

HEROIC WORKS



Emperor of Thieves

The Dark Eye

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Thanks to Daniel Amarato, Annelie Dürr, Björn Hinrichs, Norman Kobel, Kristina Pflugmacher, Tjorven Müller, Philipp Neitzel, and Fabian Sinnesbichler

Printed in EU

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Emperor of Thieves



"The Emperor says to the beggar, 'To each as they deserve,' and tosses a kreutzer into the mud. But the Golden One grants everybody their due."

—Ektor Gremob, from a sermon to his followers.

The Adventure at a Glance

Gangland murders, a conspiracy of the Nameless One, and a lively competition in honor of Phex lead to excitement and adventure in the notorious City of Thieves.

Genre: Detective Adventure

Requirements: Heroes that aren't too strongly devoted to Praios

Location: Phexcaer (the City of Thieves)

Date: 23rd-24th of Phex, 1038 FB

Complexity (Player/GM): Medium/Medium

Suggested Hero Experience Level: Experienced

Useful Skills

Social Skills



Combat





Stealth




Living History



(75; patient; calm; sometimes doubts Phex; Religions 14 (13/13/14); Willpower 7 (13/14/14); SPI 2), who maintains the residents' faith and loyalty to Phex. While conducting an excavation beneath the city, Ektor discovered the *Void Spider*, a potent artifact of the Nameless God that can desecrate the altar of Phex and shatter Delia's faith in the fox god, making her a puppet of Ektor's cult. An annual event known as the *Race of Thieves* serves as the backdrop for Ektor's schemes. During the race, various gangs compete to deliver the head of the statue of Emperor Bodar to the Temple of Phex, where it will remain on display for a day of celebration.

At Ektor's behest,  *Rickel* (37; tall; Thorwaler heritage; loud voice, even when whispering; see page 4), a member of the *Daggers* gang, hides the *Void Spider* inside a copy of the head and delivers it to  *Tobor "Tob" Gisserd* (36; greedy; hidebound; "not blessed by Hesinde," or, in other words, not very bright) (see *Otter Blood*, page 11). Tobor substitutes this false head for the real head in the camp of the *Otter* gang, which is this year's starting point for the *Race of Thieves*.

 *Anvar Eilifson* (22; curious; open-minded, yet with some prejudices; Willpower 4 (13/13/13); SPI 2), a member of the *Fox* gang, tries to shadow Rickel but gets caught and is imprisoned.



Background

A Place for Seekers of Fortune


Besides devoted followers of Phex, suitable heroes are any who dare to enter the Orclands and have skills suited to an urban environment. Other characters that can shine include skillful trackers, cunning rogues, and those who love to brawl.

The heroes can arrive here in the city of Phexcaer for any number of reasons. Perhaps they are escorting a wagon train, or maybe they are on the trail of the legendary *Orc Hoard* and must make a stopover. The heroes' ship might wisely dock for a few days in this City of the Fox, to wait until patrol vessels check on reports of increased orc activity in surrounding waters. Or, the PCs might simply have undertaken a pilgrimage pleasing unto Phex with intentions to visit the largest Temple of the Fox in *Aventuria*.

The Story Thus Far...

 *Ektor Gremob* (82 years old; arrogant; cowardly; brilliant schemer; see page 12), the High Blessed One of the Nameless God, wants to seize control of Phexcaer, the infamous City of Thieves. The only person standing in his way is the Steward Vicar of Phex,  *Delia Natjal*

... and What Happens Next

While attempting to rescue Anvar, the heroes learn about the false head and the *Void Spider*, but they cannot prevent the *Race* from occurring. They can only take part in the race and try to prevent the false head from reaching the altar. The search for the mastermind behind this plot leads the heroes to Ektor, who promptly betrays his follower Tob to divert suspicion. An ambitious cultist named  *Iskra "Isa" Werge* (24; cunning; appears harmless and pitiful; Fast-Talk 12 (15/13/14);



Willpower 14 (15/13/14); SPI 2) takes the opportunity to betray her master, Ektor, to the adventurers after they defeat Tob in combat. She paints herself as the victim and helps the heroes catch Ektor away from his bodyguard. Isa hopes to seize control of the cult after his death.

Concerning Dogs, Cats, and Other Righteous Burghers

Phexcaer is known far and wide as the City of Thieves because its many gangs have taken control of most of the city's public services. The gangs choose a leader from their ranks to serve a term as magistrate of the city, but the gangs remain rivals. The fragile peace is maintained by Delia Natjal, a Steward Vicar of the Church of Phex.

Name	Task	# of Members	Influence
Daggers	City Guards	Few	High
Foxes	Scouts	Some	Medium
Dogs	Shepherds	Few	Low
Cats	Prostitutes	Some	Medium
Otters	Well-diggers	Many	High
Storks	Farmers	Many	Medium

Act I: Fox Hunt

Phexcaer at a Glance

Region: Free human city located in the Orclands

Population: 1,500

Governance: Magistrate chosen by gang members

Temples: Peraine (includes a shrine to Ifirn), Phex, Temple of the Golden One

Trade Goods and Commerce: Furs, some goods from Thorwal, anything seekers of fortune bring to the city.

Special Features: site of the largest Temple of Phex in Aventuria; cult of the Golden One; gangs control many aspects of daily life in the city.

Mood in the City: Bustling, loud, and optimistic, despite the destruction.

Phexcaer was established in the year 806 FB when Steward Vicar *Jirtan Orbas* consecrated the largest temple of Phex in existence, an act that has influenced the city's spirit ever since. Phexcaer remains the one place in Aventuria where those who have lost everything can make a new start.

The city's mood has been tense since an orc attack in the year 1029 FB showed the inhabitants how dangerous life can be. Reconstruction has been slow because there is plenty of living space for the survivors, and many buildings still sit in ruins. Once each year, the city celebrates the *Race of Thieves*, a competition wherein the city's gangs compete to carry the head of

an old statue of Emperor Bodar (also called the *Idol of Many Hands*) to various stations all over the city.

Two Foxes Minus One

The adventure starts on the evening of the 23rd of Phex. Officially the Race of Thieves begins the following morning, but many burghers celebrate on the eve of the festivities. A tavern known as the *Two Foxes*, the regular haunt of the Fox gang, is crowded this evening even though most members of the gang are busy elsewhere with their preparations.

Vixen ♀ *Phenja* (20; braided brown hair; too pretty for this town; Seduction 10 (13/15/15); Commerce 8 (12/14/15); Fast-Talk 7 (13/14/15); Willpower 5 (13/14/15); SPI 2) darts excitedly from table to table and soon approaches the heroes with a request. She is seeking her half orc friend, Anvar, a fellow member of the Foxes. He was supposed to help her with preparations for the Race, but he never showed—which is very unlike him. Phenja can direct the heroes to the townhouse that Anvar said he wanted to investigate.

The Lost Fox

In truth, Anvar was merely looking for a good location for an ambush, but, by a lucky chance, he observed ♂ *Rickel* carrying a statue's head from the workshop of ♂ *Master Gratash* (33; orc; graying fur; black eyes; broken tusks; talks to himself in Oloarkh; Willpower 4 (13/14/12); SPI 0). Anvar knows that Rickel is an officer in the Daggers who dislikes taking orders from others.

He managed to shadow the Dagger to the camp of the Otters. Unable to figure out why Rickel would work with the Otters, he went to Gratash for answers. The orc stonemason became very talkative after only a few threats, but he lied to Anvar, saying that he made several false heads for the Daggers so they could sow confusion during the Race. Thinking quickly, Gratash directed Anvar to a ruined house near the Old Boneyard (see *Fox in a Trap*, page 3). The Fox had barely gone when the greedy Gratash warned Rickel in exchange for a reward. Rickel then ambushed and captured Anvar at the ruined house.

Rickel plans to kill Anvar in the morning, as the death of a Fox would weaken the peace between the gangs. He thinks that a quarrelsome Magistrate would be easier to manipulate, and believes that a gang war could spark a revolution that would help Rickel to rise through the ranks of the cult.

All Foxes are Gray in the Night

Even an experienced scout like Anvar can't move through the city without leaving a trace, but urban environments prove challenging to trackers. Take advantage of the heroes' lengthy nocturnal search for Anvar to introduce them to some stations involved in the Race (see *The Five Stations*, page 5).

Make use of the following encounters to keep the heroes occupied until sunrise, so that they miss the very beginning of the Race. Finding Anvar in the night doesn't change much—the Otters don't believe a single word, the Daggers deny everything, the Foxes are angry, and Delia can't be found anyway until the start of the Race, since she shut herself away for a silent prayer to find strength for the coming day. The Race begins on schedule.

- Some Storks are building a barricade near the **Townhouse (1)**. They don't like people watching them, and have just chased a Fox towards **Bardo Alley**.
- In Bardo Alley, the heroes can make a *Perception (Search)* check to find evidence that somebody climbed the **Phex Mead brewhouse (2)**. Anvar left these traces; the brewhouse roof afforded him a clear view of the stonemason's shop. Anvar also left boot prints in the mud, and the heroes can make a *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* check to follow his trail to the **Temple of Phex (3)**; with QL 2, they interpret the boot prints as returning to the stonemason's shop and can shorten their search by going straight to Gratash's.
- It is not easy to follow a trail on a busy street. By making a *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* check at -1, the heroes can follow Anvar's tracks to the **Cella Arches**.
- Anvar's boot prints look especially deep behind a closed fur shop (he stood here when he witnessed the handover of the false statue head). With a *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* check at -2, the heroes can determine that he returned directly to the stonemason from here.
- The **Great Market** poses a special challenge to tracking, as workers have already begun erecting merchant stalls here for the celebrations (at a distance from the Temple, of course, as nobody wants to be hurt in a fight between gangs). Even experienced trackers have difficulty following the trail here (make a check with *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* at -5).
- Finally, the tracks lead back past the brewery straight to the stonemason. If the adventurers lose their way, they can still take advantage of the unique qualities of cities (that is, nobody is invisible, and the heroes might find somebody who noticed the half orc sneaking by). Make a cumulative check using *Streetwise (Gather Information)*, with an interval of 15 minutes (taken up by questioning). When the heroes gather 10 QL, they find enough clues to continue following the trail.

Hewn from Stone

The orc stonemason Gratash has no love for human manners, but he likes the comfort one can buy in Phexcaer. He likes it so much that he felt no qualms

about helping with Rickel's deception or betraying Anvar.

When confronted about Anvar, Gratash denies everything at first but might be convinced to talk. Results depend on the method. Threats require a competitive check using *Intimidation (Threats)* against Gratash's *Willpower* (13/14/12). If that fails, some coins might help (Gratash is egoistic and greedy, not cruel or brave). If the heroes offer him a good deal, he might even tell them about the small bag stashed in the head of the statue, although he doesn't know what's inside—he was paid well to ignore it.

Fox in a Trap

At dawn, the heroes reach the **Old Boneyard**. Most buildings that were damaged during the orc attack are still uninhabited. A check using *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* reveals Anvar's trail as well as tracks from three additional pairs of boots. With a successful *Perception (Spot)* check, the heroes notice a scream that is cut short, but they are able to determine the building from which it came.

In the hopes that Phenja and the other Foxes are out looking for him, Anvar tries to delay his murder and provoke the Daggers into revealing their plan. He almost gets Rickel to talk, but the angry Dagger vents his wrath on the young Fox. With a successful *Stealth (Hide)* check against Rickel's *Perception*, the heroes can listen unnoticed to their conversation. Failure means Rickel notices them and charges outside to attack.

While eavesdropping, heroes learn the following information, which is paid for in Anvar's blood (the longer they listen, the more they learn, but Anvar's suffering increases with each passing minute).

- The Otter mixed up the two statue heads and put the wrong one in the Race.
- The faithful of Phexcaer are praying to a false god.
- There is a traitor among the Otters.
- It's not about winning, it's about the victory celebration.
- Delia will succumb to the Nameless God.
- The false head is not important. Its contents are what matters.
- If the head sits on the altar long enough, the Temple of Phex is doomed.
- Phex has been ruling this city for over 200 years, but the Nameless One needs just 13 hours to take it from him.
- Anvar's death will start a gang war.
- Out of the chaos, rebellion will spread.

Rickel and Cultists

COU 13 SGC 11 INT 13 CHA 12

DEX 12 AGI 12 CON 13 STR 14

LP 32 AE - KP - INI 13+1D6

DO 6 SPI 1 TOU 2 MOV 8

Unarmed: AT 12 PA 8 DP 1D6 RE short

Saber: AT 11 PA 7 DP 1D6+3 RE medium

Battleaxe: AT 13 PA 6 DP 1D6+5 RE medium

PRO/ENC 0/0

Special Abilities: Forceful Blow I (Rickel has Alertness, Forceful Blow II, Shield-Splitter)

Advantages: None

Disadvantages: Negative Trait (Greed)

Skills: *Body Control 4, Empathy 4, Fast-Talk 4, Feat of Strength 5, Intimidation 5, Perception 5, Self-Control 5, Stealth 6, Willpower 4*

Combat Behavior: The cultists are a well-trained cabal hoping to increase their standing within the cult through their victory. Rickel is an experienced fighter, but he has not yet sold his soul and cannot cast liturgical chants.

Escape: The cultists fight to the death, as does Rickel.

Pain +1 with: 24 LP, 16 LP, 8 LP, and 5 or less LP

Notes: Rickel wields a battleaxe instead of a saber.

He also has STR 15 instead of 14, *Feat of Strength 9* instead of 5, and 30 LP instead of 28. He also has two additional special abilities.

The heroes must face Rickel and two of his cultists, who fight to the death, but that does not preclude the heroes taking prisoners. If the heroes were not able to listen in and learn all of the information outlined above, they can try interrogation or some other method on a prisoner to learn about the plan with the false head.

If the heroes move quickly to free Anvar, and Rickel and the cultists die without talking, the heroes can obtain some of these clues from the half orc, who accidentally overheard a few things from Rickel and the cultists before the adventurers' arrived. You can decide what the Fox has learned. At the very least, the heroes should learn that something is hidden in the false head, and that it needs to sit on the altar for 13 hours.

Anvar leads the heroes to the headquarters of the Otters, after the Race of Thieves has just begun. To cheers of the audience, the Otters carry the head out the door only to be ambushed promptly by the Daggers. During their brawl, some Cats take the opportunity to snatch the head and run away.

Short on allies who know what's going on, Anvar offers to induct his rescuers into the Fox gang temporarily. If they win the Race, nobody will dispute their membership after the fact.

Act II. Thieves and Emperors

The Emperor's Law

Weapons are banned during the Race, but aside from that, anything goes. This is why brawls are so common. Each year's starting point is always set in the camp of last year's winner, and the head must be carried over the threshold of the Temple of Phex at the end. Since the head must be placed momentarily on a table at a minimum of one of the five stations before it can be brought to the Temple, the gangs all prepare traps and ambushes. The first gang to carry the head to a station and drag it into the Temple of Phex is declared the winner.



The Five Stations

- The gambling hall known as **Silver and Gold (4)** burned down completely during the orc attack. Creepy golden statues were all that remained of gamblers who didn't want to part with their winnings during the raid. Whether this so-called miracle was Phex's way of decrying greed (or rewarding courage) is anybody's guess.
- The **Temple of Peraine (5)** is a traditional station, but one that is not staffed during the Race (the temple leader has work to do and no time to waste on such nonsense).
- The abandoned **Palazzo of Pagol Thiron (6)** is known for its overgrown yet attractive gardens.
- The luxurious, four-story **Townhouse (1)** is the seat of the Magistrate.
- The **Phex Mead (2)** brewhouse is known for its beer flavored with honey, barley, and carrots.

Idol of Many Hands

The real head of the statue is a little over a foot tall, made of marble, weighs 70 pounds, and fits neatly into a large backpack. Since the head has taken part in the Race for over 200 hundred years and has passed through many hands, it is quite worn, and its ears and nose have been broken off.

Since it offers few handholds, the head is difficult to carry without using a wheelbarrow, a robust cloth, or a rope harness. To avoid dropping the head while transporting it, make *Body Control (Running or Jumping)* checks for every 50 yards of distance traveled, as well as when performing physical exertion (doing things like jumping, dodging, or running). It is hard for people bearing the head to dash more than a short distance, and most wind up just walking the head through town.

The false head is made of granite and has a bright spot on its neck where Gratash used plaster to fill the cavity containing the Void Spider.

The Traveling Emperor

Since the heroes probably don't know the city very well and would not have had a chance to make proper plans, they might have to try their luck in a straight-up confrontation. Of course, they could try simply camping out at the temple of Phex and stealing the head at the last second, but they should realize that they cannot win the Race if they have not passed at least one station while carrying it.

The path between the brewhouse and the Temple of Phex becomes one long, drawn-out brawl, blurring the distinction between audience and participants.

Coincidences

The following encounters occur during the Race. A specific location for each encounter, if any, appears in brackets.

Battle Plans

During the Race, the timing of events depends upon the heroes' actions. The following (incomplete) list presents encounters with various gangs. Feel free to modify or discard these as you see fit, or invent encounters and ambushes of your own.

Daggers

Task: City Guards

Greatest advantage: Good fighters

Tactics: Start a brawl with at least five members present; if one gets the head, they all run away.

Foxes

Task: Scouts

Greatest advantage: Stealth

Tactics: Ambush with traps like tripwires, snares, or falling nets (*Perception (Spot)* -2 to notice).

Dogs

Task: Shepherds

Greatest advantage: Animals

Tactics: Bait alleys with kitchen scraps to lure wild street dogs, and take the head in the confusion.

Cats

Task: Prostitutes

Greatest advantage: Distraction

Tactics: Spray perfume into an opponent's eyes (as a *Blinding Flash* with QL 1); hide the head under their billowing skirts, or convince bystanders to carry it to the next station. They are not above letting their tops slip or hiking their skirts to create distractions.

Otters

Task: Well-diggers

Greatest advantage: Strength

Tactics: Use traps like pits or tripping stones (*Perception (Spot)* to notice) and pin opponents to the ground while one of them runs off with the head.

Storks

Task: Farmers

Greatest advantage: Improvisation

Tactics: Have improvised barricades ready to block streets, and use the new dead end for an ambush.

- Near one station, a Fox on a roof throws a large net over the hero carrying the head (*Dodge* check at -4 to avoid). If caught, any nearby heroes are trapped as well. Three Foxes hiding in a doorway run up to the entrapped characters and try to cut the Emperor's head free (*Feat of Strength (Dragging & Pulling)* check to hold on to the idol; *Body Control (Squirm)* to get free). [any station]

Typical Gang Member

COU 13 SGC 12 INT 14 CHA 12

DEX 14 AGI 14 CON 13 STR 13

LP 31 AP – KP – INI 14+1D6

DO 8 SPI 2 TOU 2 MOV 8

Unarmed: AT 13 PA 7 DP 1D6 RE short

PRO/ENC 0/0

Special Abilities: Alertness, Feint I, Forceful Blow I, Improved Dodge I

Advantages: none

Disadvantages: Negative Trait (Greed)

Skills: *Body Control* 8, *Empathy* 5, *Fast-Talk* 5, *Feat of Strength* 8, *Intimidation* 8, *Perception* 9, *Self-Control* 7, *Stealth* 9, *Willpower* 7

Combat Behavior: Gang members use their SA, their fists, and the tricks mentioned under *Tactics* for each gang.

Escape: After losing 50 % LP.

Pain +1 with: 21 LP, 14 LP, 7 LP, and 5 or less LP.

Note: Stats vary by the gang. The Daggers are the better fighters (+2/+2 AT/PA), the Foxes are more agile (+1 AGI), the Otters are stronger (+1 STR), and so on. Use your judgment.

- The Otters have dug a knee-deep ditch in the road to the Temple of Peraine, filled it with mud, and topped it off with dry earth to hide it. If the heroes fail a check with *Perception (Spot)* -2, they stumble into the ditch, where Emperor Bodar's head could slip from their wet fingers (*Feat of Strength (Dragging & Pulling)* check +2 to hold onto it). Two Otters stand by to retrieve the head, after which three others form a "bucket brigade" to move the head quickly to the temple and present it at the station.
- Hay carts are chained together around the station, and must be climbed. Storks are hiding in the straw to trip any heroes who aren't carrying the head (make a *Body Control (Balancing)* check to avoid falling) and attack the person carrying the head. A single Stork waits in front of the station; the others just have to toss the head to him. [Palazzo of Pagol Thiron]
- If the heroes don't have the head but begin to draw close to another gang, a girl from the crowd points at the scrawniest adventurer with a sly grin and yells, "There's the head!" Immediately, everyone charges the innocent hero. The brawl lasts 2D6 CR or until most opponents realize that the head is nowhere to be found. [any street]
- When the heroes have the head and are fleeing from another gang, the Dogs drive a flock of sheep into the street and attack under cover of the chaos. [any station]
- The Cats built a false station around the corner from the real station at the Townhouse. Four Cats, one of which has disguised herself as an acolyte

of Phex, are nearby pretending to be members of the audience. When the heroes set the head on the simple wooden table, the Cats grab it and try to dash around the corner to the real station. The heroes can see through this ruse with a *Perception (Spot)* check at -2. [Townhouse]

The Emperor Comes Around

If the heroes have access to magic, they hold a tremendous advantage. As long they don't cast attack or fire spells, the Church of Phex will not intervene.

If the heroes try to use weapons, the other factions gang up on them and beat them into unconsciousness, taking them out of the Race. The burghers of Phexcaer have a (deserved!) reputation as scum without honor, but they take their Race of Thieves seriously.

Chaos is an important aspect of the Race. The heroes must make regular *Perception (Spot)* checks to keep an eye on whoever is carrying the head at the moment. If the check fails, the heroes might follow the wrong person accidentally. The audience enjoys giving misleading clues or throwing around a decoy bag. Also, it is impossible to make a close inspection of the head during the Race.

Bring Wine, the Emperor is Visiting!

As the heroes are about to win the race, the Daggers gather in front of the Temple of Phex to take the head from them in an all-or-nothing bid for victory. The following assumes that the heroes prevail. If they do not, adjust events as needed.

The young Blessed One named **Elwin Viskyn** (19; nondescript face; cheeky smile; Willpower 4 (13/13/13); SPI 2) is confused when the heroes carry the head of the Emperor into the temple of thieves, because he doesn't recognize them as members of a gang. Regardless, he accepts Phex's judgment quickly, declares the Race ended, and proclaims the foreigners as winners. In response, the heroes can declare membership in one of the other gangs, or name themselves as a gang. People they've never met before hand them jugs of wine, slap them on the shoulder, or kiss their cheeks.

In all this chaos, Elwin tries to take the head and place it on the altar. If the heroes stay alert and refuse to hand it over, Delia herself appears. If the heroes did not take part in the Race (or lost, if they did), they can't prevent the head of the Emperor from being placed on the altar. When Delia arrives to congratulate the winners, the heroes can intercept her and ask for a few quick words. Delia is summoned if the heroes try to interfere with the altar in any way.

Ground Floor

This building's rooms are dark, as Tob had closed all the shutters. The main room serves as both workshop and gathering place and is almost always guarded.

Pedestal (1)

The head of Emperor Bodar stood on this robust table for the last year, until it was needed for the Race. The pedestal is sticky with dried beer. The wooden boards around the table are rotten and creak loudly when anyone approaches, a deliberate effect that is intended to scare or warn off unwelcome guests.

Tables (2)

Many tankards remain standing on these two large tables, but the chairs have been thrown around and some are stained with fresh blood. A trail of blood leads towards the **Sleeping Room (9)**.

Tob had tried to sneak up on Theren and kill him from behind as he sat here, but his first swing missed and Theren fought back. Theren was half way to the sleeping room when Tob managed to kill him with his working knife, but Tob was injured in the process.

Workbenches (3)

The workbenches are untidy. Tools and flakes of hewn stone lie everywhere on the benches.

Old Workbench (4)

With a *Perception (Search or Spot)* check, the heroes notice that this workbench, and the tools lying upon it, are dusty. The Otters hide their pocket money in its middle drawer to avoid having to run to the **Treasury (14)** for every little purchase. The drawer is protected by a sharpened bolt trap (*Dodge* check at -4 to avoid, damage 1D6+4 DP). To deactivate the mechanism, they must push the drawer in hard before pulling it out. The drawer contains 10 ducats in small coins.

Cellar Stairs (5)

These stone stairs lead to the cellar. One stone near the middle of the stairs is loose. Unwary heroes might stumble and fall (*Body Control (Balancing)* +2 to avoid, damage 1D6+2 DP).

Fake Bookshelf (6)

This bookshelf conceals a secret door. The books are actually wooden blocks covered in leather. Besides boring, mundane titles like *Hammers*, *Stones*, and *Wells*, there are more ominous sounding titles, such as *GbjOexw* or *TleNkk*. These are not valuable true names of demonic creatures or anything; the person who created the leather covers simply couldn't write very well.

The bookshelf was designed to look extremely suspicious and enticing. The secret door can be revealed by pushing the bookshelf to the side

(cumulative check *Pick Locks (Bit Locks)* -2, 5 CR, 7 attempts). Beyond the door is a room that contains only a large chest (7). The wooden floorboards in this room are nearly rotten, and trespassers who fail a *Body Control (Balancing)* check fall through into the old **Well Shaft (15)**.

Treasure Chest (7)

This heavy, iron-shod chest, made of massive stone-oak wood, has a complicated lock that can only be picked by a masterful thief (cumulative check using *Pick Locks (Bit Locks)* -5, 5 CR, 7 attempts). Success at this task earns you a pile of gorgeous rocks—literally, as the chest contains no treasure. It is intended only as distraction. The inside of the chest lid bears a humorous depiction of an otter laughing at a fox. The real treasure of the Otters is far better hidden.

Threshold to the Sleeping Room (8)

There are three wide holes on the left side of this door frame, and three matching notches on the right side of the door frame. This looks like an obvious bolt trap but it is actually a mock-up designed to scare off fearful thieves or keep them busy searching for the mechanism until someone notices their presence.

Sleeping Room (9)

This room contains six beds, for Otters who work into the night or simply need to sleep something off.

Theren (10)

The blood trail on the floor leads to the first bed, upon which lies Theren's body. Tob tried to make it look as if Theren had been slain in his bed, but there was more blood than he expected and he couldn't clean it all up. The key for the bars on the **Well (15)** is still carried on Theren's body.

Barn (11)

The barn houses the Otters' carts and horses. A ladder leads up to the hayloft.

Broken Handcart (12)

Tob was trying to carry Emperor Bodar's head to the Bodir river using this handcart when the axle broke.

Stone Storage Room (13)

The Otters keep most of their unshaped stone in this storage room. The real statue head is hidden behind a pile of stones (*Perception (Search or Spot)* to find). Tob dumped it in here before he fled to Ektor's. The room isn't secured, as who would want to steal rocks? With a *Perception (Search or Spot)* check at -4, the heroes notice that there is space enough for a hidden room between the Stone Storage Room and the Sleeping Room, although there is no visible entrance (the entrance is in the **Cellar**).

Treasury (14)

The Otters' fortune is made up of coins and jewelry from racketeering, plus ore found during excavations. The gang has approximately 200 ducats' worth of various valuables.

Cellar

The hideout's dark cellar smells moldy and is used mainly to store beer barrels and broken tools.

Well Shaft (15)

The Otter hideout is built upon an old well that is now part of a trap for thieves. The bottom of the well sits about six feet below the building's foundation, and the well is filled with hip-deep water. This provides minimal cushioning; anyone falling into the well suffers 2D6-2 DP falling damage, ignoring PRO (see *Core Rules*, page 340). The well's shaft has crumbled a bit over the years, and the resulting hole is secured with locked bars (to unlock, make a cumulative check with *Pick Locks (Bit Locks)*, 5 CR, 7 attempts).

A check using *Perception (Search or Spot)* -4 reveals that the shaft wall opposite the bars appears newer than the rest of the shaft. A subterranean spring used to supply water to the well, but it dried up, exposing a natural cave that the Otters now use as a secret passage. They keep it locked with bars for added security.

Barrels (16)

At first glance, these beer barrels don't look suspicious, but a successful check using *Perception (Search or Spot)* -2 reveals a small crack in the rearmost barrel. This barrel conceals the lever that opens the **Portcullis (18)**. The lever must be pulled down and held, which requires strength (*Feat of Strength (Pushing & Bending)*). Otters don't even trust other Otters, so the treasury can never be opened by just one person.

When the portcullis opens, anyone making a *Perception (Search or Spot)* check hears a rumbling sound behind the north wall, but the secret passage (see #17, below) is in the west wall. Near the barrel, there is a **folding ladder**.

Secret Passage (17)

Hidden behind a brick in the wall (check using *Perception (Search)* -2 to find) is a lock (to open, make a cumulative check with *Pick Locks (Bit Locks)* -3, 5 CR, 7 attempts). Once unlocked, the secret door opens with a simple push to reveal a corridor leading to a natural passage.

Portcullis (18)

This massive portcullis can only be opened via the lever hidden inside the **Beer Barrel (16)**.

Bear Traps (19)

This somewhat low-lying room is filled with ankle-deep water that conceals three rusty bear traps. These traps are placed in the corners of the room (*Perception (Search or Spot)* -2 to avoid, damage 2D6+4 DP). Anyone sticking to the middle of the room can avoid stumbling into the traps.

Hatch (20)

This hatch in the ceiling leads to the treasury. Otters use the **Folding Ladder** (see *Barrels (16)*) to reach the hatch. Outsiders do not know about the trap set on this portal. A heavy rock lies on top of the hatch. When the hatch is opened, the rock falls, hitting those below (take 1D6+2 DP, plus make a check using *Body Control (Balancing)* to avoid falling from the ladder).

The rock is wrapped in rope, one end of which issues from a hole about three feet to the left of the hatch and is tied around a small hook (*Perception (Search or Spot)* to notice).

When the Otters leave the treasury, they place the stone to the right of the hatch. After closing the hatch, they reset the trap by pulling on the rope to move the rock into place on the hatch. To open the hatch safely, one need only pull the rope (*Feat of Strength (Dragging & Pulling)* +2) to move the rock to the left side of the hatch.

If the heroes find the real statue head and bring it to the temple, Delia asks them to deal with Tob while she tries to extract the artifact from the false head.

If the heroes can't find the head and instead go looking for Tob, the Otters find the head themselves and bring it to the temple in secret (they fear being accused of cheating during the Race).

The Void Spider

The Void Spider is a karmic artifact of the Nameless One that was made from pitch blend. Nobody knows the age or origin of this fist-sized spider with purple eyes and golden chelicerae. When placed within one yard of a holy object for at least thirteen hours, it dispels the karmic power of the Twelvegods. As each hour ticks by, it extends one of its thirteen legs. If it reaches 13 hours, it tears a fragment of divine order from Dere and produces a black slag that burns the skin (1D6 DP, ignoring PRO) from its spinnerets.

Act IV: Foxes and Rats

The Lost Otter

Otters, Foxes, and even members of other gangs could help shorten the heroes' search for Tob because he fled in a panic and was not trying to move unseen. Also, Tob is limping, producing a distinctive trail that can be followed by someone with *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)*. Either method eventually leads the heroes to the **Temple of the Golden One (7)**.

Tob ran straight to Ektor for help leaving the city because he fears the Otters' revenge (they will eventually determine that he is the killer). Ektor is worried that nothing will stop Delia until she finds the guilty party, so he secretly decides to betray Tob to the authorities. He directs Tob to an abandoned house and promises to smuggle him out of the city at night. As a token reward for Tob's service, Ektor taught him *Summon the Servant of the Lord (Ivash)*, thus making him a credible dark priest.

At the Temple of the Golden One

Ektor Gremob founded his *Cult of the Golden One* (secretly a front for the Nameless god) in a long-abandoned former Temple of Efferd. The building was damaged during the orc attack nine years ago and is now a mere shadow of its former glory. Its golden stucco is flaking off in sheets, and its signature golden obelisk has been replaced with a statue of a man. One of the statue's arms has broken off.

When they arrive, the heroes meet the High Priest of the Golden One and his four bodyguards, who have remained at his side nearly around the clock ever since the orc attack. He receives the heroes with an air of apparent boredom. At first he pretends to know nothing, but he agrees to talk if the heroes offer an appropriate reward for his knowledge.

He says that Tob visited him recently to sell jewelry. Since Ektor doesn't store his gold in the old temple, he asked Tob to return later that evening. As a sign of good will, he mentioned an abandoned house where Tob would be safe from unwanted eyes. Of course Ektor's story is a lie, but he is a masterful fraud. The heroes must succeed in a competitive check using *Empathy (Sense Deception)* -4 versus Ektor's *Fast-Talk (Flattery)*, or fail to notice that Ektor is not telling them the whole truth.

A Rat in Fox's Clothing

Isa is a young cultist who assists Ektor in the temple, but she feels she could be doing more. She was eavesdropping when Tob came to Ektor in despair, and she now sees her chance to get rid of the High Priest. While bringing Ektor and the heroes some wine, she enters the room wearing a submissive expression.

Bodyguard

COU 12 SGC 11 INT 13 CHA 12

DEX 12 AGI 12 CON 14 STR 13

LP 33 AP - KP - INI 10+1D6

DO 4 SPI 1 TOU 2 MOV 6

Unarmed: AT 9 PA 5 DP 1D6 RE short

Mace: AT 10 PA 3 DP 1D6+4 RE medium

Warhammer: AT 13 PA 3 DP 2D6+3 RE medium

PRO/ENC 4 / 2 (chainmail) (armor modifiers already included)

Special Abilities: Alertness, Forceful Blow I

Advantages: none

Disadvantages: Negative Trait (Greed, Submissive to Authorities)

Skills: *Body Control* 5, *Empathy* 4, *Fast-Talk* 4, *Feat of Strength* 4, *Intimidation* 8, *Perception* 6, *Self-Control* 7, *Stealth* 4, *Willpower* 4

Combat Behavior: Due to *Pervasive Sphere Song of the One*, the bodyguards are utterly loyal and do not surrender.

Escape: The bodyguards fight to the death.

Pain +1 with: 25 LP, 17 LP, 8 LP, and 5 or less LP.

When she has a chance, she casts a terrified glance at the most heavily armed adventurer. Her act is calculated to fool the heroes into thinking that she is oppressed and helpless, to get them to do her dirty work for her. If the heroes try to speak with her before they set out after Tob, she acts terrified and unwilling to open her mouth and reveal anything.

After the heroes leave, Isa convinces Ektor that Delia is already suspicious of Tob and that the adventurers will probably try to capture him alive. She asks for permission to follow the group, to make sure Tob doesn't betray anybody (she wants Tob to die because she thinks he is incompetent). Also, as a precaution, she suggests that Ektor use *Pervasive Sphere Song of the One* to enslave a few more bodyguards. She plans to have the heroes interrupt his dark ritual later this evening (see *Fallen Star*, page 11), and hopes that the presence of so many people will convince them that Ektor is the mastermind they seek. For his part, Ektor views Isa as a mutt whose usefulness stems only from her weak ties to the Temple of Phex. He has no inklings that this urchin poses a threat to him, so he follows her suggestions willingly.

If the heroes attack Ektor during their first meeting, Isa sides with them at once, betrays Tob's location, and use her time during the fight to offer Ektor the sarcastic suggestion that he get some new bodyguards. Afterwards, she uses her "kidnapped daughter" ruse to send the heroes after Ektor (see *Rats' Prey*, page 11).

Otter Blood

Tob is hiding in a former brothel called **Young Love (8)**, which is located in the southern part of the city. The paranoid gang member sits in a back room, expecting the Otters to break through the door at any moment. For added protection, he has summoned an ivash.

Tob uses the same stats as Rickel (see page 4), with the following exceptions. He has the same combat stats but uses a mace instead of a battleaxe, and his KP are almost used up and therefore irrelevant for the fight.

Rats' Prey

Isa follows the heroes and calls to them when Tob is defeated. If he is still alive, she tries to kill him. If the heroes notice her attempt, she begins to sob and says that Ektor ordered her to kill Tob if the heroes proved too merciful. To guarantee her obedience, Ektor took her little daughter captive and threatened to sacrifice the child in a dark ritual. What else could she have done?

If the heroes hesitate to trust her, she suggests they take her to Delia, as the Steward Vicar will remember her former acolyte who fell in with bad company. When Isa tearfully reveals Ektor's machinations, Delia asks the heroes to act at once, as the girl has just confirmed Delia's long-held suspicions.



As further proof that the heroes can trust her, Isa tells them about a secret escape tunnel that leads straight from Ektor's private chapel to the cellar of a nearby warehouse. Since he always locks his rooms when he goes to bed, she explains, the heroes could bypass the bodyguards completely and catch Ektor unprepared.

Act V: Fallen Star

If the heroes use the secret passage, they arrive outside the door of a room in which Ektor is performing a ritual. He is planning to use *Pervasive Sphere Song of the One* to bind four new followers of the Golden One to him, thus adding to his bodyguard. Within the room, they can hear a sweet melody without any obvious source. When they enter, they find Ektor wearing purple-and-black robes and a golden mask, and surrounded by followers who sway serenely to the music.

Ivash

COU 15 SGC 10 INT 12 CHA 12

DEX 12 AGI 13 CON 13 STR 13

LP 30 AP 20 KP – INI 14+1D6

DO 7 SPI 3 TOU 3 MOV 10

Unarmed: AT 12 PA 6 DP 1D6 RE short

Flame Tongue: RC 13 RT 1 DP 1D6+4 RA 2/4/6

PRO/ENC 1/0

Actions: 1

Special Abilities: Feint I

Skills: *Body Control* 5, *Feat of Strength* 5, *Self-Control* - (automatic success), *Willpower* - (automatic success)

Size Category: medium

Type: Demon (Nameless One), humanoid

Combat Behavior: Ivashim obey their summoners' orders.

Escape: Ivashim do not run away.

Special Rules

Firestarter: Wooden weapons and non-metal parts of armor burst into flames at its touch, giving the user the state *burning*.

Susceptible to Water: Double all water-based damage. Use the rules for acid damage (see *Core Rules*, page 341).

Flame Tongue: Opponents can either dodge the Flame Tongue or parry it (but only with a shield).

Shapeless: An ivash's body is without fixed shape. It can squeeze easily between tight bars or through a gap under a door, for example.

Immunity to Fire: Ivashim are immune to heat and flames. Spells like *Ignifaxius* cause them no damage.

Demon Rules: Ivashim use the general demon rules (see *Core Rules*, page 355), with the exception that blessed weapons of an opposed god do not inflict double damage (because there is no opposed god in this case).



Ektor Gremob

COU 10 SGC 15 INT 16 CHA 17

DEX 10 AGI 9 CON 11 STR 10

LP 28 AP – KP 65 INI 10+1D6

DO 5 SPI 3 TOU 0* MOV 8

Unarmed: AT 12 PA 8 DP 1D6 RE short

Basilisk-Tongue Dagger: AT 12 PA 5 DP 1D6+2 RE short

PRO/ENC 0/0

Special Abilities: Alertness

Advantages: Increased Spirit

Disadvantages: Negative Trait (Envy, Greed)

Skills: *Body Control* 4, *Empathy* 15, *Fast-Talk* 16, *Feat of Strength* 3, *Intimidation* 8, *Perception* 11, *Persuasion* 17, *Religions* 13, *Self-Control* 12, *Stealth* 13, *Willpower* 13

Liturgical Chants *Fire and Brimstone* 13, all other liturgical chants Ektor knows are unimportant for the fight.

Combat Behavior: Ektor uses *Fire and Brimstone* first and lets his followers fight for him. If cornered, he defends himself with his ritual dagger.

Escape: Ektor tries to escape if given the chance, as he wants to survive at any cost. Surrender isn't an option, since he knows that he will be executed. He has no qualms sacrificing followers.

Pain +1 with: 21 LP, 14 LP, 7 LP, and 5 or less LP.

Equipment: *) An amulet blessed by the Nameless One gives him +3 SPI and +3 TOU versus magic.

If the heroes try to attack Ektor, the music stops and the followers come out of their trances and attack mindlessly. Ektor sets these unarmed men and women on the heroes to buy some time for him to escape. He fights only when cornered.

If the heroes choose to enter by the front door, they must defeat the bodyguards and then pick the lock (cumulative check using *Pick Locks (Bit Locks)* –4, 5 KC, 7 attempts) on Ektor's room. They can also try to break down the door, but doing so would give Ektor time to get away through his escape tunnel.



Fire and Brimstone

Check: COU/SGC/CHA

Effect: A purple ray shoots in a straight line from the fingers of the Blessed One to strike the target. Target suffers 2D6 + (QL x 2) DP. The ray is considered a ranged attack with a missile weapon. It can be dodged or parried with a shield. The ray causes structural damage to shields equal to the DP.

Liturgical Time: 4 actions

KP Cost: 8 KP (you cannot use a modification on this chant's cost)

Range: 16 yards

Duration: immediate

Target Category: All

Tradition: Nameless

Liturgical Chants and Ceremonies

Pervasive Sphere Song of the One: This liturgical chant places targets under the control of the Blessed One, forcing them to obey every command. Ektor uses this liturgical chant only to create bodyguards and other loyal servants, and prefers to incorporate it into extended ceremonies. He hasn't yet thought of using it in combat.

Summon Servant of the Lord (Ivash): this liturgical chant summons a type of demon called an *ivash*.

Nameless Doubt: This liturgical chant makes targets doubt and even ignore their moral principles. Blessed Ones ignore the rules of their Church, vegetarians eat meat, honorable warriors stage ambushes, and so on.

Ektor's followers use the same stats as cultists (see page 4), except that they are all unarmed.

Isa's daughter ♀ *Jella* (3 years old; helpless; awkward) is well and resting in a side room. Ektor didn't actually kidnap the child; Isa always brings her daughter to the temple because she has no one to care for the child while she is at work.

The Heroes' Reward

Delia is relieved to hear of Ektor's defeat, but also a bit sad, as she couldn't destroy the Void Spider. She had to place her trust in Phex and hide the unholy artifact in a mundane place where it will (hopefully) never be found. For their efforts, the heroes should receive 25 adventure points each.

Epilogue: The Future is Golden

As soon as the heroes turn their backs, Isa moves into Ektor's old villa. To retain the property, she enslaves **¶ Firl Krawinz** (32; big; talented orator, but with little self-confidence; Willpower 2 (12/10/15); SPI 1), a member of the Daggers who is also a follower in the temple of the Golden One. Her new "lover" then declares himself Ektor's successor as Priest of the Golden One, drawing attention away from Isa. With the support of the Daggers, who receive a portion of the income from the cult's drug sales, Firl is almost untouchable. Of course, Isa is the real High Priestess of the Nameless One. She furthers her plans by offering her services as an informant to Delia. The Steward Vicar of Phex wants to destroy the Cult of the Golden One and thus is eager for news of any cult activity. Isa makes use of Delia's resources to take out her rivals.

Isa expands the cult of the Nameless God slowly, for she is more prudent than Ektor. She rules the cult with an iron fist while pretending publicly to be the (weak) woman at Firl's side. Under Isa's direction, the cult continues its excavations in the collapsed tunnels under Ektor's old villa, but her main goal remains the destruction of the Church of Phex. She endeavors to become Delia's confidante so she can strike when the moment is right.

Important NPCs

¶ Anvar Eilifsson

Anvar's mother was an orc who left her tribe for his father, a dashing Thorwaler pirate. These days, Anvar (22; curious; open-minded yet suffers from prejudices; Willpower 4 (13/13/13); SPI 2) tries hard to earn his keep in Phexcaer. Even though his head of black hair and thick body hair makes the 22-year-old look more orcish than human, he was never interested in orcish customs and has always considered himself a Thorwaler.

¶ Delia Natjal

Delia (75; patient; calm; sometimes doubts Phex; Religions 14 (13/13/14); Willpower 7 (13/14/14); SPI 2) has suffered many setbacks in her long life and once even lost her faith in the fox god. But in the end, the old Blessed One couldn't give up on Phexcaer or her belief that the city is a prized jewel in Phex' treasury. She is painfully aware that Boron will grant her only a few more years on Dere, and she fears for her city's future if Ektor Gremob and his Cult of the Golden One should ever grow strong again.

¶ Ektor Gremob

Ektor Gremob (82; arrogant; cowardly; brilliant schemer; Willpower 13 (10/16/17); SPI 3) was once the

most influential man in Phexcaer. He founded the Cult of the Golden One almost fifty years ago, and burghers have come to his temple in droves to receive "bread of the Golden One," a drug that causes euphoria and weakens the user's will, and Ektor's power and wealth grew.

During the orc attack, he lost his alchemists and almost lost his own life. To escape, he had to sacrifice his left hand to the Nameless One. Ektor tried to expand his cult and regain his influence, at least in the shadows, but he had lost his greatest source of income. He used his remaining wealth to explore the collapsed tunnels beneath his villa, where he felt the call of something strong. Today his left hand has been replaced with a golden hook, and his temple is little more than a den of drug dealers.

¶ Iskra "Isa" Werge

Isa (24; cunning; appears harmless and pitiful; Fast-Talk 12 (15/13/14); Willpower 14 (15/13/14); SPI 2) was once an acolyte of Phex. She suffered much at the hands of the orcs during the attack nine years ago (a punch from one knocked out her front teeth; tavern-goers know her as *Toothless Isa*) and she lost her faith in Phex for abandoning her in her moment of greatest need. She wandered aimlessly for a time and eventually fell in with a priest named Ektor who had received impressive protection from the Nameless One during the attack. She sacrificed her right ear willingly to help the true god obliterate the Church of Phex within the city, but she soon grew to despise Ektor because he was wasting her talents.

Her hatred for Phex is deep-seated, as she feels that a true ruler should take care of his subjects. She hates orcs, too, and always wears a necklace of broken tusks that she gathered after the attack. In her mind she blames the coal pelts for her missing ear, too.

Isa appears harmless and pitiful as a tactic to get what she wants. She cares only for her daughter Jella (whose birth was the result of a one-night stand after a night of drinking in the tavern). But Isa does not hesitate to use Jella as a tool to achieve her goals.

¶ Tobor "Tob" Gisserd

When elections for a new gang boss were held after the death of the previous leader, Tob (36; pragmatic; greedy; hidebound; not blessed by Hesinde; Willpower 4 (13/13/12); SPI 1) lost by only a few votes and now must take orders from the younger *Tarlitha Moorfarmer*. Ektor promised to aid the Otter in claiming his rightful position once the Church of Phex is defeated. To seal the deal, Tob sacrificed the front half of his right foot to the Nameless God.

AVENTURIA

Emperor of Thieves

by Annette Juretzki

Phexcaer withstood the orc horde nine years ago, but this resilient metropolis by the Bodir River now faces something far more insidious. A dark power stretches forth its hand to steal this jewel in the Orclands from the fox god. Its agents lurk in every corner, like an invisible spider in a web of lies. The puppeteer is ready, and a sinister shadow play is about to begin.

What do various gangs of thieves, the head of an emperor, a half orc, a foot race, a thieves' hideout, a spider, and the largest Temple of Phex in Aventuria all have in common? To find out, the heroes must follow the trail of the fox and hope that they have the cunning, skill, and endurance to prevail.

At least one thing is certain: in a city where everything is for sale, the price of failure can be very high, indeed...

You need only *The Dark Eye Core Rules* to play this adventure. *Emperor of Thieves* includes all other necessary information, such as maps, handouts, and NPCs. The *Aventurian Almanac* is useful for understanding the history and setting of the adventure and enriching play, but it is not required.



Gangland murders, a conspiracy of the Nameless One, and a lively competition in honor of Phex lead to excitement and adventure in the notorious City of Thieves.

Genre: Detective Adventure
Requirements: Heroes that aren't too strongly devoted to Praios
Location: Phexcaer (City of Thieves)
Date: 23rd-24th of Phex 1038 FB
Complexity (Player/GM): Medium/Medium
Suggested Hero Experience Level: Experienced

Useful Skills

Social Skills ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
 Combat ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
 Stealth ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

Living History ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆



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