimpressed by everyone, but inspects all of the PCs' weapons. He answers no questions (Dúranaki are famous for their rudeness, their air of superiority, and their tendency to just ignore people when they choose), but when he has finished, addresses them: “For now I must take you all into custody to be questioned in this matter. I have seen all I need to within. Let us go.” The PCs are tied up. Ranzi says to Terek: “I would bind you only with an oath, but since you have broken an oath to your people not once but twice I find that I cannot trust you.”

3• OUT OF THE FRYING PAN...

The group begins a long hike to the Dúranak cave city of Jaarn. It is 160 miles, a trip which will take 8 days through the snow. (Ranzi and his men reside at a border keep about 35 miles east of the Loremaster's house. T'kaal Arain, being a Mentalist of some powers, can communicate telepathically with attuned men on the perimeter. Thus Ranzi and his Thavani made it to the house in a day.)

The journey proceeds uneventfully for the first four days, the group making good time despite the snow (which will probably be added to somewhat). The prisoners are treated civilly but not with any courtesy. Ranzi shows no curiosity about the other members of the group, and if Ty men-

tions that he is the son of the Emperor, might be moved to a derisive comment. Rhakhaan is not revered in Tanara. One of the younger Myri—named Zak—is charged with caring for the prisoners. He is naturally friendly, seems bright but undereducated, and plainly holds all Dúranaki (even Terek) in reverence. He will be discouraged from talking too much with the PCs, though.

GM Note: Through this period, there should be little chance for escape. The Thavani in general are efficient, and Ranzi in particular is no slouch. And if they do escape, they can be easily tracked through the snow; the only possibility would be flee and summon the Navigator right off (Navigators frown on transporting tied-up people with their guards standing right there; at the very least the prisoners need to get a stone's throw from their keepers). However, the GM may wish to allow an escape and Jump rather than the more gruesome spectacle to follow.

The party is on the edge of a pine forest, marching north-northeast on the fifth night (Dúranaki travel at night and sleep by day) when Ranzi first detects that they might be followed. He directs



Jerel to continue to lead and vanishes (literally). Ranzi does not reappear until they have settled for the day in a small cave. At the mouth of the cave he has a whispered conversation with Jerel, Beren, and the other two Dúranaki, which Terek gets bits of:

Ranzi: "...Messengers, two squads, perhaps three..."

Other Dúranak: "Burdened by the Prisoners, we could not elude them."

Ranzi: "...slain if we free them now..."

Beren: "Could we ask for aid?"

Ranzi: "No time... ..attack us at dusk."

A few moments later a course of action seems to have been decided on. Ranzi comes forward and addresses them. "We are being pursued by minions of the Iron Wind; perhaps you have heard of them: Messengers of Al-Athuul. I believe they had something to do with the death of the Loremaster. They may be seeking you, though for what reason I cannot imagine. At any rate, I suspect they will attack us tonight, and rather than face them unprepared on the road, we will make a stand here. You will remain in the cave; I will free you when the Messengers have been dispatched."

The rest of the day passes uneventfully, but in late afternoon, there is a sense of tension as everyone packs up. While the group is untied to eat, Zak has a pleading discussion with Ranzi, who seems to relent after some arguing. He speaks to the prisoners again: "Zak has convinced me to leave you untied while you are held in the cave. Your weapons will also be left with you, so that you may defend yourselves with honor in the unlikely event that we fail to defeat these vermin." If the PCS volunteer to help fight the Messengers, Ranzi will barely conceal a look of surprise, then derision. "The Messengers would cut you to ribbons, and besides I cannot be certain of your loyalties."

The others file out of the cave, and Zak says goodbye, leaving the weapons in a sack just inside the entrance. Ranzi stands outside and warns: "Try no tricks when I release you; I will detect any subterfuge in your minds." He steps back, and makes a small gesture with his right hand as his fingers glimmer with a blue-violet light. With a rush and roar, the cave entrance is sealed by a churning wall of water. A moment later, the water itself glimmers violet and, accompanied by a dry crackling sound, the water freezes solid. The characters are trapped inside. (They will not suffocate; there appears to be a small fissure towards the back of this 20' diameter chamber, allowing some fresh air in.)

ENCOUNTER: MESSENGERS OF AL-ATHUUL

The ice is virtually opaque and soundproof, so the characters are forced to sit in the cold and darkness (a fire would consume too much oxygen, but magical light might do) awaiting their fate, unless they decide to summon the Navigator and flee then and there. If not, they wait about three hours before they hear an unnerving cry which penetrates even the ice wall.

■ **PC Roll:** Anyone who can *Detect Presences* (Morden for instance) could follow the battle to some extent within his range. A Successful spell roll means that he can track the Tanarans already there, and distinguish them from newcomers. The description following assumes such ability.

Two of the Thavani die within seconds (they are hit by poisoned darts), then the earth is rocked by an explosion. A moment later twelve presences (assumed to be Messengers) close around the surviving seven Tanarans. A thirteenth presence seems to lurk on the perimeter of range. Over the next minute, three more Thavani die, as do five Messengers; two other Messengers stop moving. Then every PC hears a mental voice—it is Ranzi's Mind Speech: "They have a Priest Lyak with them! Since you have no escape, do the

honorable and merciful thing and take your own lives before they reach you. We will buy you a few seconds more—" the voice is cut off.

THE NAVIGATOR

The situation here is plainly desperate; the players had better use their coin to summon the Navigator. All that is required is that the coin be held and the holder say: "I require a Navigator!"

Almost instantaneously, Sulfean Kuldur materializes with a prismatic flash. The Navigator glows with a golden aura, clearly visible especially in the darkened cave.

SULFEAN KULDUR

This youthful Navigator is a member of the Guides of Vurn-kye. He is a cool operator who will not be flustered no matter what is happening around him. As he well knows, he will not be touched by anyone. Even the Messengers of Al-athuul will not attack him.

★*ote: A summary of Sulfean's appearance and demeanor appears below; since this should be a routine Jump, it is unlikely that his full system data is needed. However, if more on Sulfean is required, his stats appear in the Master Atlas (2ND ED) pg 144.*

Age: 25 (Appears ≈18). Eyes: Deep Blue. Hair: Pale Blond (shoulder length). Build: Slender but Muscular. Height: 6'6". Race/Sex: Iylar-Laen/M. Skin: Fair. Demeanor: Coldly Aloof. Dress: Black uniform with gold trim. True Attitude: Controlled, determined to behave professionally. Home: Nexus.

A beautiful youth, Sulfean is nevertheless a master of the remote demeanor required of the Guides of Vurn-Kye. His black tunic, breeches and boots are skillfully tailored to his athletic frame, shoulders crowned by the usual gilded epaulettes and braid, etc. Not once (in front of a client) have his perfect lips curved into a smile.

THE JUMP

Sulfean will glance at the ice wall (which will begin to crack under repeated heavy blows 30 seconds after Ranzi's call), turn to the coin holder and ask "Your fellow travellers?" The holder need only think of whom he wishes to bring (hopefully the entire PC group; a generous and quick-witted holder might also ask for any surviving Myri and Dúranaki to be included), and Sulfean will whisk all away without delay.

GM Note: you must decide about any survivors among the Thavani if the coin holder asks them to be brought. They would be cared for at Gryphon, but the PCs would be given asylum—i.e., the Thavani cannot continue to hold them prisoner. They are outnumbered by the Gryphon guards and not stupid. Perhaps the NPCs would still be too injured to put up a fight before the PCs leave. In any case, this good deed would serve them later in Tanara.

If there appear to be a few seconds of spare time, Sulfean will ask for the coin, examine it, cock an eyebrow and ask: "This is passage to Gryphon College; are you invited guests?" When the answer is no, he will say "I will have to deposit you outside of the gates, then."

★*ote that Sulfean will defend himself, but will not protect the PCs no matter what. If the holder of the coin is incapacitated, he will ask someone else for a decision. If that is not practical, he will just take everyone who appears to be in the 'group' (this is an unusual display of initiative from him). Also note that Sulfean will be aware of the presence of an evil priest just outside the door and will have taken steps to protect himself. The GM may wish to have the Priest Lyak—who will be about 15th level—cast a few spells from the Evil Channeling or Sorcery lists (Cracks Call or Corridor come immediately to mind...) on the ice wall. Should that happen, Sulfean will Jump everyone in the cave immediately—even as splinters of ice explode into the cave.*

• PART X •

THE GRYPHON

Where are the Fabled artifacts of the Six Realms of Jaiman? Indeed, the tales swirling about the Crowns, the Pendants and the Swords are many and contradictory. Recent events have forced discussion of these items and their locations into the limelight, and as a result, I have been asked to prepare a preliminary report on my findings. Herewith are the results of my search to date.

THE GRYPHON: Both the crown and pendant were taken south by the Loremaster Temeris just days before the orb of the Lords of Essænce was brought to Verzor. I believe that they are held in an enclave somewhere in eastern Jaiman. While one might draw the obvious conclusion that these items are in the monastic compound known as Gryphon College, I have been to this location and find no evidence of items of power. Instead, it is a rustic enclosure devoted to the study of medicinal herbs and other flora. I saw no evidence of animate gryphons, guardian creatures rumored by locals. As for the Gryphon Sword, tales that it was destroyed with Verzor appear also to be erroneous. The last known bearer of the blade was Fen Uthgal, who happened to be on a diplomatic mission to Tanara when disaster struck. Without a home realm (and possibly mentally damaged by the death of his liege), he wandered the countryside for years. Local legend among the Myri tells of his decision to ask the King of Tanara to take his life and entomb the sword in the Catacombs of Ūr.

THE PEGASUS: The Crown—according to the *Dúranak Araini* of Tanara, heirs to the ancient kings—is in the Catacombs of Ūr, protected by many unsleeping guards. The pendant is worn by the First Speaker of the Jyaad, T'kaal Arain. Of the Sword, no one will speak, and I have found no trace of it since the fall. The Cloudlords may have knowledge it, however.

THE UNICORN: I have spent some time in Urulan seeking knowledge of the artifacts, to no avail. While the widely rumored sense of a hostile ‘presence’ was definitely in evidence, I was unable to verify any link to the Crown. Likewise the Sword and Pendant. I have not returned to Urulan since the apparent breaking of the Crown-spell to verify whether the ‘presence’ remains, but intend to do so.

THE PHOENIX: As we all know, The Phoenix Crown has been held in a vault under Haalkitaine for many years, gathering dust. That is, until the ascension of Jerrin Arej Malvion Faslorin III in 6043. He refused the Crown as did his predecessors, but his cousin Frelik managed to take the crown and flee north to plot a revolt. To my knowledge he has not donned the crown. The pendant was taken by the Empress Ajkara III in 5121 when she escaped a revolt of the nobles. It was subsequently lost. The sword was believed to be held in a vault beneath Haalkitaine, but when it was to be brought forth in 5899, the chamber was empty, the sword apparently stolen by subterranean creatures. The fact of the missing Sword is not common knowledge. I should note here that the chambers beneath Haalkitaine Palace are quite labyrinthine in nature, and I suspect they might connect to much older passages. I recommend further exploration.

THE WYVERN: The Crown of Saralis, along with the Pendant and Sword, vanished when that land was sundered late in the Second Era. There are scrolls which tell that, after the plague of SE 5900, survivors in the royal family fled to an isolated isle in Karish Lake, but I have found no official record of a royal retreat there. We must assume that the items were destroyed when the palace was razed during the Wars of Dominion.

THE SEA DRAKE: Perhaps most interesting is the current location of the Sea Drake Crown. We are well aware of the turmoil in U-Lyshaak: the mysterious death of Prince Halek (of Helyssa, a province of old U-Lyshaak) in 6046, and the disappearance of his son Kier. Then, only days ago, Kier appeared in U-Lyshaak wearing the crown and employing powers of mythical scope. Entire armies ran in panic, according to eyewitnesses of our own order. The following night the skies of Jaiman were lit by coruscating displays of raw Essænce, and the next day, Kier’s power seemed to have failed. Fortunately, even the short time at full power seems to have been enough to turn the tide in U-Lyshaak. The Sword is now held by a young champion of Kier’s, and is being used to effect against the forces of the Priest Arnak. As for the Pendant, I fear that it is currently held by the Priest Yarthraak in his tower on the U-Lyshak coast.

While it is apparent that the Great Crowns have lost some powers, this event somehow linked to the Essænce display of 6051•5•21, Kier Ianis seems to continue to wield considerable magical power. I would venture to suggest that the Essænce display was a byproduct of the destruction of the legendary Forge of Arion, a central controlling-point for the Crowns. However, the Artifacts of Tethior and Andraax retain some of their powers. Whether these are purely residual and will fail with time, or if they are inherent characteristics which will endure, only time will tell.

Zener Morndaak

A report to the Loremaster Council

TE 6051•5•69

(A copy of this report was acquired by Nomikos Scribes less than a month ago)



ryphon College is a monastic center in northwestern Rhakhaan. Located on the steep rocky northwest bank of the Ryanna River, it is a forbidding granite edifice protected by guardians seen and unseen.

1•THE GRYPHON GATE

With a flash and whirl of color, the chaos of Tanara is gone, replaced by a quiet grassy hill. A tree-shaded cobblestone road leads up to an iron gate guarding a walled enclosure. Sulfean is bathed in a glimmering aura, his boyish face still impassive. If he has not already collected the coin he does. Then he says, without a hint of sarcasm, “I leave you now. Peace. If you ever have need of swift, reliable transportation again, remember the Navigators.” He is filled with a golden light, and gone.

Whatever time of day or night it was in Tanara, it is only slightly earlier here (half an hour or so, by the sun). The group will only be here for a minute or so before the gate is thrown open and eight men and women in green and brown livery hurry towards them from within the enclosure. There will be some questioning, but if the group explains that they got their transport coin from a Loremaster, there will be guarded relief and the group will be tended to and brought up to the house. They will even be allowed to keep their weapons.

2•A GUARDED WELCOME

The characters are brought into the foyer under heavy guard. Zaris will enter within moments—at which time the Phoenix Pendant will burst into a very bright glow which cannot be hidden. Zaris will notice this and say to Terek: “Young man, you and I must have a private talk.”

If anyone’s wounds are very serious, she will see to them herself, otherwise she will have a few questions before they are admitted past the foyer.

Zaris will query the group closely about their recent activities, and when the name Sæn Alyster is mentioned, she will frown and shake her head. She orders the group to be quartered in guest rooms (Rooms 57 and 58 if using *Jaiman*). NPC Thavani will be housed elsewhere. Their injuries are to be tended, their clothes cleaned and mended, and they are to be fed in their rooms, under guard until further notice.

KALEN & JAD

After the characters have recovered, they are invited to dinner in the great hall, and are introduced to a pair of young men, one dark and clearly of Laan descent, and the other fair, with an Elvish character. They are presented as Lord Kalen Avaniir, and Squire Jad

Hurok. Ty might have actually met Kalen and Jad before in Haalkitane, and while he and Jad might hit it off, it is unlikely that Tyrus and Kalen would have much to say to each other. Kalen is known in Royal circles as a sulking intellectual, with a condescending attitude uncalled-for from a nobleman of an outlying duchy.

Kalen and Jad are currently staying in room 82 (usually professors’ quarters but currently vacant).

■ **PC Roll:** Each player who got a good look at the priest Arnak Osaran may make a *Very Hard* (-20) *Perception* roll. Success means that they see a resemblance between the priest and Jad Hurok. Jad could almost be his son...but it’s probably a coincidence.

GM Note: Jad is Osaran’s son, but does not know who his real father is. The GM should be circumspect in releasing this information, and avoid arousing enough suspicion such that the PCs begin to talk amongst themselves.

3•ATTUNEMENTS

After dinner, Terek and Tyrus will be summoned to Zaris’ office (#4), where she will, without delay, ask to see the Phoenix Pendant. Terek might be taken aback, but once he produces it, she will reveal to both youths that she wears the Gryphon Pendant.

Zaris will want to know all about Terek and Tyrus’ motives, and those of the rest of the group before she even brings up attunement. Then she will send Terek into an anteroom and asks Tyrus if he wishes to allow the Dúranak to have full use of the pendant. If Tyrus asks her advice, she will be loathe to give it, but if Terek seems to have been behaving himself, she will advise to go ahead. She does not at any time suggest that they march home to Haalkitane and turn both artifacts over to Ty’s father. If Tyrus suggests it (to his credit) she will raise an eyebrow and say, “That is well-intentioned, young man, but your father has enough to worry about right now. The sword is in your hands.”

If all goes well, Zaris will agree to perform the procedures: “If only to keep the thing quiet!” She tells him that an unattuned but worn pendant tends to constantly broadcast its presence, while the attuned wearer can command it to shield itself. The sword is not as bad, but Tyrus should attune it to get better use of its powers.

GM Note: The GM may want to include the possibility that use of the item still causes a disturbance in the Essence that can be detected by enemies. This could help to restrain overzealous players.

Zaris calls Terek back in, and while Tyrus watches, she performs the Attunement. She gives Terek a leaf which he is to chew, explaining that it is an herb to induce a trancelike state. She holds the Phoenix by the chain in front of Terek's eyes and commands him to look within the crystal, and the tiny image of the fiery bird within. Flames from the nearby hearth seem to lick through the crystal, until they appear to be inside it... As Terek concentrates, he feels drawn inside, the bird growing larger and larger, until he finds himself hovering high above the ground, facing a huge, majestic bird, its spread wings aflame yet not consumed. It sweeps towards him and the flames are all around, but he isn't burned. Together he and the bird fly over the land, seeing Haalkitane at the heart of a great realm. Then he feels himself floating down to earth again, drifting in a red-gold cloud. He is sitting before Zaris, the pendant glimmering dimly.

GM Note: you may wish to give Terek additional visions while under the influence of this herb. It is a powerful hallucinogen known to provide insights into people and places which affect the user (it is also highly addictive, so any additional use is discouraged).

An exhausted Terek is sent back to his room, the after-image of the Phoenix still burning in his mind. He now has full access to all Phoenix powers.

The procedure is basically the same for the sword.

4•SHADOWS OF THE PAST

The characters are welcome to use the Gryphon College facilities while they are staying there, including the library and maps. Here they might run into Kalen and Jad, who seem intent on travel plans of their own (which they are not interested in sharing, incidentally). The group would be well advised to chart out their next course of action. As noted earlier in Nomikos, Elor Once Dark is believed to live in the northwest, and would be a treasure trove of information. And of course Rælen is itching to go to the Mur Fostisyr to help fight against the Iron Wind. Hopefully his friends will go along to help.

OF SARALIS

There is little definitive literature available about Saralis after the fall of the realm around 6000 Second Era. In fact, it would appear that the government never recovered from a plague which killed over half the population around 5900—including the entire royal family except one daughter, still a child. The land remained in fragmented city-states until the Wars of Dominion, which spelled the end of what little organization was left.

Through the Third Era, Saralis could not even manage the fitful attempts at cohesion which marked the histories of U'Lyshak and Tanara. Instead, the cold, desolate landscape has remained practically uninhabited. It is dominated by rolling hills and fog-shrouded moors. A rather depressing place.

OF LU'NAK... AND DÍR

On the journey to the Mur Fostisyr, the group will have to pass through Lu'nak and the vast forest of Dír.

A passage about the Forest of Dír is discovered, quoted at the beginning of Part ???, pg ??? devoted to Lu'nak. The entire passage appears in the *Master Atlas* (2nd ed pg 64); the GM may wish to give the entire passage to the players, as it refers to two other groups of shards (Viour and Thanor) in Emer who might be encountered later.



Obviously this is a warning. How much information about Shards the GM wishes to give to the players is up to her, but they should remain quite mysterious and frightful. Almost no one has lived who has actually seen a Shard.

The characters might also find this short verse-fragment:

*Beware of wooden pedestals,
thrones hewn of ancient woods unbright*

(five lines missing)

*And if there should be a stone,
run and seek safety in open light
for with a glow and a mist of rouge
there will be no right.
First Six, then One, then all will war,
the land torn by blight.*

—Journals of Ugus Fost
Last lord of the Blue Forest
(final entry)

5•THE RIVER HIGHWAY

After everyone is healed and feeling up to it, the group is offered a small boat (no crew) to continue their journey; Zaris suggests this as a safer route than across Saralis. Gryphon College also supplies them with warm over garments for the trip north.

Even going by the lake route, however, they may have to put ashore even before they reach the northern shores of Karish (the middle lake) because of ice which lingers into summer.

And so, the group will bid farewell to Gryphon College. If they leave in the early morning or evening, the river will be cloaked in mist which also clings to the College buildings. Just before they depart, Zaris will appear with a pouch of herbs (*GM's discretion, but don't be too generous; she will include four doses of a Circulatory poison antidote*).

The river current gently takes the *Maid of the Mist*, and less than a mile from the College the mists will clear somewhat.