



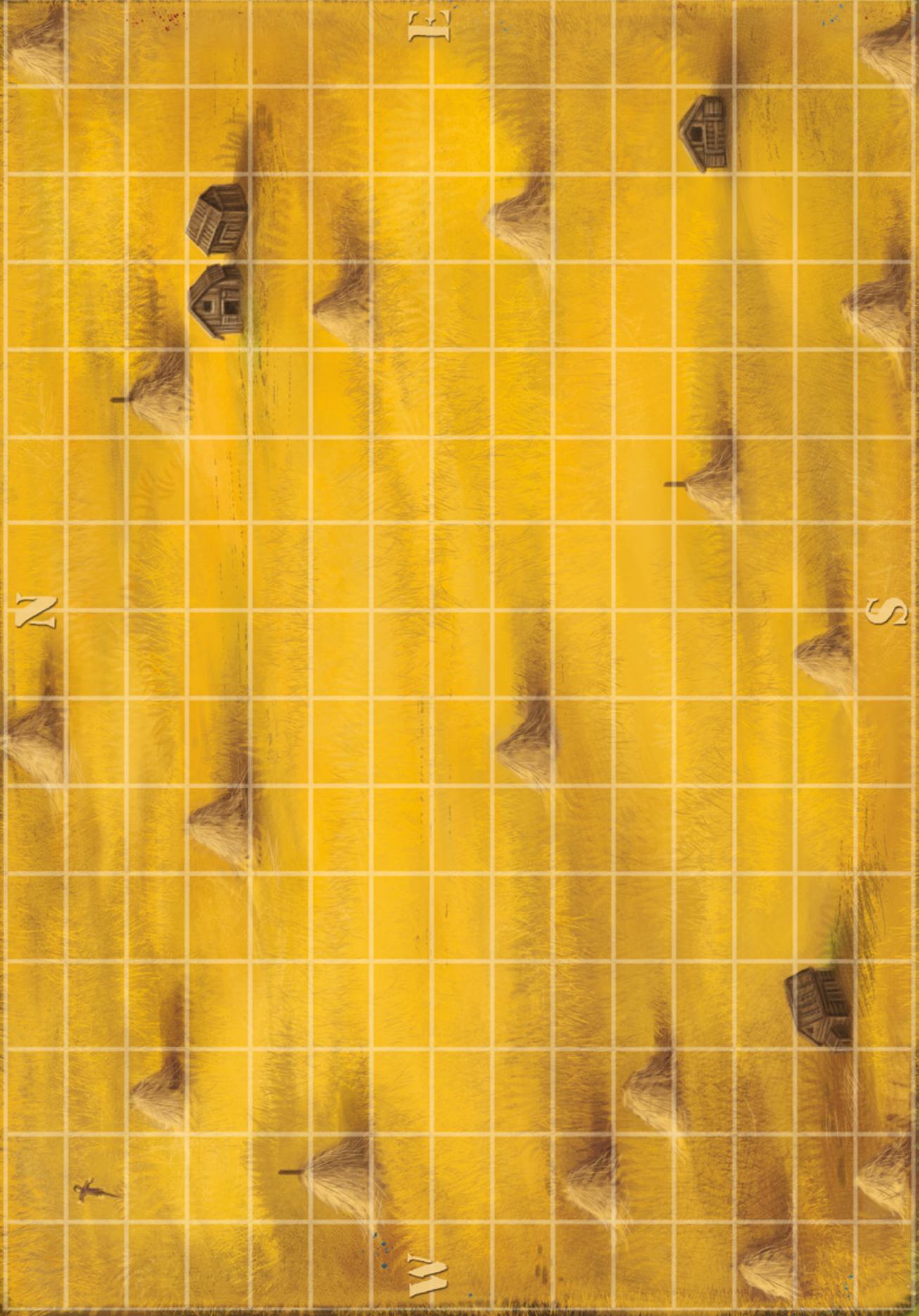
The Dark Eye

Tales of  
Dragons and Thieves



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Tales of Dragons and Thieves





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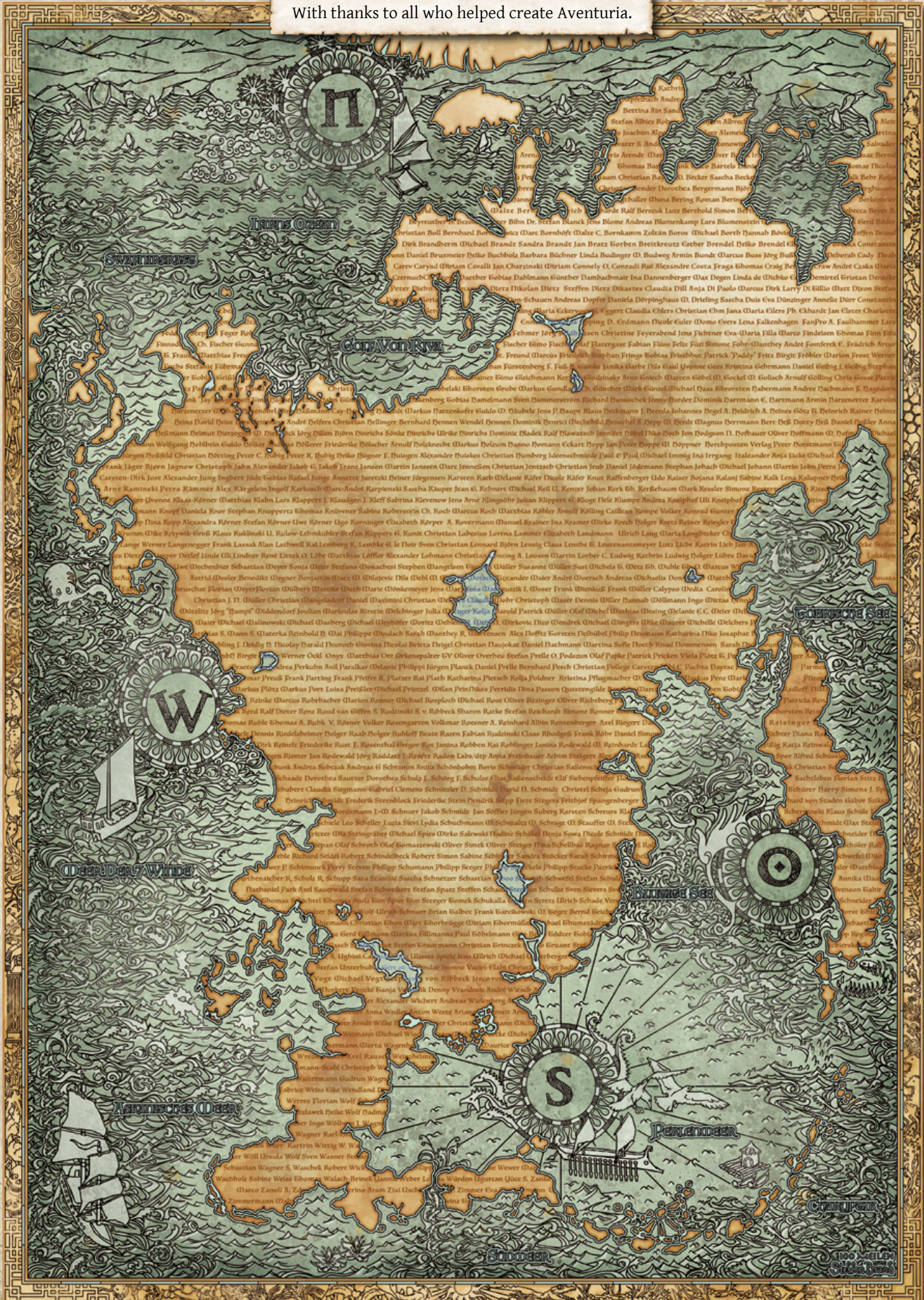
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With thanks to all who helped create Aventuria.



1000 Jahre  
Siedler  
in Aventuria



## Table of Contents

GM Introduction	4
Late Mail	5
A Reluctant Groom	38
Ishlunar's Treasures	59
Appendix	95



To make a scene easier for the heroes, use the suggestions in this paragraph.



To make a scene more difficult for the heroes, use the suggestions in this paragraph.

• **Read Aloud Text:** You can read this text aloud to your players (or paraphrase it), as it does not contain any GM-only information.

• **GM Information:** The information in these boxes is not meant for the players, although some if it is background for the GM.

• **Rumors:** heroes who try to gather information might hear rumors or innuendo. Rumors are true (+), false (-), or partly true and partly false (+/-).

• **NPC stats:** The stats provided for NPCs include everything needed to play the adventure but are not necessarily complete. For NPCs with a large number of skills, such as spellcasters and Blessed Ones, this book does not include every skill with a rating higher than 0, especially ones that aren't relevant to the game. Feel free to add or adjust skills as you see fit.

• Some NPCs' Special Abilities have entries such as *Feint I+II* and *Precise Shot/Throw I+II*. The notation *I+II* means that the GM sets the challenge level by choosing whether the NPC has Level I or Level II in that ability.

• These boxes contain important information about the game!



NPCs with this symbol play an important role in future official adventures.



NPCs with this symbol hold a position that will prove important in future official adventures, but the character itself may be replaced with one of your choosing.



NPCs with this symbol do not appear in future official adventures. You can use them freely in your campaigns and adventures.

Level	Quality	Price
1	Miserable dump	Very cheap (50% of normal price)
2	Dirty dive	Cheap (75% of normal price)
3	Simple inn	Normal (normal price)
4	Middle-class tavern	Expensive (150% of normal price)
5	Exquisite hotel	Very expensive (200% of normal price)
6	Luxurious hotel	Extremely expensive (400% of normal price)

### Taverns & Inns: Quality, Prices, and Beds

Taverns and inns are rated by levels associated with their *(Q)uality*, *(P)rice*, and *(B)eds*. *Quality* indicates the establishment's overall condition, *Price* modifies the prices listed in the *Core Rules* for services and goods by the given percentage, and *Beds* indicates the maximum number of beds available.

## GM Introduction

Greetings to the Twelve! This anthology contains three ready-to-play adventures all about Fire-breathing dragons and cunning brigands.

In **Late Mail**, a message from the past leads to a famous lost fortune in gold and jewels. Before they can claim it, however, the heroes must save a farming community from ruin and survive a robber gang's deadly legacy.

The heroes sign on to escort **A Reluctant Groom** to his arranged wedding, but the rebellious young man is not the only one who wants the heroes to fail.

To obtain an important artifact for the Church of Hesinde, the heroes must search mountainous terrain for a hidden dragon's cave. Rough terrain and dangerous barbarians are the least of their worries as they search for **Ishlunar's Treasures**.

Will the heroes find the robbers' lost treasure, deliver the uncooperative youth safely to his destination, and escape the dragon's cave intact? Only time will tell!



# Late Mail



by Tim Niclas Scheffler and Daniel Simon Richter

Special thanks to Tina Hagner for the “Northmarchan feel”

## Introduction and Background

*“By Praios, I’ve had enough! Take a banner’s worth of men from the River Guard and seize—or better yet slay—those damn Kobolds!”*

—the Lord of the Northmarches in Eilenwid-above-the-Waters to his Master of Arms, about one hundred years ago

*“We’ll seal the caves and guard the treasure until those fops in Elenvina forget about us—then we’ll come back for our gold.”*

—Patras Okarn, leader of the robber gang known as the Kobolds, about one hundred years ago

*“I can’t believe I’ve got the only key and I’m getting away with it! Ha! You can all wither away and die, for all I care!”*

—Patras to himself, about five minutes later

*“I promise to deliver the letter the next time I pass through Moorsend—that is the name of the village, correct? And no, I will not give it to anyone but the telor\* Eberhelm. Not Eberhelm? Ah, Eberwin Witniken, your scion. Eorla—so shall it be.”*

—the glade elf Amarandel Welldance to her dying friend Patras, two years later, somewhere near Niemith



\*Isdira: Human



## The Adventure

**Genre:** Treasure hunt

**Prerequisites:** Helpful heroes with a sense of curiosity

**Location:** Ideally, a village at the edge of the Kosh Mountains in the Northmarches, but it may be set anywhere.

**Complexity (Player/GM):** low/low to medium

**Suggested Hero Experience Level:** Inexperienced to Experienced

### Challenge Level

Combat	◆	◆	◆	◆
Social Skills	◆	◆	◆	◆
Nature Skills	◆	◆	◆	◆
<i>Living History</i>	◆	◆	◆	◆

**Late Mail** is set in the Northmarches, specifically, the Kosh Mountain region bordering Ridgerock County. Note that the events in this adventure do not affect *Aventuria's Living History*; therefore, they can take place anywhere along one of *Aventuria's* many trade routes. The year is also flexible, but **Late Mail** must occur early in the month of Travia, after the autumn harvest, when people give thanks to the goddess Peraine for the soil's bounty.

## Background and Prologue

About one hundred years ago, a brigand gang known as the Kobolds plagued the Kosh Mountains and surrounding area. According to legend, the peasants called them Kobolds because, much like their magical namesake, they appeared and disappeared without warning. Not even the burgrave of Ridgerock could stop them. The Kobolds ambushed trade caravans from Havena to Gareth, acquiring great riches and—eventually—amassing a great fortune.

In his quest to put an end to the constant thievery, the duke of Elenvina hired mercenaries to finish off the Kobolds. The brigands escaped, but only after they sealed their treasure in a mountain cave. They planned to return and divide the bounty after the furor died down.

However, the Kobolds' leader, Patras Okarn, disappeared—along with the treasure map outlining the many devious traps set by the gang and the one item able to open the

sealed cache: a magical ring. The other gang members searched for Patras but never found him.

Patras began a new life as an adventurer; but he never got the chance to return home, for a poisoned blade ended his life a few years later. Before he died, Patras gave the map and ring to his elven companion, Amarandel Welldance, and asked her to give them to his son, Eberwin Witniken, who lived in Moorsend—a village in the Northmarches. To prove the treasure existed, he also gave the elf a palm-sized Gwen-Petryl stone that was once part of the treasure. Amarandel promised to deliver the map, ring and stone when she reached Moorsend, but she was unworldly and didn't realize how short a human's life could be. As time went on and generations slipped by, Amarandel forgot about the Kobold treasure map and the key to the caves. She only recently remembered Patras' request and set out to make good on her promise.

Meanwhile, the brigands Patras betrayed despaired of ever finding him, so they settled near the old cave, in the village of Moorsend. They knew Patras was related to the Witnikens and hoped he would someday return to his family. Patras never did return, and the ex-brigands eventually forgot him. The memory of the riches, however, stayed alive in legends passed down from generation to generation—today, some folks still hope there is a grain of truth in those old stories.

## What is About to Happen

The innkeeper, Jasper Gellenbrinck, is one of the brigand's descendants who still dreams about recovering the treasure one day. When Amarandel comes to his taproom looking for Eberwin Witniken, who was ancient when Jasper was still a boy, Jasper realizes he finally has a chance to claim his heritage. He enlists some friends to help him set a fire during a village celebration as a distraction and steal the map and key from the healer, Alrik Witniken, Eberwin's direct descendant.

Jasper didn't account for the heroes, who are visiting this small village at the edge of the Kosh Mountains as a thank-you for having recently rescued a wealthy Moorsend farmer, Bosper Glimmerdell, from a brigand attack. After the fire is contained, they quickly learn the arsonists' identities and track Jasper and his cronies to the old Kobold cave. The final battle for control of the shimmering Kobold treasure takes place deep below the mountains.



## Selecting Heroes

This adventure is designed for *Inexperienced* to *Skilled* heroes. It is suitable for all races, cultures and professions, though characters with combat and wilderness survival experience are especially useful. Urban heroes can experience village life and nature, giving many opportunities to play out disadvantages, such as *Arrogance*, *Vanity*, *Spoiled*, and *Prejudiced*. Noble heroes must deal with the simple concerns of peasants, which can also prove interesting.

Dwarves and elves are easy to tie into the adventure. Elven heroes may be the target of some superstition

in the country, but dwarves are a common sight in the Northmarches. Southern heroes, as well as characters from the Middenrealm or the Far North, can participate in this scenario without restrictions.

Locals respect Blessed Ones, especially those of *Praios*, *Travia*, and *Peraine*. Spellcasters can prove useful, but aren't strictly necessary. The people of the Northmarches have a very Praios-oriented mindset, which could cause problems for guild mages who are not of the *White Guild* when dealing with people—provided, of course, a simple peasant can tell the difference. Oddly enough, most of the population respects witches and druids.

## Introduction

### The Duchy of the Northmarches

The Northmarches have many different facets. While towns near the Realm's Road and the Great River grew wealthy through trade, the remote settlements in the hinterlands often suffer from dire poverty. The people of the Northmarches have a very down-to-earth philosophy, but they don't talk much, are reserved, and hide their enthusiasm well. From the outside, they appear to stick together; however, infighting happens often. The war against Albernia brought the nobility of the Northmarches together for a while, but once the peace treaty was signed ("We were robbed of our victory!"), they resumed quarreling amongst themselves. The situation in Ridgerock is no different; the nobles have always fought amongst each other and the burgrave, and only external threats bring them together.

The Ridgerock Basin, also called *Peraine's Farmland*, is a fertile valley surrounded by the Ingra Peaks, the Kosh Mountains, the Tommel River, and the Great River. The region is hilly and difficult in places, but the mountains protect it from the cold winds, allowing for abundant agriculture. Families divide their fields equally among their children, a practice that has shaped the landscape of small fields typical in Ridgerock.

Vairingen, the barony where **Late Mail** is set, lies at the foothills of the Vorder Kosh—north of the Tommel, near the town of Ridgerock.

### What Does My Character Know About Ridgerock?

A hero born and raised in the Northmarches or the surrounding regions already knows the following details. However, even heroes from a different country may have learned these details about the Northmarches, so it's a

good idea to include this information in-game as general knowledge, when appropriate.

If you prefer to let the dice decide what the heroes know, use the following guidelines:

#### Religions check +2

QL 1: Most people in the Northmarches worship Praios; however, Rundra, Travia, Ingerimm, and especially Peraine are also well respected.

QL 2: The proximity of the Northmarches to the dwarven cities led to the peoples' acceptance of ancient dwarven traditions as to what is right and wrong.

QL 3+: Magical druids live in the forests and mountains. They act as priests, attempting to live in balance with nature to awaken the primal giantess, Sumu.





### Geography (Northmarches) check +2

QL 1: The Northmarches are a province in the Middenrealm.  
QL 2: The duchy lies east of the capital of Gareth, surrounded by the Kosh Mountains, the Ingra Peaks (the mountains surrounding Xorlosh), the Iron Forest, and the Great River. Elenvina at the Great River is the powerful duke's capital.  
QL 3+: Neighboring regions include Windhag, Albernia, Kosh, and Andergast.

### Etiquette (Rumors) check +2

QL 1: The Northmarches are a duchy in the Middenrealm, whose duke is loyal to the empress. Rebellion and tradition don't tend to mix well, and for many years, Albernia and the Northmarches were enemies. However, in recent years, the situation has calmed down a bit.  
QL 2: Hagrobald of the Great River, Duke of the Northmarches, is young and ambitious and always up for a new challenge.  
QL 3+: The nobles of the Northmarches are bitter enemies, held in check only by the duke. The Northmarches is one of the Middenrealm's most influential regions. Ridgerock's ruler, Burgrave Alrik Custodias-Greifax of Ridgerock, controls his nobles with strict laws.

### Short Ridgerock Glossary

*Griffon Pass*: An important route over the Kosh Mountains, connecting the Northmarches to the Principality of Kosh; impassable in winter.  
*Harvest Thanks*: A celebration common among the farmers in the fertile region of the Ridgerock Basin, during which they thank the gentle goddess Peraine for the bounty of the soil and trees; often features exuberant revelry.  
*Hinter Kosh*: One of the lands bordering Andergast; infamous for its remoteness, dense forests, and merciless winters, as well as its wolf packs.  
*Nabla*: A river bordering Andergast.  
*Ridgerock*: A well-defended town, with tall levies and hot sulfur springs; even minor crimes here are often punished by stiff fines.  
*Ridgerock mountain farm*: An architectural style characterized by half-timbered houses with low rooftops covered in wooden shingles.  
*Tommel*: A river; one of Ridgerock's main arteries.  
*Vairingen*: The barony in Ridgerock.  
*Vorder Kosh*: The foothills of the Kosh Mountains. The areas' villages and cultivated, wooded areas are usually protected only by a palisade or a guard tower controlled by a knight.  
*Winter Man*: A traditional figure from folklore, blending faith in Firun with the worship of the elements.

## Chapter I: Ambush

The heroes come across bandits attacking a wealthy Moorsend farmer named Bosper Glimmerdell and save his life. To thank them, Glimmerdell invites the heroes to his farm in nearby Moorsend so they can attend the upcoming harvest celebration (on the 3rd of Travia). The real adventure begins there.

### Realm Road III

While traveling, the heroes see bandits ambush Bosper on Realm Road III. This long trade route connects the Middenrealm from east to west. It starts in Kyndoch, passes through Abilacht and Ridgerock, crosses the Kosh Mountains via Griffon Pass, leads into Angbar, and continues on to Gareth. Heroes have many reasons to be here. Perhaps they are passing through on their way to Albernia, or traveling from Albernia over the Griffon Pass to Angbar or Gareth. Even nearby Ridgerock could be their destination, as the sulfur springs are popular among alchemists. Whatever the reason your heroes have for

being in the area, they have plenty of time to accompany Bosper to Moorsend, as the little village is only about half a day's travel north of the Realm Road.

### The Ambush

#### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*You shiver and wrap your cloak more tightly around you as you watch your breath steam in the chill air. It's only the beginning of Travia, but this close to the Kosh Mountains, winter seems to be nigh. Dense, morning fog lies over the fields, covering the trees and their autumn leaves in white, billowing cobwebs. It's still quite early in the morning; no one besides you seems to be traveling on the Realm Road, which is usually rather lively. Just as you decide that you must be the only travelers around for miles, you hear unsettling sounds coming from the white veil: a muffled cry for help and weapons rattling. Somewhere up ahead in the mist, someone is in trouble.*



◊ The following scene introduces the heroes to Moorsend. Tailor the introductory scene to your players' tastes. Alternatively, the heroes arrive directly in Moorsend, perhaps to visit a relative or a fellow member of a coven.

The heroes must make a successful *Perception (Search)* check with a + 2 bonus to determine the exact location of the noise.

In fact, the fight is happening just a few yards ahead on the Realm Road. A group of [# heroes + 1] brigands took advantage of the dense morning fog to ambush unsuspecting travelers. Their victims are the farmer *Bosper Glimmerdell* (for stats, see

page 10) and his companion, protector *Hannafrid Altlapper* (26; broad shoulders; muscular; short hair; silent peasant woman who knows how to wield a club; responsible; loyal, but a bit stupid; see page 10), whom the brigands perceived as easy prey.

#### Ridgerock Brigand

COU 13 SGC 11 INT 13 CHA 12

DEX 11 AGI 13 CON 13 STR 13

LP 31 AE - KP - INI 12+1D6

DO 6 SPI 1 TOU 2 MOV 7

**Unarmed:** AT 12 PA 6 DP 1D6

RE short

**Mace:** AT 12 PA 5 DP 1D6+4 RE

medium

**PRO/ENC** 2/1 (light leather armor) (includes armor modifiers)

**Special Abilities:** Feint I, Forceful Blow I

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Negative Trait (Greed)

**Skills:** *Body Control* 5, *Empathy* 3, *Feat of Strength* 6, *Intimidation* 7, *Orienting* 5, *Perception* 5, *Self-Control* 4, *Stealth* 8, *Tracking* 4, *Willpower* 3

**Combat Behavior:** The brigands prefer to gang up on one opponent, and alternate between using Feints and Forceful Blows

**Escape:** After loss of 50% LP, or when more than half the brigands are incapacitated

**Pain +1 at:** 23 LP, 16 LP, 8 LP, and 5 LP or less



#### Into the Fight!

When the heroes arrive on the scene, they find the following:

- Hannafrid, bleeding from several wounds, holding off three opponents with desperate courage
- The remaining brigands trying to overtake the farmer
- The brigands are not just interested in Bosper's money, they rather hope to earn a large ransom for him ("It's Glimmerdell! Be careful with him! He's worth a hefty ransom!")
- Due to the fog, all checks using skills, AT, and defense suffer a penalty of 2 (see *Core Rules*, page 348, *Visibility Modifiers*).
- RC attacks suffer a penalty of 4.
- The brigands also suffer these penalties, and they are distracted, as well. Their checks to notice the heroes suffer an additional penalty of 2.

◊ Assign unique visual traits (an eye patch, a greasy beard, an old coat, rusty plate armor, and so on) to the brigands to help the heroes distinguish them. At the end of the adventure, the heroes meet up with brigands, again. If some of these brigands are present, the heroes may notice they have a chance to settle an old score.

It does look as though the brigands are trying

to take Bosper alive. The heroes can wait for the battle to end and then attempt to free the farmer; however, waiting could prove fatal to Hannafrid (roll 1D6: on a 1-2, she dies; on a 3-6, she becomes incapacitated with *Pain IV*).

#### 👤 Bosper Glimmerdell

**Description:** 60; experienced trader and farmer; heavysset; salt and pepper ring of hair; wears rustic clothes made of good cloth; his bald pate becomes red and shiny when he is angry.

**Role:** Farmer in trouble; draws the heroes into the adventure.

**Background:** With skilled deals, Peraine's favor, and a bit of luck, Bosper has managed to make good money and become one of the wealthiest farmers in the area. Bosper owns the largest fields and has the best-fed herds, and he leads a good life. Many small farmers whose land he purchased work for him. The villagers made him mayor due to his influence. But being well-known in the area has its disadvantages—he and his family members make opportune targets for brigand gangs, as everyone knows the Glimmerdells can likely pay a large ransom.

Bosper's family means everything to him, which is why he is stern with his son Gisbert. He hopes Gisbert will give



### Hannafrid Altlapper

COU 12 SGC 10 INT 13 CHA 10

DEX 13 AGI 12 CON 14 STR 13

LP 31 AE - KP - INI 12+1D6

DO 6 SPI 1 TOU 1 MOV 8

**Unarmed:** AT 13 PA 8 DP 1D6 RE short

**Club:** AT 12 PA 4 DP 1D6+2 RE medium

PRO/ENC 0/0

**Special Abilities:** Forceful Blow I

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Obligations (to Bosper)

**Skills:** *Animal Lore 8, Body Control 5, Empathy 3, Fast-Talk 3, Feat of Strength 6, Intimidation 6, Perception 2, Plant Lore 10, Self-Control 5, Stealth 3, Willpower 4*

**Combat Behavior:** Hannafrid uses intimidation to avoid confrontations and resist provocations. However, she does not fear a brawl. She is Bosper's protector and is willing to fight for him.

**Escape:** Hannafrid does not run away from a fight

**Pain +1 at:** 23 LP, 16 LP, 8 LP, and 5 LP or less

### Bosper Glimmerdell

COU 12 SGC 13 INT 14 CHA 14

DEX 13 AGI 11 CON 12 STR 12

LP 29 AP - KP - INI 12+1D6

DO 6 SPI 2 TOU 1 MOV 8

**Unarmed:** AT 9 PA 5 DP 1D6 RE

short

**Dagger:** AT 9 PA 5 DP 1D6+1 RE short

PRO/ENC 0/0

**Special Abilities:** Alertness, Aptitude (Commerce)

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Negative Trait (Talks a Mile-a-Minute)

**Skills:** *Body Control 2, Commerce 10, Empathy 6, Feat of Strength 3, Intimidation 3, Perception 5, Self-Control 3, Stealth 2, Willpower 6*

**Combat Behavior:** Bosper tries to avoid a fight. If he must defend himself, he tries to flee as soon as possible

**Escape:** Loss of 25% LP

**Pain +1 at:** 22 LP, 15 LP, 7 LP, and 5 LP or less



up the idea of living an adventurer's life and learn how to be a worthy heir.

**Role Playing Tips:** Talk constantly, especially about yourself and your family, stopping only when the players interrupt you. Interject if your players give you a cue to talk about yourself again.

*"I started out small, too, you know; and, as you can see, I made something of myself. You can't become as wealthy as me by spending money with both hands. I've held onto every silverthaler, yes, I have! And today I own an impressive three-sided farm with 23 cows, 37 sheep, 50 chickens..."*



If you think your heroes can't handle the brigands, reduce the number they must fight. There could also be sounds announcing more travelers (or even fighters) coming up the Realm Road, to help drive the brigands away.



If you think the fight is too easy for your heroes, add more brigands. You could also incapacitate or kill off Hannafrid earlier, taking her out of the fight and forcing the heroes to face more enemies on their own.

### Don't Let Them Get Away!

The brigands flee once the heroes outnumber them. Chasing after them (see *Core Rules*, page 349) proves difficult.

- The brigands scatter in different directions, and the heroes must decide whom to follow.
- The fog hinders visibility. Checks using *Body Control (Running)* suffer a penalty of 2 (see *Core Rules*, page 348 for rules about *Visibility Modifiers*).

### True Heroes!

Once Bosper recovers from his fright, he embraces his saviors—whom he refers to as "true heroes" from now on—and enthusiastically thanks them for their unexpected help. To show the heroes his appreciation, he invites them to be his guests of honor at tomorrow night's celebration of the Harvest Thanks, a holiday honoring Peraine that is a high point of the year for the Moorsenders. He asks the heroes to stay at his farm in Moorsend, where they can also receive treatment for their wounds. Heroes who request a reward for Bosper's rescue receive 3 ducats each.

Even modest heroes cannot dissuade Bosper; somewhere behind all the honest thankfulness hides the secret hope that the heroes accompany him to Moorsend for his safety. If the heroes do not show interest in his invitation, he offers to hire them to protect him on his way home.

• Whether some brigands run away or the heroes defeat them all is not important to the adventure. If your players fight well and deserve a victory, let them have it. If some of the brigands escape this encounter, the heroes might recognize some of them when they come across a brigand camp later in the adventure (see page 28). If not, the heroes meet the brigands' companions who were not present at the ambush.



## The Journey to Moorsend

The heroes' journey to Moorsend is an opportunity to get to know Bosper Glimmerdell and learn about his village. By the time the travelers start out for Moorsend, Bosper has recovered from the fright of the ambush and begins to babble nonstop to the heroes. However, if Hannafred dies in combat, the otherwise verbose Bosper loses all interest in talking for several hours. Either way, the heroes learn the following on their journey:

### About Bosper and the Brigands

- Bosper is a wealthy farmer and the self-appointed mayor of Moorsend. He is well-known in the region, which has its disadvantages, as the heroes witnessed.
- Brigands have always been a problem in this area. North of Ridgerock and the Tommel are the Vorder Kosh—the foothills of the Kosh Mountains—a forested, impenetrable, and sparsely inhabited area, an ideal retreat for the brigands.

The heroes can hear the following story before or after they arrive in Moorsend.

### The Story of the Kobolds

Once, there was a brigand gang called “the Kobolds,” who lived in the mountains of Kosh. Like the fairy creatures, they would appear out of nowhere and then disappear just as quickly into the mountain forests without a trace, after committing their nefarious deeds. No traveler was safe from them, no village too well-defended, and Ridgerock's rulers always failed to capture them. It was as though the ground swallowed up the Kobolds, hiding them.

One day, the prince of Albernia and his retinue came riding through, returning from the great tournament in Gareth. Shortly after they crossed over the Griffon Pass, they were ambushed by brigands. These scoundrels made the noble and his followers undress down to their undergarments, and even took the treasure the prince was carrying on the emperor's behalf as a gift to the Church of Efferd in Havena. The brigands then forced the trembling, shivering, humiliated men and women to walk down into the Ridgerock valley, where the inhabitants had a hearty laugh, as they didn't realize these were nobles.

The duke of Elenvina was furious—the brigands constantly outwitted his guards and embarrassed him in front of the whole realm. In his rage, he sent a whole banner's worth of the River Guard to end the brigands' reign.

The soldiers searched the forests for twelve days and nights, but couldn't find a single brigand. Hanging their heads, they returned

- It's been a long time since brigands were bold enough to attack travelers on the Realm Road.
- Brigands do not dare enter the villages, but travelers are a source of easy loot. People like Bosper are especially useful, as a ransom can bring the brigands more coin than a simple ambush.
- Sometimes, Burgrave Alrik Custodias sends soldiers to fight the brigand plague, usually with limited success.
- People still tell stories about the Kobolds, a legendary brigand gang from a hundred years ago that escaped the duke's famous River Guard (Bosper can share *The Story of the Kobolds* with the heroes at this time, if you want).

### About Moorsend

- Moorsend may be small, but it is not as poor as the other villages in the region.
- Their harvests tend to be better than average, because the people know what they are doing when it comes to farming.

home to Elenvina, fearing the duke's rage. To their surprise, despite the fact they had not apprehended even one brigand, the attacks suddenly ended. The Kobolds were neither seen nor heard from ever again. The riches they had amassed over the years also disappeared. Legend has it the Kobold treasure is still hidden today—somewhere in the mountains, under the trunk of a mighty oak. Only someone with true Kobold blood can find it; but, since magical beings have avoided the Kosh since ancient times, it's likely no one will ever claim the treasure.

The information in this fairy tale can help your players, since it has some truth at its core. The story is based on the following truths:

- A brigand gang known as the *Kobolds* did exist long ago.
- The Kobolds were never caught. Their attacks ended suddenly one day.
- Their treasure was never found.
- The Kobolds stole the emperor's gift, intended for the Temple of Efferd in Havena. This gift was a fist-sized Gwen-Petryl stone, which Amarandel the elf later gives to Alrik Witniken as proof that the treasure exists.
- In theory, anyone can find the treasure. They need only know its location and have the (magical) key to the hoard. The legend that it can only be found by someone with *Kobold blood* has survived in the telling of the fairy tale (*Kobold blood* does not refer to a magical creature, but rather to the brigands' descendants, who are most likely to have this information).



- Even the burgrave realizes this, and his tax collectors enjoy visiting Moorsend.
- The harvests have been so plentiful that there is talk of converting the shrine to Peraine into a true temple. The people have already convinced a Blessed One this should happen.

- Gedo the giant is well known in the region. Legend has it he went up onto the forested mountain slopes when a great drought dried up the fields long, long ago. He drove all the game hiding on the mountain into the valley, providing Moorsend's inhabitants with enough food for the long winter. It is said Gedo still lives in the Kosh Mountains and will return to help if Moorsend is ever threatened again.

## Chapter II: A Message from the Past

In this part of the adventure, the heroes get to know Moorsend and its inhabitants. They meet Bosper's son, Gisbert, who dreams of becoming a great adventurer one day. They also have a chance to show their bravery during the bull riding competition during the Harvest Thanks celebration.

At some point, the elf *Amarandel Welldance* arrives and delivers Patras Okarn's treasure map to Patras' descendant, *Alrik Witniken*. This exchange is secretly noticed by the innkeeper *Jasper Gellenbrinck* and his friends, who are aware of their own brigand heritage and now hope to find their ancestors' missing treasure. During the harvest celebration, Jasper and his friends set a fire to distract everyone in the village, break into Alrik's house without being noticed, and procure the map.

### Moorsend

This section presents an overview of the village of Moorsend. The adventure narrative continues on page 14.

#### The Village of Moorsend

**Inhabitants:** about 50

**Ruler:** Farmer Bosper Glimmerdell (village mayor)

**Temple:** Shrine to Peraine

**Trade and Commerce:** Herb trader and healer (Alrik Witniken); blacksmith (Noring Krummau); carpenter (Helwin Sebelgarn)

**Taverns:** The Laughing Gedo (Q4/P3/B8)

Moorsend consists of a few, single-story, half-timbered houses with stone foundations, as well as some large log cabins with steeply-sloped, pointed roofs covered with wooden shingles. The residents in this typical farming village work hard as a rule, but they also know how to relax and enjoy themselves. They admire and respect fighters, Blessed Ones, and nobles, are suspicious of spellcasters, and do not often have visitors from out of town.

#### Important Locations in Moorsend

- **The Laughing Gedo:** The village's tavern (for details, see page 15).
- **Bosper Glimmerdell's Farmhouse:** The sheer size of the farmhouse is a clear sign of Bosper's wealth. One of the building's two side wings contains the family and servants' living quarters, while the other functions as a large barn and stables for livestock. The building is the only one in the village with its own well, and the property is surrounded by a high wall with a double-swing gate.
- **Alrik Witniken's House:** The village medicus and herb trader's leaning house, which sits near the Glimmerdell's farmhouse, is smaller than the farmhouse's stables. Alrik grows all his healing herbs in an herb garden behind the hut. A small wall surrounds the property.
- **Forge:** The forge sits in the center of the village, near the pond, separated from the other houses by the path. The village blacksmith, *Noring Krummau* (41; bald; bushy, "Emperor Alrik" style mustache; muscular; superstitious; moderately skilled), lives in fear that flue imps (minor spirits) could spoil his work, and blames their (unsubstantiated) presence for his own mistakes.
- **Shrine to Peraine:** The walls of this small shrine, which is tended to only by traveling Blessed Ones, are covered with simple, green linen panels with ears of grain stitched into them. Along the back wall sits a life-sized stork statue, made from brown stone. A donation bowl containing many herbs rests in front of the statue. Apples, ears of grain, and small pots containing leeks are scattered about the temple.
- **Gedo Stone:** On the village green, in front of the pond, stands a large stone statue, hewn into a vaguely human shape by an unskilled stonemason. It was made to honor the legendary figure, Gedo, a giant who, according to legend, saved the Moorsenders from famine.
- **Boron Yard:** This is where the Moorsenders bury their dead. The inscriptions on the headstones give hints about the lives of those buried here. Because some of them were brigands, inscriptions say things such as, "Always escaped the River Guard" and "Gone on one last robbery."



## Alrik Witniken

**Description:** 40; average alchemist; experienced healer and herbalist; long, graying, formerly black hair; knows about his brigand ancestor's crimes, and attempts to lead a milder and more helpful life as a form of atonement.

**Motivation:** Alrik is a third-generation village medicus. He derives great joy from healing and helping others.

**Agenda:** Alrik feels guilty for his ancestor's deeds and feels he must atone by helping others. He finds the elf's message unsettling and does not know how to deal with his sudden inheritance. He has no interest in finding the gold.

**Role:** The heroes' employer, Patras Okarn's heir, and recipient of Amaranandel's message. Once Alrik receives the letter, he can direct the heroes to the old brigand cave.

**Background:** Alrik is Eberwin Witniken's great-grandson. Eberwin was the original intended recipient of the treasure map. Alrik knows his great-great-grandfather, Patras Okarn, was the brigand gang's captain and is ashamed of his heritage. As a healer, he hopes to save as many lives as his



ancestor took. Alrik does not know Okarn's fate. The stories he heard as a child always ended with the River Guard's punitive expedition, so Alrik assumes Okarn died then.

**Role-Playing Tips:** Appear interested in others' life stories. Speak with a friendly tone and remain calm, but act bitter when someone mentions the brigands in the woods. Find a good time to show this mood swing; for example, when treating the heroes' wounds, ask what happened. If the heroes mention the Kobolds, become silent or try to change the subject, at least until Jasper escapes with the treasure map.

**Fate:** Alrik does not appear in future publications. His fate is open.

**Important Stats:** *Trustworthy*; Alchemy 7 (13/15/13), Commerce 4 (15/14/13), Perception 8 (15/14/14), Self-Control 7 (13/13/11), Treat Wounds 10 (15/13/13), Willpower 8 (13/14/13); SPI 2, TOU 1.

*"When it's time to gather the annual taxes, the burgrave's officials are quick to appear. But when robbers plague the region, they're nowhere to be found. It's a disgrace!"*

*"Unfortunately, the hinterland of Ridgerock has always been a retreat for outlaws."*





## At Bosper's House

When the heroes reach Moorsend, Bosper invites them into his home. He has his servants prepare rooms for them and sends for the healer and herb trader, Alrik Witniken, to treat the heroes' wounds (and those of Hannafrid, if she survived).

Bosper's son, *Gisbert Glimmerdell* (17; black hair; wide shoulders; fashionable dresser; admires the heroes, as he dreams of becoming an adventurer himself) curiously watches the heroes from afar. He does not work up the courage to speak to the heroes until dinnertime.

At dinnertime, Bosper invites the heroes to enjoy a hearty stew made of potatoes, lentils, bacon, and beans, and proudly introduces the rest of his family:

- *Gissa Glimmerdell* (45; chubby; talkative; hides her gray hair under a bonnet; *Willpower* 7 (12/13/12), *SPI* 1) admires her husband for his wealth and is convinced he fought bravely during the battle against the brigands.
- *Larona Glimmerdell* (13; brown hair; sulky teenager; *Willpower* 3 (10/10/10), *SPI* 0) acts as though she does not care about the heroes and thinks everything her parents do or say is embarrassing.
- *Nella Glimmerdell* (7; dark blond hair; shy; always carries a straw doll with her) stares at the heroes with large eyes, but quickly hides behind her father if any of them meet her gaze.

The family, especially Gisbert, talks all throughout dinner, asking the heroes countless questions:

- Tell me again: How, exactly, did you help my father?
- Where do you come from?
- What brings you to Moorsend/to the Northmarches?
- Have you ever seen a real dragon?
- Do orcs smell as badly as people say they do?
- How many princesses (or princes) have you saved?

Bosper seems to find Gisbert's curious questions annoying. He repeatedly tells Gisbert to be silent, and apologizes to the heroes for his son's disrespectful behavior.

Make it obvious that Gisbert admires the heroes, and that their stories encourage his dreams of an adventurers' life. Bosper's stern reactions demonstrate that he has no patience for his son's dreams.

After dinner, Bosper invites the heroes to have a drink with him in *The Laughing Gedo*, so he can introduce them to the village community.

## 👤 Gisbert Glimmerdell

**Description:** 17; average farmer and trader; inexperienced adventurer; black hair; broad shoulders; fashionable dresser; admires the heroes and dreams about becoming an adventurer himself.

**Motivation:** Gisbert does not want to spend his life in a small hamlet like Moorsend. He wants to impress *Odelia Moorsender* (see page 16), with whom he is in love.

**Agenda:** The heroes are paragons to him, and their presence only fuels his desire for adventure. He takes advantage of any opportunity to prove to *Odelia* he is a true hero.

**Role:** Overconfident youth whose ambition the heroes must hold in check. He wants to be just like the heroes, and if they don't act heroic enough, he admonishes them, asking if they really are heroes after all. His disappearance is meant to motivate the heroes to pursue Jasper. In the end, Gisbert can prove his bravery by assisting the heroes in the brigand cave. Alternatively, he might serve as cannon fodder and trigger a trap, thus saving a hero from a gruesome injury.

### Gisbert Glimmerdell

COU 13 SGC 10 INT 12 CHA 12

DEX 12 AGI 13 CON 13 STR 13

LP 31 AE - KP - INI 13+1D6

DO 7 SPI 1 TOU 2 MOV 8

**Unarmed:** AT 11 PA 6 DP 1D6 RE  
short

**Club:** AT 8 PA 3 DP 1D6+2 RE medium  
PRO/ENC 0/0

**Fate Points:** 2

**Special Abilities:** Forceful Blow I

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Good Looks I

**Skills:** *Body Control* 4, *Empathy* 4, *Feat of Strength* 7,  
*Intimidation* 3, *Orienting* 4, *Perception* 4, *Self-Control* 4,  
*Stealth* 3, *Willpower* 4

**Combat Behavior:** Gisbert is strong and uses Forceful Blows, but he isn't a skilled fighter

**Escape:** Loss of 50% LP

**Pain +1 at:** 23 LP, 16 LP, 8 LP, and 5 LP or less





**Background:** As Bosper's eldest child, Gisbert will inherit the farm. But the boy is at an age where he wants to rebel against his parents. He can't imagine anything worse than spending his whole life herding pigs in Moorsend. His dreams about having adventures and seeing the world often lead to confrontations with his father.

**Role-Playing Tips:** Use every available opportunity to ask the heroes about their lives and skills. Act especially fascinated with combative heroes—follow them everywhere, watch them closely, ask them to give you hints and tips you can someday use when you are a great fighter and adventurer.

**Fate:** Gisbert does not appear in later adventures. He might one day become a famous adventurer, about whom future heroes hear legends. Or, perhaps he meets the fate of many ambitious adventurers and fails at his first quest after encountering an enemy's trap or combat prowess.

### An Evening in *The Laughing Gedo*

The following scene introduces the heroes to all the important characters in the adventure, and allows them to learn vital information and understand significant connections (for a summary of everything the heroes should know by now, see page 19). The adventure continues on page 19.

The *Laughing Gedo* (Q3/P3/B8) is the only tavern in the village. It is located in the village green, close to the Gedo statue. Every night, the villagers meet in the taproom—a rustic room with a large wooden table, bar stools, and a large, cast iron candelabra—to end the day together with food and drink.

Heroes who do not wish to stay at Bosper's farm may sleep in the common room or rent one of the two single-bed rooms, and their horses can stay in the nearby stable. The villagers watch the heroes curiously, as strangers are an uncommon sight in Moorsend.

The tavern belongs to *Jasper Gellenbrinck*, who also sells travel equipment—ropes, bags, and new tack—to the few travelers who pass through Moorsend. Around his right wrist, Jasper wears bracelets made from (precious) metals, which do not fit with the rest of his appearance, as he does not look wealthy. If the heroes comment on his bracelets, he refers to them as “family heirlooms,” which, in a way, they are. • ○

Heroes who have the SA *Foxian* and make a successful *Commerce (Fencing Stolen Goods)* check learn via secret signs in the bar or *Foxian* terms skillfully hidden in conversation that Jasper also sells stolen items.

### 👤 Jasper Gellenbrinck

**Description:** 43; experienced innkeeper and fence; gaunt; wears an earring and several (precious) metal bracelets; steely gaze; dashing smile; smalltime rogue who dreams of great riches.

**Motivation:** As a direct descendant of one of the original Kobold brigands, Jasper still dreams of one day finding the lost treasure.

**Agenda:** When he observes the elf handing the map to Alrik, he becomes determined to claim his brigand heritage.

**Role:** Jasper is the villain of the story. He is willing to kill to achieve his goals.

**Background:** Jasper is a descendant of the brigands who settled in Moorsend to await for their escaped captain's return. Patras Okarn never did return, but the Kobolds' treasure was never forgotten. Stories about the great treasure were passed down through the generations. Many details have become vague, as is evident in the fairy tale the heroes already heard. But there is truth at the center of every version of the story. Jasper knows this, as the bracelets he wears are part of the brigands' treasure. When he was young, Jasper roamed the surrounding countryside, listening to stories about the treasure and looking for clues to the legendary brigand cave. Even though Jasper knows every rumor on the subject by heart, he still hasn't been able to find the cave itself.

When the elf, Amaran-del, appears in Jasper's tavern and delivers the message and the big Gwen-Petryl stone to Alrik, Jasper realizes at once that these items are clues to the brigand treasure. He knows Patras Okarn was Eberwin Witniken's father, and he is certain the Gwen-Petryl stone came from the donation stolen from the Temple of Efferd in Havena (see *The Story of the Kobolds*, on page 11).

Jasper never seems to have enough money, so he earns a little extra as a grocer and fence. He is well-aware some of the things he sells under-the-table come from the loot of the brigands the heroes encountered at the start of the adventure.

**Role Playing Tips:** Be a gracious host, but wear an unsettling, weasel-like grin. Rub your hands together when you are about to make a deal, and gaze at your players intently, as if trying to read their characters in their body language.

Use veiled phrases (see quotes) to signal to shady-looking heroes that you are interested in making a deal. Buy stolen goods from them or try to sell them something suitable.

• The bracelets come from the brigand treasure and were passed down from generation to generation. Jasper loses one of them later, and the heroes can use this clue to prove his guilt.



### Jasper Gellenbrinck

COU 14 SGC 11 INT 14 CHA 14  
DEX 13 AGI 14 CON 11 STR 13  
LP 27 AE - KP - INI 13+1D6  
DO 7 SPI 2 TOU 1 MOV 7

**Unarmed:** AT 11 PA 7 DP 1D6  
RE short

**Saber:** AT 12 PA 7 DP 1D6+3 RE medium

**PRO/ENC** 1/0 (heavy clothes) (includes armor modifiers)

**Special Abilities:** Feint I, Forceful Blow I

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Negative Trait (Short Temper)

**Skills:** Body Control 4, Commerce 8, Empathy 8, Feat of Strength 4, Intimidation 6, Perception 5, Prepare Food 9, Self-Control 4, Stealth 5, Streetwise 8, Willpower 7

**Combat Behavior:** Jasper attacks with Feints, reserving Forceful Blows for well-armed opponents.

**Escape:** Loss of 50% LP

**Pain +1 at:** 20 LP, 14 LP, 7 LP, and 5 LP or less



**Fate:** Jasper probably dies, or else gets handed over to the authorities at the end of the adventure.

*"Many travelers lose trinkets on the road; honest people who find them hand them over to me. Didn't you say you were missing this silver fork?"*

*"You've seen the menu. Are you interested in the chef's suggestion?"*

*"I've searched for the treasure my whole life. NOBODY is going to take it from me!"*

### A Tavern Full of Villagers

As it is every evening, the tavern is quite full tonight. The whole village has gathered to end the day with a tankard of ale and to listen to lyre and bagpipe music. There is much laughter and drinking.

Here in the tavern, the heroes meet all the important characters in this adventure: Alrik Witniken, Gisbert Glimmerdell, and Jasper Gellenbrinck and his two henchmen: *Burgol Clothmaker* (26; short dark hair; broad shoulders; sown cleft lip; short temper; greedy; Bosper Glimmerdell's stupid servant; rough-and-tumble guy) and *Ragna Coalburner* (31; thin brown hair; muscular woodcutter; Jasper's contact with the brigands in the woods, to whom she prostitutes herself; wants to *get out of this business*). Introduce these NPCs in a small scene. The following list of additional villagers includes some suggestions for introducing them to the heroes.

### Local NPCs in the Tavern

Here is a list of all Moorsenders who might be present in the tavern.

When no other stats are given, the villagers have *Willpower* 4 (12/12/12). Other skills use similar stats. For professions, they typically have a SR between 7 and 10.

- ◆ **Bosper Glimmerdell:** about 60; wealthy farmer and self-made village mayor; salt and pepper ring of hair; heavysset; talks a lot, mostly about himself (see page 10).
- ◆ **Gisbert Glimmerdell:** 17; Bosper's son; black hair; good looking; wants to be a hero; dreams about adventure (see page 14).
- ◆ **Gissa Glimmerdell:** 45; Bosper's wife; chubby; talkative; hides her graying hair under a bonnet; worships her husband like a hero because of his wealth.
- ◆ **Alrik Witniken:** 40; healer and herbalist; long, graying, formerly black hair; tries to atone for the crimes of his brigand ancestor by helping people (see page 13).
- ◆ **Jasper Gellenbrinck:** 43; innkeeper; gaunt; wears an earring and several (precious) metal bracelets; steely gaze; dashing smile; small-time rogue who dreams of great riches.
- ◆ **Burgol Clothmaker:** Bospar's dim-witted servant; short dark hair; broad shoulders; sown cleft lip; short temper; greedy; a rough and tumble kind of guy.
- ◆ **Ragna Coalburner:** Woodcutter; thin brown hair; muscular; Jasper's contact with the brigands in the woods, to whom she prostitutes herself; wants to "get out of this business."
- ◆ **Odelia Moorsender:** 16; village beauty; red hair; inexperienced; dreams about Prince Charming coming to the village and taking her away to his castle.
- ◆ **Hannafrid Altlapper:** 26; peasant woman; silent; broad shoulders; muscular; short hair; reliable; loyal, but a bit stupid; knows how to wield a club; probably wounded (or may even have died early in the adventure) (see page 10).
- ◆ **Noring Krummau:** 41; blacksmith; bald; bushy Emperor-Alrik mustache; muscular; superstitious; moderately skilled; always fears flueimps (minor spirits) could spoil his work, and blames his mistakes on their alleged haunting.
- ◆ **Helwin Sebelgarn:** 33; carpenter; blond hair; homely; failed her journeywoman's exam in Ridgerock and moved to Moorsend because she can't work in the city anymore.
- ◆ **Madalin Kätner:** 23; maid; 6'7"; brown hair; wears two girlish pigtails; strong, practical, and very calm.
- ◆ **Adelar Kätner:** late 20s; Blessed One of Peraine; unruly blond hair; Madalin's brother; came here from Ridgerock to attend the celebration; tries to be



## More Moorsenders!

Use the following names for any additional villagers the heroes encounter in the *Laughing Gede*, if needed. These names are typical for the Middenrealm.

*Female First Names:* Drala, Elida, Gwynna, Kysira, Maren, Nana, Perainetreue, Thornia, Tsafriede, Vana

*Male First Names:* Ardo, Bardo, Bodar, Eberhelm, Gero, Godehard, Helmbrecht, Menzel, Travidan, Wulfhelm

*Family Names:* Fassbinder, Fieldserf, Firhouse, Kauderer, Miller, Oatear, Ridgerock, Stoutleaf, Verg

## The Bull Ride for the Harvest Thanks Celebration

According to Moorsend tradition, the richest farmer in the village—Bosper Glimmerdell, for some years now—donates his best bull for the Harvest Thanks Feast. Any villagers who wish may try to ride the bull without the benefit of ropes or other riding harness, to prove their bravery and strength. These bull rides symbolize humanity's triumph over wild nature. That evening, butchers slaughter the beast, and everyone shares in the feast the following night.

The celebration ends with the traditional burning of the grain sheaves, which are tied together in the rough shape of a stork. This represents the Moorsenders' prayers that Peraine bless their harvests in the coming year.

dignified at first, but then succumbs to the urging of the villagers, celebrates with them, and goes on the binge of his life.

### Tavern Scenes

- Bosper climbs up on a chair, gets the crowd's attention, and introduces the heroes. He describes their deeds and lauds them as "true heroes," but does not forget to exaggerate his own actions. The villagers cheer and celebrate the heroes enthusiastically.
- After publicly praising the heroes, Bosper further honors one of them by suggesting they ride the bull the next day during the Harvest Thanks (see page 21). This leads to respectful surprise and frantic whispering, for outsiders are almost never invited to participate in this local honor. Burgol Clothmaker, Noring Krummau, Madalin Kätner, and—eventually—even Gisbert Glimmerdell (who wants to impress Odelia) all also wish to ride the bull. Since only a few are permitted to make the attempt each year, the heroes may want to avoid insulting anyone by offering a contest to decide who may ride. • Arm-wrestling, wrestling, dagger throwing, tankard lifting, or dice or drinking games are all possibilities. Listen to the players' suggestions.
- The village beauty, *Odelia Moorsender*, flirts with a hero, but is too shy to speak much to him. Gisbert watches with a

• Avoid duels with sharp weapons. The celebration is meant to be a friendly gathering, not a bloodbath.





stony expression. If something then seems to develop between Odelia and the hero, Gisbert crushes his drinking cup in anger.

- Gisbert turns to a heroine and, with a longing gaze toward Odelia, asks her for advice on winning the heart of a woman and being a good lover.
- Alrik Witniken invites a hero who seems to be an alchemist to drink with him and then asks for the hero's help. He bought a jar of fragrant balm from a wandering merchant who said it was a magical wound-healing balm, but Alrik does not want to use it on anyone without first confirming it. Knowledgeable heroes who make an *Alchemy (Mundane Alchemy)* check with a penalty of 2 discover the fragrant balm is just a simple pomade, like the kind used in the Horasian Empire.
- In a quiet moment, Jasper joins Burgol and Ragna for a game of boltan. They play for kretzers.
- Burgol and a hero have a confrontation. Perhaps they play boltan and Burgol loses several times, or perhaps a drunken Burgol bumps into a hero, spills his beer, and blames the hero. The hero must keep a cool head to prevent the situation from turning into a brawl (for Burgol's stats, see page 35).

#### Rumors

The heroes overhear some of the following rumors during their time at the tavern, which might help them better understand people and situations in Moorsend.

#### About the Brigands

- *Brigand gangs have always felt at home in this area.* (+)
- *The burgrave doesn't have much money and tolerates the gangs because they pay him tribute.* (-)

- *One gang, the so-called Kobolds, was quite infamous. They plagued the region over 100 years ago. No noble could ever catch them.* (+/-)
- *One time, the Kobolds pulled off a big job—they plundered Efferd's temple in Havena or something. The duke was angry about it and sent the River Guard after them.* (+/-)
- *They never caught the Kobolds. Their descendants are richer than Stoorrebrandt and still live in style, somewhere in the woods.* (+/-)
- *After they had stolen enough, the Kobolds simply retired.* (-)
- *The Moorsenders have some brigand blood in their veins, too. Bosper, especially. His great-something-grandfather was their leader. That's why he's so rich.* (+/-)
- *The Kobolds' treasure was never found. Some say it's still hidden in the mountains somewhere.* (+)

#### About the Villagers

- *Gisbert is in love with Odelia.* (+)
- *Odelia only acts innocent. She has known many men.* (-)
- *Jasper is a crook. He distills his own alcohol and labels it as something else.* (+/-)
- *Villagers and brigands have more in common than most Moorsenders care to admit.* (+)
- *Ragna will keep you warm for money.* (+)
- *Noring is a drunk. That's why he sees ghosts all the time.* (-)
- *Alrik Witniken is a third- or fourth-generation healer.* (+)
- *Burgol has no self-control. He killed somebody in anger at the Kupperus Celebration in Ridgerock last year.* (+/-)
- *Helwin is pitiful. She failed her carpenter journeywoman's exam in Ridgerock.* (+)
- *Madalin is having an affair with Gisbert.* (-)

#### What the Heroes Should Know...

Before starting the next event and continuing the adventure, make sure the heroes have learned or achieved everything on the following list:

- Bosper Glimmerdell chose a hero to ride the bull
- The heroes met Alrik, Jasper, Burgol, and Ragna
- The heroes heard all the rumors (see above) about the Kobolds, as well as their story (see page 11)





## Late Mail

Once the heroes meet the villagers and learn about the brigand gang called the Kobolds, they are ready for the elf's visit.

### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*The laughter fades and the music trails off as a tall woman enters the taproom. Her silvery blond hair falls across her soft face, leaving her pointed ears visible. She stands completely still in the entrance and surveys the crowd with her large, sapphire-blue eyes. The room grows quiet. Soon the only sounds come from the burning logs crackling in the fireplace. When she speaks, her crystal-clear voice rings with a musical quality, as if she is singing a tune: "Sa nya bha, tala! Feydha Amarandel." When no one reacts, she speaks in Garethi. Her words have a lovely accent: "Greetings, humans. I am Amarandel from the glade folk, and I seek Eberwin Witniken."*

*Alrik rises and steps forward. After clearing his throat, he looks at the elf and says "Eberwin was my great-grandfather."*

*The elf seems to consider this for a moment, then shakes her head and beckons to Alrik, saying "I have a message for him."*

*A murmur rises in the room when the woman pulls an old piece of parchment, a plain ring, and a fist-sized, blue-green glowing rock from her cloak. "Questions burn on your lips, human," the elf remarks when she sees Alrik's questioning gaze. "Come, let us walk for a while. I will tell you more."*

*The two are gone for some time before the villagers manage to shake off their initial surprise and try to return to their gregarious evening, but even then, the strange visitor is the only thing anyone can talk about.*

### What Just Happened?

The elf, *Amarandel Welldance* (312; 6'8"; silver-blond hair; sapphire-blue eyes; restless and unworldly elven glade runner; quickly distracted, slowly leading her to forget her real goals), delivered three items to Alrik Witniken:

- a letter from the brigand captain, Patras Okarn, that contains directions to the brigand treasure
- a ring, which the elf calls a key, that grants entry to the brigand cave
- a fist-sized Gwen-Petryl stone, proof that the treasure exists

### The Peoples' Reactions

The former exuberance in the taproom seems to disappear after the elf leaves with Alrik. Everyone tries to act casual, but it is obvious the strange visitor is still on their minds. If the heroes try to continue with normal conversation, the NPCs participate at first, but after a few sentences, they

interrupt the heroes with questions such as "What did we just witness?" and "What's going on?"

Heroes who succeed at a *Perception (Spot)* check notice Jasper, Burgol, and Ragna sit down together. Their conversation is hushed, but they gesture wildly. If the heroes attempt to eavesdrop (another *Perception (Spot)* check, with a penalty of 1), they overhear the three discussing the possibility of the Gwen-Petryl stone being part of the brigand treasure. In the end, Jasper decides to confront Alrik the next day, and they don't make any further plans for that evening.

### Eavesdropping on Amarandel and Alrik

If at least one hero attempts to eavesdrop on the elf's conversation with Alrik, they see the following: the two leave the taproom and, a short time later, the village. Amarandel feels more comfortable speaking in the forest and believes they will not be overheard there.

Sneaking up on them is difficult. Amarandel is alert and scans the area regularly. The heroes must make three successful *Stealth (Hiding)* checks to follow Alrik and Amarandel into the forest unseen, and an additional *Stealth (Sneak)* check to approach closely enough to hear what they are saying without being discovered.





Each time the heroes make a check, Amarandel makes a *Perception* (*Search* or *Spot*) check. Alrik makes checks, as well (SR 8; 15/14/14).

All checks suffer a Level 2 Visibility penalty for darkness (see *Core Rules*, page 348). The visibility penalty for Amarandel is only Level 1 because she has the advantage Darksight I.

If the heroes succeed in eavesdropping, they hear Amarandel tell the brigands' story (see *Background and Prologue* on page 6).

If Alrik or Amarandel catch the heroes eavesdropping, Alrik admonishes them and remains suspicious of them for the rest of the adventure (all checks using social skills to interact with Alrik suffer a penalty of 1). If the heroes refuse to leave, Amarandel asks them nicely (casting a *Bannbaladin*; see the *Core Rules*, page 288), or makes them sleepy with a *Somnigravis* (see *Core Rules*, page 297).



#### Amarandel Welldance

COU 12 SGC 11 INT 15 CHA 13

DEX 15 AGI 15 CON 11 STR 13

LP 28 AE 37 KP - INI 14+1D6

DO 8 SPI 2 TOU 0 MOV 8

Unarmed: AT 13 PA 8 DP 1D6

RE short

Wolf-knife: AT 14 PA 8 DP 1D6+3 RE medium

Elf Bow: RC 17 RT 1 DP 1D6+5 RA 50/100/200

PRO/ENC 0/0

**Special Abilities:** Feint I+II,  
Precise Shot/Throw I+II

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Darksight I, Needs No Sleep, Good Looks I, Resistant to Aging, Sensitive Nose, Spellcaster, Two-Voiced Singing / Incompetence (Carousing), Personality Flaw (Unworldly)

**Skills:** Body Control 12, Empathy 2, Feat of Strength 3, Intimidation 4, Perception 14, Self-Control 4, Stealth 11, Willpower 4

**Cantrips:** Siren Call

**Spells:** Armatruz 7, Bannbaladin 10, Eagle Eye 10, Hawk Eye 13, Somnigravis 12, Traceless 13, Visibili 8, plus other spells in Tradition (Elves)

**Combat Behavior:** Amarandel tries to avoid combat, using magic to do so, if necessary. If cornered, she tries to take out enemies as quickly and efficiently as possible, using spells and combat.

**Escape:** Loss of 50% LP

**Pain +1 at:** 21 LP, 14 LP, 7 LP, and 5 LP or less

The elf accompanies Alrik to his house after they talk, and then leaves, despite the late hour. Alrik is unsettled. He knew about his ancestors' evil deeds, but he never dreamed he would ever profit from their legacy.

If the heroes intercept him, he is aloof and requests they give him a night to sleep on the events of the evening.

#### What's Bothering Alrik?

Amarandel just gave Alrik a letter from his ancestor, Patras Okarn, the famous brigand captain of the Kobolds. Okarn's letter included a detailed map to the brigand's treasure, and the key (a ring) to open the magically sealed door. Alrik never imagined he would have to contend with his ancestors' crimes, and now he holds the key to their long-forgotten riches. He is completely unsettled. He knows he does not want anything to do with the dirty money, but he cannot just pretend he never received the letter—besides, the whole village saw the elf walk in and ask for him. Alrik frets for quite a while over the question of what to do. Jasper's imminent theft helps him make a decision.

#### Help—My Players Strayed From the Plot!

The strange events of the evening likely pique the heroes' curiosity, and the Harvest Thanks celebration may seem less important to them once they resolve to learn the contents of the letter Alrik received from the elf. They might use magic and persuasion to convince Alrik to let them in on the secret, or perhaps one of the heroes decides to steal the treasure map from Alrik.

Whether they discuss the plan with Alrik (for suggestions on how to handle this, see page 36), or set out on their own, the heroes embark on a treasure hunt. One solution is simply to switch the roles Jasper and the heroes play. Instead of the heroes following Jasper to the mountains and finding the cave, Jasper and his friends follow the heroes. Since Jasper's gang view themselves as lawful heirs to the treasure, they take advantage of the cave's remote location to dispose of the heroes.

Continue with *Chapter III: In the Brigand Cave* (see page 25), where the heroes explore the hideout and all its dangers. Jasper, Burgol, and Ragna ambush them outside but might, if given the chance to locate and identify all the traps ahead of time, follow them into the mountain. In this instance, the brigands in the camp do not kidnap Gisbert.





## The Next Day—The Harvest Thanks

If the heroes did not follow Alrik, they meet up with him again the next day during the Harvest Thanks. They notice (with a successful *Empathy (Discern Motivation)* check) the herb trader seems oddly unfocused, as though preoccupied with other thoughts. Alrik won't reveal his thoughts, though, and tries to evade the heroes if they attempt to discuss last night's events with him ("Today is Harvest Thanks. Come, let us celebrate. We can talk about this some other time."). He might become angry and withdrawn if stubborn heroes try to use spells, liturgical chants, or persuasion to find out the truth.

If the heroes allow Alrik to reveal his secrets in his own time, the adventure continues with the celebration honoring Peraine and the traditional bull ride.

## The Bull Ride

The tradition consists of a few riders attempting to stay on the bull's back for about two minutes each. If one of the heroes is participating in the challenge, play out the bull ride. If not, simply describe the event. Perhaps Gisbert uses the opportunity to attempt to impress Odelia. If so, the ambitious, wannabe hero might soon find himself lying in the grass next to an angry bull—requiring real heroes to save his life.

### Read Aloud or Paraphrase


*The whole village gathers around the fence that borders the meadow behind the village, where Bosper's bull stands waiting. A wreath made from autumn flowers adorns the animal's neck, and a bundle of grain sheaths crowns its head, marking it as a sacrifice to Peraine.*


*Muscles bulge under the bull's skin as he calmly looks at the crowd with large eyes. The crowd applauds in expectation of the imminent spectacle. Bosper looks toward the first rider with a challenge in his eyes. The crowd cheers louder when the rider walks toward the bull. Some villagers slap the first rider on the shoulder encouragingly.*

The bull ride is a test of skill and stamina between animal and rider, and ends after about two minutes of riding, or when the rider flees from the bull—whichever comes first.

- To climb on the bull's back, the rider must make a successful *Ride* check. This check initially receives a bonus of 1, as the beast is still calm. Each level of *Stupor* the bull suffers increases the penalty for *Ride* checks by 1 (cumulative with penalties the rider gains from *Pain Levels*), as the animal becomes angry and tries to defend itself (see below).
- This is a combat situation. If a rider fails the *Ride* check, the bull attacks until the rider flees or manages to climb back on the beast's back.

- Once on the bull's back, the rider must make a cumulative *Ride* check (interval 20 seconds, 5 checks allowed to gather 7 QL). These checks receive various bonuses and penalties (initially, +2, +1, 0, -1, and -2), cumulative with the penalties resulting from any *Pain Levels* the rider suffers.
- If the rider manages to gather 7 QL in 5 checks, the bull suffers one level of *Stupor*. With each level of *Stupor* the bull suffers, the beast gets angrier and increasingly attempts to shake off its rider, resulting in an additional penalty of 1 to that rider's checks. For example, the first rider gets +2, +1, 0, -1, and -2 to the checks (no additional penalties). If successful, the bull gains one level of *Stupor*. The next rider's checks get +1, 0, -1, -2, and -3, and if successful, the bull gains another level of *Stupor*. The next rider makes checks with penalties of +0, -1, -2, -3, and -4. If successful, the bull gains yet another level of *Stupor*, and the last rider makes checks at -1, -2, -3, -4, and -5.
- A rider who fails to accumulate 7 QL in 5 checks gets thrown off the bull and suffers 3D6 *Falling Damage* (see *Core Rules*, page 340), which may be reduced with a *Body Control (Jumping)* check. Once on the ground, the rider is in a close combat situation with the bull, and may defend by dodging and making another check to get back on the bull's back (see above), or else by fleeing from the meadow.
- The bull riding ends when either the animal suffers 4 levels of *Stupor* and is *incapacitated*, or all the riders succeed, give up and flee, or become *incapacitated*.

 If you feel the bull ride won't be difficult enough for a hero, increase the penalties or the number of QL the hero must achieve (for example, 10 QL instead of 7 QL).

 As it turns out, Bosper did not donate his best bull. Grant the *Ride* check a larger bonus (beginning, for example, with +3, +2, +1, 0, and -1), give the rider more chances to reach 7 QL, or decide to not raise the check penalties each round (for example, give 7 checks to achieve 7 QL, with bonuses/penalties of +2, +1, +1, 0, -1, -1, and -2).

The nominal winner is the person who remains on the bull the longest, or the one riding the bull when it gains its fourth level of *Stupor*. Villagers carry the winner on their shoulders to the village green, crown them with a garland made of corn, and reward them with beer. Even those who are thrown receive recognition and praise as a true Moorsender.

Villagers slaughter the bull and carry it, respectfully adorned with bundles of grain and flower wreaths, on a barrow to the village green. It is then hung for a day, butchered, and cooked.



## The Village Festival

After the bull ride, the peasants move to the village green to play games and drink top-fermented ale. A large figure of a stork made from bundles of thrashed grain sits to one side, waiting to be burned that evening. In addition to classic tavern games, the villagers enjoy sack races (cumulative *Body Control (Jumping)* check, interval 1 minute, for 10 QL to reach the goal), tug-of-war competitions (competitive *Feat of Strength (Dragging & Pulling)* check or group check), and wrestling matches.

Expose the heroes to villagers and facets of village life during the celebration. Include villagers the heroes already know, and introduce things the heroes still need to learn (such as Gisbert's love for Odelia, or his desire to prove himself).

Religiously, the high point of the afternoon is the interpretation of the goose race, whereby Adelar, a Blessed One of Peraine, closely watches a race between geese kept at the shrine to Peraine to deduce the favor of the goddesses

Peraine and Travia for the coming year. The goose race itself is a rather passive entertainment: basically, a bird race with much betting on the outcome. The day's

◦ If one of the heroes is a Blessed One of Peraine, the villagers ask the hero to bless the fields.

### SA: Trample (Special Maneuver)

Trampling is one of the simplest ways to attack an opponent and cause a great amount of damage. The creature makes a kind of charge attack, but does not stop moving at the target's position and instead charges on, even if it hits other targets.

**Rules:** Trample is only possible if the attacker has a MOV of at least 4 and moves at least 24 feet before making the attack. The target may defend normally. If the Trample Attack fails, the target may make an attack of opportunity with an additional penalty of 4. If the Trample attack succeeds, subsequent attacks made by the target against the creature during that same CR suffer a penalty of 2. The creature ends its movement a maximum of (MOV/2) yards from the target (its choice), whether the Trample Attack succeeded or not. This special maneuver cannot be combined with the basic maneuver Feint.

celebration ends shortly before sundown when the young Blessed One of Peraine, Adelar, ◦ performs the *Field Blessing*, and the image of the stork is set afire.

### Bull

COU 12 SGC 9 (a) INT 12 CHA 12

DEX 10 AGI 12 CON 17 STR 23

LP 60 AE - KP - INI 12+1D6

DE 6 SPI -4 TOU 4 MOV 9

**Horn Thrust:** AT 9 DP 1D6+6 RE short

**Trample:** AT 8 DP 2D6+5 RE short

PRO/ENC 0/0

**Actions:** 1

**Special Abilities:** Powerful Blow (Horn Thrust; if attack succeeds, medium or smaller targets must make a *Feat of Strength* check with a penalty of 2, or gain the state *prone*; see *Aventuria Almanac*, page 149), Trample (Trample)

**Skills:** *Body Control 4, Climbing 1, Feat of Strength 12, Intimidation 8, Perception 6, Self-Control 6, Stealth 2, Swimming 6, Willpower 10*

**Number:** 1

**Size Category:** large

**Type:** Animal, non-humanoid

**Loot:** 450 rations of meat, hide (2 silverthalers), trophy (horns, 4 silverthalers)

**Combat Behavior:** This bull is accustomed to people and tolerates much—unless a hero sits on its back, in which case it reacts with fear and aggression. Bulls try to trample opponents or gore them with their horns.

**Escape:** The fence keeps the bull from wandering off. If it loses more than 50% of its LP, it tries to retreat from combat. If the bull continues to be attacked after it retreats, it gains the state of *bloodlust* (see *Core Rules*, page 34).

### Animal Lore (Wild Animals)

◦ **QL 1:** Bulls are territorial and defend their herds. They are not usually accustomed to riders.

◦ **QL 2:** Bulls become more aggressive during mating season or when provoked. If a bull lowers its head and scrapes at the ground, it's a sure sign you are about to be attacked.

◦ **QL 3+:** Bulls can become enraged.

**Hunt:** 0

### Special Rules

**Pack Mule:** Bulls can carry loads up to 300 pounds

**Pain +1 at:** 53 LP, 35 LP, 18 LP, and 5 LP or less



### Villainous Plans

After the fight, Jasper decides to steal the treasure map. He does not want to risk Alrik burning the map, giving it to the temple, or otherwise doing anything to cheat him out of his rightful inheritance. He decides that if Alrik won't surrender the map or share the treasure, then he doesn't deserve to have it. Shortly after the fight, he confers with Burgol and Ragna. They decide to set fire to the fields to distract the villagers while they steal the map from Alrik's house.

If the heroes keep an eye on Jasper or his henchmen, they see the three conferring. If Jasper, Burgol, or Ragna notice they are being watched, they quickly change the subject to something innocuous.

### Help!—The Heroes Are Too Clever!

If the heroes decide to keep an eye on Jasper and his friends, they might witness the three starting the fire and move to prevent it. Use one of the following suggestions to handle this:

- If the heroes shadow only one of the three, they see him take flint, tinder, and some lamp oil or similar incendiary agent out to the field. Even if they prevent this arson, the other two set a fire and break into Alrik's house without being noticed.
- Alternatively, create another scene requiring the heroes' full attention. Before the heroes determine the villains' plans, a brawl breaks out in the village green—perhaps a drunken Gisbert starts a fight with somebody out of jealousy, or maybe a villager believes the goose race was rigged—and the heroes must intervene to prevent serious injuries.



### The Fight

Sometime during either the festival or the bull ride, at least one of the heroes should witness the following argument. Take care not to place the scene directly before Jasper and his friends set the fire.

Jasper Gellenbrinck and Alrik Witniken argue at the outskirts of the festival. The two men keep their voices low, but gesture wildly. If the heroes get close enough to one of the men without being noticed, they overhear snippets of the conversation: *"The treasure belongs to all of us!... You have no right to decide!... He stole from all of them!"*

Alrik finally ends the conversation (*Enough! It is my letter and my heritage! I decide what happens!"*) and returns to the festival.

If the men notice the heroes eavesdropping, Alrik ends the argument sooner, using the abovementioned words.

If the heroes ask him about the fight, Alrik dodges their questions, saying *"Today, we celebrate the Harvest Thanks. Let's focus on the festival and not worry about meaningless fights."*

Alrik is helpless against spells, liturgical chants, and suitable skill checks. If the heroes succeed in using one of these against him, Alrik shares what he learned from Amarandel and seeks counsel on the ethical questions torturing him (see page 13). He also tells them Jasper traces his heritage back to the brigands as well, and wishes to claim the treasure for himself, as Alrik's great-grandfather stole it from his great-grandfather.

After the Blessed One performs the *Field Blessing*, but before the villagers ignite the large stork made from bundles of grain, the following happens:

### Fire!

#### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*A panicked shout disrupts the celebratory mood, saying "Fire! Fire! The fields are burning!" You and the villagers spin around to see what is happening. Sure enough, beyond the rooftops you see a deep, red glow. Some of the villagers panic, while others drop everything and rush as quickly as possible to the fields.*

If the heroes don't fully grasp the fire's disastrous possibilities, Bosper asks for their help to fight the fire. If it reaches the village's haystacks and barns, the villagers will lose their winter rations and seeds for next year's planting season.

If the heroes agree to help, set up the board for the strategy game **Fire on Moorsend's Fields**, found inside the front cover of this book, and explain the rules to the players.

If desired, role-play the encounter with the fire, instead. The heroes must make a *Fast-Talk (Manipulation)* or *Intimidation (Threats)* check with a penalty of 1 to organize the panic-stricken peasants into bucket brigades, and station the farmers where the fire might travel next or where it could cause the most damage (accurately evaluating the situation requires a *Plant Lore (Crops)* check).



## Bonus Game: Fire on Moorsend's Fields

The goal of this strategy game is to save Moorsend's haylofts and barns from the flames, thus preventing the destruction of the peasants' winter supplies. The map and game tokens for this game appear inside the front and back covers of this book, but you may also download them at [www.ulissesnorthamerica.com](http://www.ulissesnorthamerica.com).

### The Game Board

The game board is a 15x15 square grid marked with haystacks and barns. Counters for burning fields (fire markers) and destroyed squares (ash markers) get added during the game. The fire starts in three squares: 6I, 8E, and 11K. Place a fire marker in each of these squares.

### The Fire

The game progresses in rounds. Each round, the fire spreads to the next field (square) downwind. At the beginning of the game, the wind is blowing south. At the end of even-numbered rounds, the wind might change direction. Roll 1D6 to determine the wind's direction for the following round.

1D6	Effect
1-2	The wind blows left 90 degrees from the current direction.
3-4	The wind continues to blow in the same direction.
5-6	The wind blows right 90 degrees from the current direction.

The fire burns for 4 rounds on fields (empty squares) and haystacks, after which they are destroyed. Indicate this by placing an ash marker on that square. Fire cannot spread onto destroyed squares, as no fuel remains.

If the flames reach a barn, they burn continuously until quenched. After 2 rounds, firefighters can no longer save the barn, but they should still try to extinguish the fire, as it can spread from that location repeatedly.

To remember how long each field square has been burning, place a D4 next to each fire marker and use it to indicate the number of rounds it has been burning. If you reach 4 rounds without extinguishing the fire, the fire burns out on its own. Place an ash marker on destroyed squares and squares destroyed on purpose by firefighting squads.

### Firefighting Squads

Under the heroes' leadership, the villagers form six firefighting squads to fight the fire. Depending on the number of heroes, they lead one or two squads each.

At the start of the game, each player places their firefighting squad(s) on the starting square(s) of their choice on one edge of the board. Squares can hold only one squad at a time.

Each firefighting squad has a *Firefighting* stat that indicates their skill at extinguishing fires. Each squad starts the game with a *Firefighting* stat of 14.

To properly lead a firefighting squad, each player must make a *Fast-Talk (Manipulation)* check for the squad(s) under their control. Heroes with the special ability *Leader* receive a bonus of 1. If successful, increase that squad's *Firefighting* stat by 1 per QL, permanently. If the check fails, decrease that squad's *Firefighting* stat by 2.

### Fighting the Fire

Each round, firefighting squads can either move to an adjacent square or remain in place. Squads may only move horizontally and vertically on the board. Squads cannot move diagonally and cannot enter burning fields. After deciding on movement, a squad may perform one of two actions: destroy the square it occupies (for example, to create a firebreak to contain or redirect the fire), or attempt to extinguish the fire in an adjacent square. No check is required to destroy a square (create a firebreak). To extinguish a fire, the player whose hero leads the squad must roll 1D20. If the result is less than or equal to that squad's *Firefighting* stat, the squad extinguishes the fire in that square.

If a fire spreads to a square containing firefighters, the squad can perform an additional action to evade into an adjacent square. When necessary, other firefighting squads retreat to make room for their companions. If a firefighting squad ever finds itself surrounded by flames (all adjacent squares are burning), the firefighting squad gets badly injured and its members can no longer contribute to the firefighting effort.

### Supernatural Effects


It is possible the heroes have an ace up their sleeve: a Blessed One or spellcaster with the power to change the wind's direction, call rain, or summon a water djinni to fight the fire. If the heroes use an ability like this to change the wind direction, simply continue the game with the new direction. A sudden, strong rain extinguishes all fires within 5 rounds. The GM decides what effect water djinns and other magical or liturgical powers have on the fire.




### After the Fire

When the last fire is extinguished, calculate the bonus AP the heroes receive at the conclusion of the adventure.



At the start of the game, the game board consists of 204 empty squares, 17 haystacks, and 4 barns. Each empty square the heroes manage to save is worth 1 point, each haystack is worth 5 points, and each barn is worth 20 points. Divide the heroes' total points by 40 to get the total additional adventure points the heroes receive for their fight against the fire.

 If your players aren't experienced with board games, start with two fires instead, in squares 6I and 11K only. Alternatively, place the starting fires closer to the edges of the game board. If the heroes have low SR in social skills, give the squads a higher starting *Firefighting* stat.

 Place an additional fire counter in a square of your choice at the start of the game. You can also start the squads with a lower initial *Firefighting* stat, forcing the players to destroy more fields to fight the fire.

### During the Fire

The following events occur during the fire.

-  Jasper, Burgol, and Ragna, who set the fire as a distraction, enter Alrik's house (almost) unnoticed and steal the treasure map and key
-  While fetching field tools from his father's barn to cut firebreaks and fight the fire, Gisbert sees Jasper, Burgol, and Ragna exit Alrik's house and head toward the woods; he decides to pursue them.

A hero notices these events only by ignoring the fire and instead keeping an eye on Jasper and his friends. Heroes who do so have one of two choices: inform the other heroes, losing enough time that the story continues as expected; or confront the three villains alone, in which case Jasper and his friends attempt to silence the hero.

If more than one hero follows Jasper, distract them before they notice the break-in. Perhaps a villager they like is surrounded by the flames and might die if the heroes don't act. Also, Gisbert's disappearance (or the fact that he does not return) should serve to distract the heroes.



## Chapter III: The Brigand's Cave

Putting out the fire ushers the adventure into its last stage. The heroes find tracks that lead them to strongly suspect arson, and they soon find out why: the fire was meant as a distraction so someone could break into Alrik Witniken's house and steal the treasure map. Clues at Alrik's house point to Jasper Gellenbrinck and his friends, Burgol and Ragna. But Gisbert Glimmerdell has also disappeared.

The heroes follow Jasper's trail and realize Gisbert started pursuing the three villains but quickly lost his way. If the heroes follow Gisbert's trail, they learn that he was captured by the same Ridgerock brigands they met at the beginning of the adventure, and the brigands plan to demand a ransom from Bosper.

Jasper, Burgol, and Ragna's tracks lead up into the Kosh Mountains, where the Kobolds used caves for their hideout. Deep in the mountains, the heroes finally confront their enemies and discover a huge brigand's treasure.

### Looking for Clues

#### Arson!

After the heroes extinguish the fire, which they already know started in three different places, they should try to determine the cause. To do so, they must make a cumulative

*Perception (Search)* check (interval of 10 minutes, target of 10 QL), with a penalty of 3 due to poor visibility conditions (it is now dark, as night has fallen). Light sources—such as torches—help by reducing the visibility penalty to 1.

When they achieve 10 QL, the heroes find broken oil lamps in fields 6I, 8E, and 11K that clearly caused the fire. It is obvious: this was arson!

#### Gisbert is Gone!

It is likely the heroes want to share their findings with Bosper Glimmerdell, since he is the village mayor and should hear about this crime. Bosper listens to the heroes and shakes his head in confusion and sadness. He asks the heroes to investigate and find out who started the fire.

He also asks whether any of them saw his son, Gisbert. Bosper lost sight of him during the fire and asks the heroes to keep an eye out for him. He wants to make sure Gisbert is OK.

For now, Bosper is only mildly concerned about his son's disappearance, as he believes the boy is somewhere in the village. This changes when the villagers return to the village green from the fields and discover Gisbert is not



among them. The heroes meet up with Bosper again when they finish looking for clues at the scene of the break-in.

### Thieves!

Confront the heroes with the next problem at once. Except for the lamps, there are no other clues to find (the firefighting squads trampled everything), so the heroes won't find anything else anyway.

While the heroes speak to Bosper, an agitated Alrik Witniken runs up and reports that somebody broke into his house while the village was fighting the fire. If the heroes have a good relationship with Alrik, he might report straight to them. Bosper asks the heroes, who already agreed to investigate the fire, to look into the break-in as well (Bosper does not believe in coincidences).

#### Looking for Clues?—The Heroes Know Everything

It's possible your heroes easily piece together all the clues and feel no need to search Alrik's house. If they witnessed the argument between Jasper and Alrik and learned what it was about, they might already be convinced of Jasper's guilt, especially if Alrik mentions his suspicion that Jasper is behind the crime. If the heroes search around outside the house, they find Jasper's tracks and can take up the chase.

If they start searching for Gisbert, they could also discover Jasper's tracks, which lead along the wall around Bosper's farmhouse and meet up with tracks of three others that lead away from the herb trader's hut (Gisbert hid behind the wall to watch the three thieves, then climbed over it and took up the chase).

Even if the heroes don't search Alrik's house, he warns them that the map of the cave mentions traps (see page 27).



### In the Herb Trader's House

It's immediately obvious Alrik's house was, indeed, broken into. The small herb store's showroom is in shambles, as is the living quarters. Drawers were torn from cabinets and dressers, shelves were toppled, and pictures were removed from the walls. Scattered herbs make the salesroom smell like a Tulamydian bazaar. Broken glass lies everywhere.

In the small kitchen, the intruders destroyed the kettle and alchemist's tools—seemingly as an act of pure vandalism—and someone slashed all the pillows and blankets in the bedroom.

Of course, Alrik knows exactly what is missing: the letter (including the treasure map), the ring, and the Gwen-Petryl stone—everything he received from the mysterious elf the day before. He hid them in the mattress straw, but the robbers found them anyway. Alrik strongly suspects Jasper, but the heroes might need some more clues to reach the same conclusion.

Heroes who want to take a closer look at the room can make a *Perception (Search)* check. If successful, they find a silver bracelet in the densely-packed mattress straw. The bracelet is etched with a coat-of-arms: three crowns within a triangle (an *Etiquette (Heraldry)* check reveals it's the Albernian royal crest).

If the players don't recall this, remind them that their heroes saw a similar silver bracelet earlier—on Jasper Gellenbrinck's wrist. It's not important for them to recognize the crest, though heroes who do could make the connection to the brigand story Bosper related during their journey. Maybe the story of the attack on the Albernian prince holds more truth than they thought.

#### Time for Some Straight Talk, Friend!

It's time for Alrik to explain the background to the heroes so they understand Jasper's plans. He tells the heroes the following information:

##### About the Treasure:

- Jasper stole a letter, a ring, and a large Gwen-Petryl stone.
- These were the items he received from the elf, Amarandel Welldance, the day before.



- These items come from his great-great-grandfather, Patras Okarn's, estate.
- Patras was the captain of the Kobolds, a brigand gang that plagued the area about one hundred years ago.
- When the duke's River Guard nearly caught up with them, they locked their treasure in a cave and decided not to return for it until the search for them had ended and they could sell the items without fear of being caught.
- But Okarn betrayed his friends. He escaped with the key (the ring), an artifact that permits entry into the cave
- He lived the rest of his life as an adventurer traveling with Amarandel. Before he died, he gave Amarandel the letter, the ring, and the stone, and asked her to give them to his heir, Eberwin Witniken, Alrik's great-grandfather.
- The elf forgot how short-lived humans are and only now, one hundred years later, journeyed to Moorsend to deliver the message.
- Alrik knows about his family's past, but he never dreamed it would affect his life. He is ashamed of his ancestor's deeds.
- He isn't sure how to deal with the situation. He read the letter and quickly scanned the map, but never intended to claim the treasure. *"The men who stole this treasure had blood on their hands. A lot of blood."*

#### About Jasper and the Villagers:

- Many of the villagers are descendants of the Kobolds. The brigands settled where Patras' heir, Eberwin Witniken, lived, hoping Patras would one day return and they'd get their share of the treasure. But Patras Okarn never did return.
- Jasper is one of the brigand's descendants. He knew what the elf signified the moment she arrived in his taproom.
- This afternoon, Jasper confronted Alrik about the treasure: *"Jasper didn't know much, and I'm afraid my answers only confirmed his suspicions."*
- Alrik is not convinced that he should claim the treasure. He knows that he and Jasper are the brigands' true heirs, but the treasure came from theft and bloodshed.
- Alrik thought about burning the map.
- Jasper wants the treasure all for himself. He was afraid that Alrik might destroy the map, so he stole it.

## Get Them!

### Preparations

If punishing arsonists isn't enough motivation for the heroes, remind them that Gisbert is still missing. The heroes barely finish investigating Alrik's break-in when a worried Bosper approaches them, much more anxious than before. He searched the whole village but couldn't find Gisbert anywhere. People last saw Gisbert when he set out to retrieve some tools from home to help fight the fire.

Anyone making a *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* check at the farm finds footprints leading from the barn to the back of the property and ending at the wall. If the heroes climb the wall (*Climbing (Walls)* check with a bonus of 1), they find the tracks continue on the other side and eventually meet up with three sets of tracks leading away from Alrik's house. It seems Gisbert either followed the burglars, or was conspiring with them.

### It's a Trap!

Alrik describes the cave's rough location, which should be enough information to help them find the correct valley later. He also gives them a warning: he only briefly glanced at the map of the brigand cave, but he saw several traps marked on it that the brigands likely built to deter thieves. He tells the heroes to be careful.

## The Chase

If the heroes set out right away, all checks suffer a penalty of 3 due to poor visibility (nighttime, dense woods, and so on). Sources of light (lamps, torches, and so on) reduce the penalty to 1, but enable enemies to see the heroes from a great distance.

A successful check with *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* lets the heroes find tracks leading north around Alrik's house. Make one check every half hour. Attentive trackers (those with QL 2+) also notice three separate sets of tracks leaving Alrik's house (Jasper, Burgol, and Ragna). A fourth set of tracks joins them just outside the village (Gisbert).

The tracks lead north to the woods. To follow the tracks, the heroes must make a cumulative group *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* check (interval of 10 minutes, no more than three heroes). When the heroes achieve 10 QL, they successfully follow the tracks and notice where the tracks split.

• The heroes are not meant to fail here, but keep the pressure on by making the players roll and giving them the impression that time is short.



## The Tracks Split

### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*You follow the tracks across the landscape, always uphill, always toward the Kosh Mountains, for hours, until you eventually reach a small brook. It cuts deep into the ground and runs, curving, toward the valley. The tracks end here. It appears Jasper and his companions crossed the stream.*

*You look around, carefully [Do not read the rest of this text aloud until the heroes succeed at a Perception (Search) check].*

*What's this? The tracks split up! While most of the footprints continue northeast on the other side of the brook, one set meanders along the slope, seemingly without direction for a distance, before finally turning and heading northeast.*

A successful *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* check shows the trail does indeed split, with several sets of tracks heading northeast while another seems to wander around, lost. With QL 2+, the heroes determine that these wandering tracks belong to Gisbert.

It seems this is where Gisbert lost the others' trails, which should confirm the boy has no dealings with the thieves and in fact is pursuing them himself.

The heroes must decide which trail to follow. Gisbert's trail obviously won't lead them to the treasure, and besides, the heroes might fear the young man would be a hindrance during their pursuit if they go find him first. On the other hand, the boy might be in danger and need the heroes' help. A treasure that has been hidden in the mountains for a hundred years can wait a few more hours, and perhaps the boy could prove useful in the cave, after all?

### Which Path Do We Follow?

The following section describes the search for Gisbert first, and then covers the showdown in the brigand cave. The heroes are free to decide which path to follow; in the end, the order is not important.

If they decide to search for Gisbert first, continue with the next scene. If they choose to track Jasper and his companions to the treasure cave, jump to the scene *The Treasure in the Mountain*, on page 30.



## The Brigand Camp

To follow Gisbert, the players must make a successful *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* check or another cumulative group check, as described earlier. After a while, a successful *Perception (Spot)* check lets the heroes hear nearby voices.

### Evaluating the Situation

The heroes can sneak toward the brigands' camp with a *Stealth (Sneaking)* check (the darkness imposes a penalty of up to 2, and the brigands are distracted).

Six tents cluster around a large campfire. Three scruffy figures sit near the fire, drinking merrily; behind them sits a keg of fruit beer called *Baldur's Brew*—from a Ridgerock brewery. One tent stands open; a *Perception (Spot)* check lets the heroes see other crates and kegs stacked up inside. These clues indicate that this must be the Ridgerock brigands' camp.

Any brigands who escaped the heroes at the beginning of the adventure are present here.

The camp currently holds ten brigands. Three sit around the fire. A scout walks the perimeter of the camp. Roll 1D6: on a 1, the scout comes dangerously close to the heroes' hiding place and may make a competitive *Perception (Spot Ambush, Spot, or Search)* check versus *Stealth (Hide)* to see them and raise the alarm.

If the heroes set out immediately after learning Gisbert was missing, three brigands are taunting Gisbert as they tie him up in one of the tents ("You'll bring us a nice ransom, boy!"). Three other ruffians sit in a separate tent, playing boltan.

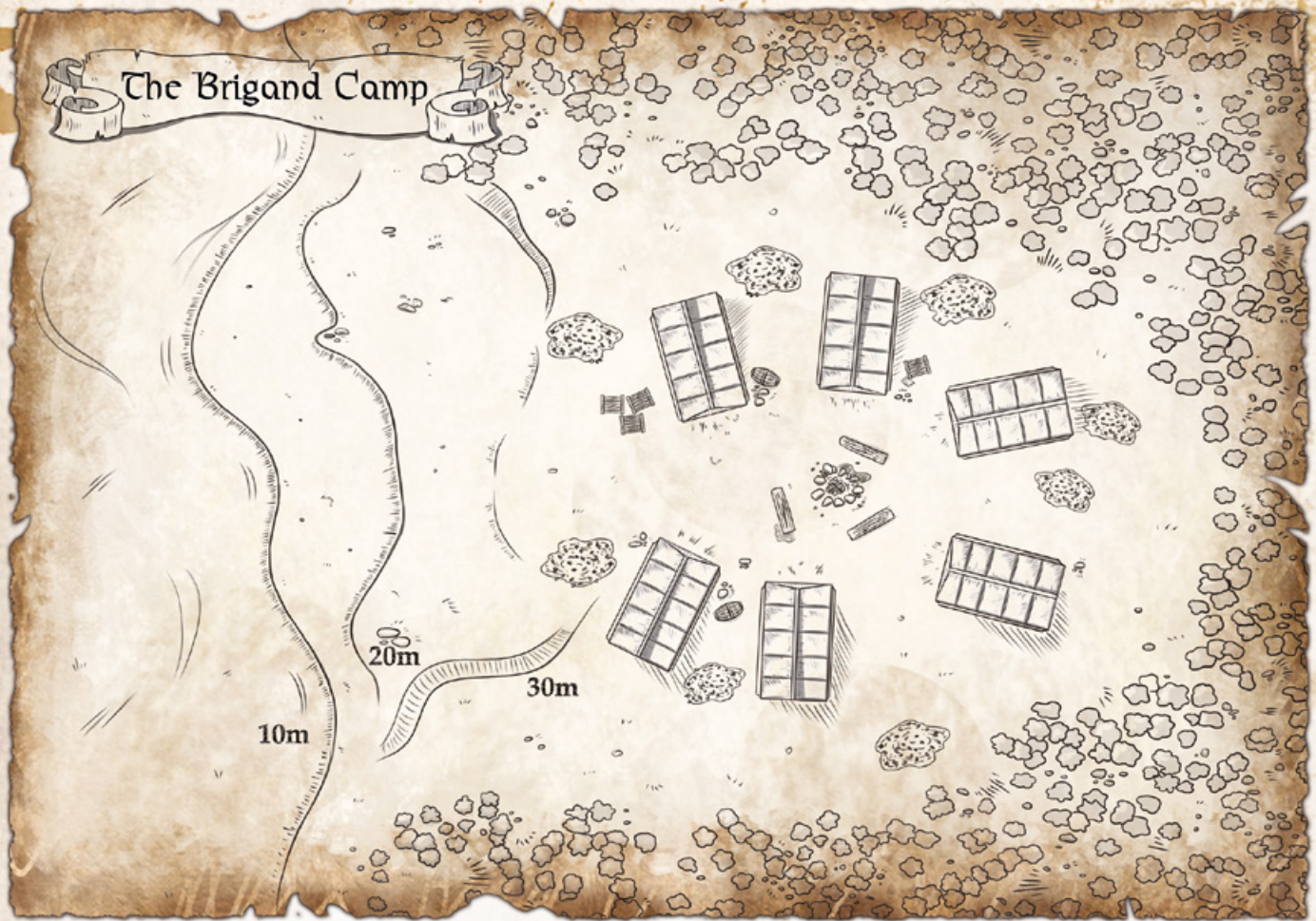
If the heroes arrive later, Gisbert is tied up in one of the tents, six of the brigands are asleep in other tents, three sit by the fire, and one scout patrols the perimeter, as mentioned above.

### Be Careful with the Light!

If the heroes are carrying one or more lights (to offset the penalties on their checks), the brigands receive a bonus of 3 to *Perception (Spot)* checks unless the heroes extinguish their lights before approaching the camp.







### The Rescue

Let the heroes devise a plan to free Gisbert from his predicament. If they trust their combat skills, a frontal attack might be the best option. Alternatively, the stealthiest among them might try to reach Gisbert while most of them remain hidden as long as possible. For Gisbert's stats, see page 14.

The brigands are not guarding Gisbert, but they hid eight pitfalls around the camp (shown as irregularly shaped, dotted areas near the tents on the map on page 29) to defend against wild beasts. These traps are not shown on the player map at the end of the book. Spotting each pitfall requires a successful *Perception (Spot)* check with a penalty of 1.

A hero falling into a trap must make a *Climbing (Mountains)* check to climb out. If this check fails, another hero can help by lowering a rope and making a *Feat of Strength (Dragging & Pulling)* check with a penalty of 2. The pits are 10 feet deep, and anyone falling in suffers 3D6 falling damage (see *Core Rules*, page 340). Heroes who cannot escape the pits are caught by the brigands the next morning, unless the rest of the heroes defeat all the brigands, of course.

Use any or all of the following events to confuse the heroes, make the scene more exciting, or make the scene easier, as desired.

- The three drunk thugs around the fire continue to drink. With a successful *Carousing (Resist Drug Intoxication)* check, the heroes can tell when the brigands reach level 3 *Stupor*, at which point they probably won't notice the heroes entering the camp. Getting in should be easy if they don't encounter one of the patrolling scouts.
- When a hero rolls a 1 on 1D6, the scout returns to camp to oversee a changing of the guard. If the heroes don't stop him, he rebukes the drunkards, sends them to their tents with a few kicks, and posts new guards.
- The boltan players begin to argue about their wagers, and a brawl erupts. 1D3+1 other brigands must intervene to put an end to it. While breaking up the brawl, they are distracted (additional penalty of 4 on checks to notice the heroes). If desired, they attack each other with knives (1D3 brigands have Level 2 *Pain*, and 1D3 additional brigands have level 1 *Pain*).
- Two brigands go hunting (only during the day).
- One of the heroes starts a fire (either intentionally or due to clumsiness). All the brigands panic, but 1D3+3 brigands have the presence of mind to leave the camp with buckets to fetch water from a nearby brook.





### Ridgerock Brigand

COU 13 SGC 11 INT 13 CHA 12

DEX 11 AGI 13 CON 13 STR 13

LP 31 AE - KP - INI 12+1D6

DO 6 SPI 1 TOU 2 MOV 7

Unarmed: AT 12 PA 6 DP 1D6

RE short

Mace: AT 12 PA 5 DP 1D6+4 RE medium

PRO/ENC 2/1 (light leather armor) (includes armor modifiers)

Special Abilities: Feint I, Forceful Blow I

Advantages/Disadvantages: Negative Trait (Greed)

Skills: Body Control 5, Empathy 3, Feat of Strength 6, Intimidation 7, Orienting 5, Perception 5, Self-Control 4, Stealth 8, Tracking 4, Willpower 3

Combat Behavior: The brigands prefer to gang up on one opponent, and alternate between Feints and Forceful Blows

Escape: After loss of 50% LP, or when more than half are incapacitated

Pain +1 at: 23 LP, 16 LP, 8 LP, and 5 LP or less

One of the drunk brigands walks away from camp to relieve himself and falls into one of the pits. The other three (the two drunks and the scout) hurry over to try to pull him out. The brigands in the tents wake up, but go back to sleep after the commotion dies down. They don't react to anything that happens in the camp for the rest of the night, assuming that it is most likely a false alarm anyway.

Adjust the difficulty of this scene to match the heroes' skill levels using a combination of these events.

A brigand keeps a close watch on Gisbert—the heroes must incapacitate him quickly and quietly to free the boy.

### Gisbert is Free!

#### Escape

Surviving brigands might pursue Gisbert and the heroes. Use the rules for chases from the *Core Rules* (see page 349), or call for competitive *Tracking (Hide Tracks)* and *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* checks if the heroes manage to put some distance between themselves and the brigands. Note that

the heroes must use their worst *Tracking (Hide Tracks)* stat against the brigands' best *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* skill.

At the GM's discretion, the brigands do not follow the heroes.

#### What to Do with Gisbert?

If the players decide to free Gisbert before following Jasper and his friends, they must now decide what to do with Gisbert. They can tell him to go back to Moorsend alone, but he refuses because he wants to be a hero.

To convince him to go, the heroes must make competitive checks using *Persuasion (Conversation)*, *Fast-Talk (Hard Sell, Begging, Manipulation, or Flattery)*, or *Intimidation (Threats)* against Gisbert's *Willpower* (various applications, depending on skill).

The heroes may also bring Gisbert along to show him how dangerous an adventurer's life can be. And, perhaps, they might actually need his support in the end.

### The Treasure in the Mountain

The old cave hideout of the Kobolds sits up in the remote Kosh Mountains. The heroes reach the vicinity with another cumulative group *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* check (interval of 10 minutes).

With a little persistence, the heroes find the correct valley—and the half-overgrown entrance to a natural cave formation—a while later. The tunnels are natural, unworked, and—of course—lightless.

#### Gisbert as an Ace in the Hole?

Use Gisbert as a chaotic element. His desire for adventure and his overconfidence ("It's all so exciting!") might lead him into danger, from which the heroes must then save him. Perhaps Gisbert's clumsiness awakens a bear from its slumber (or nearly does so).

Gisbert is not a skilled fighter, but he can draw the opponents' attention (and attacks). Also, Gisbert has 2 FtP, which could allow him to be an unexpected help for the heroes in an otherwise hopeless situation. Maybe he succeeds at a check which all the heroes fail, or he performs a heroic action at just the right moment—there is something of a true hero in Gisbert, after all.



Gisbert (who, by chance, wears a red shirt; see page 14) might prove useful in an ironic manner when he triggers a deadly trap in the hallway (6). Assuming the heroes don't cruelly send Gisbert ahead of them to find traps, he could still dash forward unadvisedly and accidentally trigger a trap. Employ this idea only if the players become unfocused, forget about the traps, or don't have the correct skills to find and circumvent them. It's a tragic, but powerful, way to remind them that their surroundings are dangerous.

## The Cave System

The player's map of the brigand cave (omitting the traps) appears at the end of the book. The corridors are roughly 4 feet wide, but there are also narrow passages with just enough room for one greedy brigand hauling a treasure chest. The ceiling in the tunnels is between 10 and 14 feet high; 30 to 42 feet high in the caverns. The heroes must walk single-file through the corridors. Have your players determine the order in which they walk when they enter the cave.

## Modifiers

All corridors use the rules for *Cramped Spaces* (see *Core Rules*, page 238), meaning short weapons suffer no penalties, medium weapons suffer a penalty of -4 AT/-4 PA, and long weapons suffer a penalty of -8/-8. Shield use is also restricted; the penalties for small, medium, and large shields are -2/-2, -4/-3, and -6/-4, respectively.

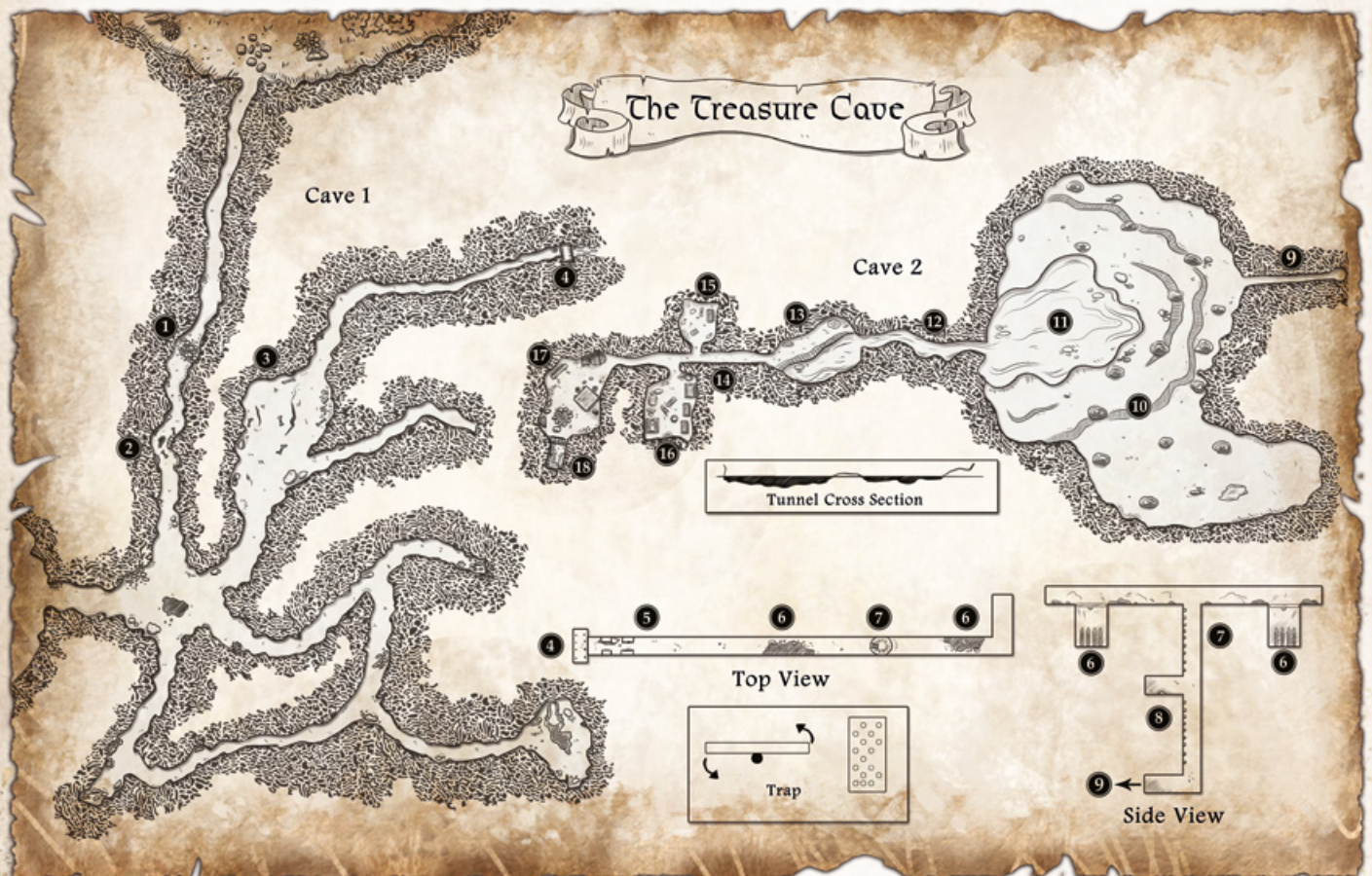
Depending on which light source the heroes use, there could also be visibility modifiers (see *Core Rules*, pages 348 and 376).

## Worrying Traces

A hero who makes a successful *Perception (Spot)* check in the upper cave system (**Cave 1**) finds feces. A successful *Animal Lore (Wild Animals)* check identifies it as bear feces.

## Pile of Boulders (1)

Part of the corridor ceiling collapsed into a pile here (the ceiling is still more than 8 feet high). A *Climbing (Mountains)* check with a bonus of 3 is necessary to climb over the loose stones. If the check fails, the boulders slip, injuring the heroes (2 DP; ignore PRO).





### Hole in the Ceiling (2)

Here, the heroes find a head-sized hole in the ceiling. Water drips down and a thin ray of light shines in through the hole. This natural hole has been the doom of many creatures, if the bones below it are any indication. To the south, the tunnel leads to a cavern with a subterranean lake. Rainwater flows through gaps in the ceiling and collects in the small lake, which slowly seeps away through cracks in the rock. This is the source of the small mountain brook the heroes saw in the woods.

### Bear Cave (3)

The sharp smell coming from this cave tells the heroes it's an old black bear's retreat. The condition of the bear, and whether the heroes meet it, depends on when they arrive.

- If the heroes pursued Jasper, Burgol, and Ragna here, the three brigands already encountered the black bear. The beast is probably injured and afraid, and either retreated to one of the corridors further down on the map or fled. It might return and ambush the heroes when they try to leave the cave later.
- The encounter with Jasper and his friends might have angered the bear. The cave is its home, and the heroes are intruders. Perhaps Jasper's group managed to sneak past the bear without a fight, or kept it at a distance (for example, by using fire), and now the heroes must endure its full wrath.
- Maybe Jasper, Burgol, and Ragna got lucky, and the bear wasn't home when they passed through. It returns just as the last hero enters its lair.
- The bear arrived after Jasper and his friends entered the cave, but before the heroes arrived. The smell of intruders made it angry. The heroes enter the cave just in time to give the bear a target for its anger.
- If the heroes took the map and tried to find the treasure on their own, the bear waits for them, serving as a kind of Boss enemy.

Luckily, the cave is wide enough to allow several heroes to use their weapons against the beast. The rules for cramped spaces do not apply here.

### Steel Door (4)

A mighty steel door is set into the stone at the end of this long corridor. If the heroes came here alone with the treasure map and ring, it is still closed and they must figure out how the ring opens the door. We assume the heroes followed Jasper and his companions here, so the door is open.

### Black Bear

**Size:** 10 to 11 feet tall at the shoulder, when standing on two legs

**Weight:** 1,200 to 1,500 pounds  
**COU** 14 **SGC** 12 (a) **INT** 12 **CHA** 12

**DEX** 11 **AGI** 11 **CON** 20 **STR** 21

**LP** 60 **AE - KP - INI** 13+1D6

**DE** 6 **SPI** 0 **TOU** 5 **MOV** 10

**Bite:** AT 11 DP 2D6+2 RE short

**Paws:** AT 12 DP 1D6+6 RE medium

**PRO/ENC:** 1/0

**Actions:** 2 (max. 1 x Bite)

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Exceptional Sense (Smell) / Negative Trait (Curiosity)

**Special Abilities:** Forceful Blow I (Bite, Paw), Takedown (Paw)

**Skills:** *Body Control* 4, *Climbing* 7, *Feat of Strength* 12, *Intimidation* 10, *Perception* 10, *Self-Control* 12, *Stealth* 2, *Swimming* 7, *Willpower* 4

**Number:** 1

**Size Category:** Medium

**Type:** Animal, non-humanoid

**Loot:** 100 rations meat, fur (30 silverthalers), trophy (teeth and claws, 5 silverthalers)

**Combat Behavior:** When provoked or attacked, the bear stands up on its hind legs and attacks with its claws, attempting to grab and bite its enemy.

**Escape:** Loss of 50% LP, except when in *frenzy* (see below), in which case it fights to the death.

#### Animal Lore (*Wild Animals*)

• **QL 1:** Bears can run faster than humans.

• **QL 2:** Bears are curious and have a good sense of smell. They can detect food and prey from afar. You can avoid trouble with bears by staying downwind of them.

• **QL 3+:** Bears can become enraged when injured or when their cubs are threatened.

**Hunt:** -3

#### Special Rules

**Bloodlust:** Each time a bear suffers a level of *Pain*, it makes a Willpower check. If it fails, it becomes enraged and gains the state *bloodlust*. The state ends after the opponent's death or after one hour. For more information about black bears, see the *Aventuria Almanac*, page 169.

**Pain +1 at:** 45 LP, 30 LP, 15 LP, and 5 LP or less





The heroes find a ring pushed into a gap in the stone, like a key in a lock. The ring seems to be fused with the door and they can't remove it.

A magical analysis reveals the entire door is infused with powerful magic. The magical sign, *Lockdown*, was cast on the back of the door, which can now only be opened with the proper key (in this case, the ring).

### Lockdown

**AE Cost:** 16 AP

This magical sign locks a door. Only the appropriate key can reopen the door (this might be an actual key, a ring, or even a code word).

**AP Value:** 5 adventure points

A *Mechanics (Complicated Systems)* check reveals the following:

- **QL 1:** The steel door has few seams and is scratched (caused by a crowbar) and dented (caused by pickaxes, hammers, and so on) where someone attempted to use tools to break it open. This damage has a similar patina as the rest of the door, which probably means the attempts to open it were made long ago—likely by the brigands who tried to force their way in after Patras Okarn disappeared.
- **QL 2:** The mountain appears to have shifted in the last few years. The doorframe is warped, and despite having the key, it seems Jasper and his friends had trouble pushing the door open. It is not possible to lock the door again.
- **QL 3+:** The door belongs on a safe, one that would not be out of place in a branch of the Northland Bank. It is probably of dwarven make. The thick metal bolts that connect the door to the wall would prevent all but the strongest intruders from entering.

The doorway leads into a tunnel that slopes downward and is supported by strong wooden beams. These have seen better days, too. Humidity soaked into the beams. Many are covered by fungi, others look rotten and brittle, and several shattered under the weight of the stone years ago.

An *Earthenraft (Stone Carving)* check reveals that parts of the tunnel could collapse at any moment. Water droplets and even small stones fall onto the heroes at times.

Though the tunnels are not illuminated, a *Perception (Spot)* check reveals footprints in the dirt on the floor. A *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* check shows the tracks were made by three different people.

### The Tunnels

#### Tunnel (5)

This tunnel, which is about 6 feet wide with a 6 foot ceiling, continues on for some distance. Eventually it turns left and ends in a very short but slightly wider (9 feet) corridor. The heroes must first survive the hidden **traps (6)** and pass the **shaft (7)** to see the dead end around the corner.

#### Trap (6)

The Kobolds dug two pitfalls here and covered them with dirt and gravel. The heroes can cross safely only along a 6-inch wide ledge; the rest of the corridor consists of a pivoting trap door that drops away when someone steps on it. Anyone setting off this trap falls into a pit 12 feet deep with pointed wooden stakes covering the bottom. Luckily, the stakes are almost completely rotted away and cause only 1D6 DP. In addition, the victim takes falling damage (4D6 DP, ignore PRO). This damage can be reduced with a successful *Body Control (Jumping)* check (see *Core Rules*, page 340).

To notice the trap in time, the heroes must make a *Perception (Spot)* check with a penalty of 1. Apply visibility modifiers, as applicable.

#### Shaft (7)

This round shaft in the floor of the corridor is about 10 feet in diameter. Iron rungs descend for about 50 feet to the cave below (**Cave 2**). Several metal pulleys, attached to the ceiling above the shaft, were apparently used by the Kobolds to lift or lower heavy objects. The wheels are rusty, and half of the pulley block broke loose and fell long ago.

The rungs are only 2 feet wide, which makes this a challenge for those who are afraid of heights. In addition, every third rung is sabotaged—it was sawn through and breaks when too much weight is put on it. Only a successful *Body Control (Jumping)* check with a penalty of 1 can prevent a fall from one of these rungs. Otherwise, the victim suffers falling damage appropriate for the distance fallen.



The other rungs have their issues, too. Heroes suffering three or more points of *Encumbrance* must make a *Body Control (Balance)* check with a bonus of 1 to avoid losing their grip on the slippery rungs. Slipping is painful (1D3 DP, ignore PRO) and an unlucky person (roll of a 1 on 1D6) might fall all the way to the bottom of the shaft instead of landing on the **stopover (8)**. Old ropes and the wreckage of a round, wooden platform 6 feet in diameter are scattered at the bottom of the shaft.

### Stopover (8)

There is a stopover in the middle of the **shaft (7)**, for the occasions when one Kobold had to make way for another coming through. A falling hero might catch themselves here, if they're lucky. The shaft opens into another **tunnel (9)** at the bottom.

### Tunnel (9)

The shaft ends in another tunnel, which slopes downward and ends in a large, **dripstone cave (10)**.

## The Brigand Cave

### Dripstone Cave (10)

The tunnel opens to a large dripstone cave, with an uneven floor. Stalagmites and stalactites make the whole grotto look like a forest of stone. A mirror-surfaced lake with crystal-clear water fills the eastern part of the cave.

What happens next depends on how much time has passed since Jasper, Burgol, and Ragna reached the cave:

**If the heroes were close behind the thieves...** they might catch up to them here. Getting past the bear, opening the door, and avoiding the traps cost Jasper and his companions some time. They soon encountered an obstacle they did not expect. Water now fills the cave above the level of the old entrance to the brigand hideout. By the time the three decide they must dive to continue on, the heroes catch up to them. This encounter can go several ways, as follows.

- The brigands fight the heroes in the dripstone cave, or
- The brigands try to escape by diving into the lake. Thanks to the Gwen-Petryl stone Jasper stole, the three can see underwater.

**If the heroes rescued Gisbert first...** or were delayed for any other reason, Jasper and his friends already gained access to the brigand cave. They might have started bringing up treasures and leaving them on the lakeshore, or they may just be standing in the brigand hideout, rejoicing at their riches.

- If the brigands have started to salvage the treasure, the heroes might see one of them emerge from the water and pile gold and silver on the shore, or else they see the obvious glow of their Gwen-Petryl stone. The thief notices the heroes and escapes through the lake, but at least the heroes now know where to look for them.
- If all the brigands are celebrating in the hideout, the heroes find an empty cave and might have trouble finding a clue that leads to the brigand hideout.

### The Lake in the Cave (11)

If the heroes succeed at a *Perception (Spot)* check with a bonus of 3 while examining the crystal-clear lake, they see an opening in the cave wall below the surface of the water. Steps hewn from the stone lead down to the opening, which is surrounded by pointy stalagmites.

An *Earthencraft (Stonecutting)* check reveals that these steps would be highly impractical to create underwater. With QL 2+, they also know that stalagmites do not grow underwater. Therefore, this part of the cave was not always flooded.

### Natural Tunnel (12)

To reach the brigands' hideout, the heroes must swim down through the lake.

About halfway through the submerged tunnel is an air pocket where swimming heroes can come up for air. Steps lead down and, later, back up.

To dive through the tunnel, the heroes must make a cumulative *Swimming (Diving)* check, with a penalty dependent on the illumination: 0 (*Glow Sphere*, magical torch, or Gwen-Petryl stone), 2 (torches above the water's surface), or 4 (complete darkness; heroes must feel their way along). Each hero can make CON/2 checks. Heroes who do not achieve 6 QL (to the air pocket), and 10 QL (from the air pocket to the cave at the end) suffer a level of *Stupor*.



### Small Driestone Cave (13)

This cave is a smaller version of the first driestone cave. Another **passage (14)** leads out of it. The heroes see light when they surface in this part of the cave (Jasper, Burgol, and Ragna ignited torches here).

If the thieves are already aware of the heroes' presence, they ambush the heroes now. Jasper, Burgol, or Ragna (or all three) hide behind stalagmites, bows at the ready, waiting to shoot at the heroes when they come to the surface. To avoid the arrows, the heroes must either rush forward (attacks of opportunity and close combat) or dive underwater again. If they dive again, their *Swimming (Diving)* checks suffer a penalty of 1, as they didn't get enough time to catch their breath.

If the heroes did not find the villains here, they meet them in the **Great Hall (17)** after getting through the door.



If the heroes are not likely to survive a fight with three enemies, especially if ambushed, try the following: Give the heroes the advantage of surprise when encountering Jasper and his friends, or reduce the thieves' LP (maybe they had to fight the black bear).

### Passage (14)

This level passage—about 5 feet wide and 6 feet high (*cramped*)—runs east-west, connecting the **small driestone cave (13)** with the **sleeping rooms (15/16)** and the **Great Hall (17)**.

### Sleeping Rooms (15/16)

The Kobolds once lived in these quarters, as evidenced by the beds and chests of drawers. Over the years, the cave's natural humidity ruined every item made of wood, leather, and cloth that the Kobolds left behind.

### Great Hall (17)

If the drawings and scratches on the walls, the large fireplace, and the rotted benches, tables, and chairs are any indication, the Kobolds spent most of their leisure time in this room. The kegs, baskets, and chests have *suffered badly from Satinav's horns*.<sup>•</sup> The south wall is skillfully built and grouted, and contains a massive, iron-shod, wooden door that is locked. This door leads to the **treasure chamber (18)**.

Here, Satinav had mercy; the door absorbed a great deal of minerals from the water over the years and is now as hard

<sup>•</sup> An Aventurian expression. Satinav is the Lord of Time.



### Jasper Gellenbrinck

COU 14 SGC 11 INT 14 CHA 14

DEX 13 AGI 14 CON 11 STR 13

LP 27 AE - KP - INI 13+1D6

DO 7 SPI 2 TOU 1 MOV 7

**Unarmed:** AT 12 PA 7 DP 1D6

RE short

**Saber:** AT 12 PA 7 DP 1D6+3 RE medium

**PRO/ENC** 1/0 (heavy clothes) (includes armor modifiers)

**Special Abilities:** Feint I, Forceful Blow I

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Negative Trait (Short Temper)

**Skills:** *Body Control 4, Commerce 8, Empathy 8, Feat of Strength 4, Intimidation 6, Perception 5, Prepare Food 9, Self-Control 4, Stealth 5, Streetwise 8, Willpower 7*

**Combat Behavior:** Jasper attacks with Feints, but uses Forceful Blows against well-armed opponents.

**Escape:** Loss of 50% LP

**Pain +1 at:** 20 LP, 14 LP, 7 LP, and 5 LP or less

### Burgol/Ragna

COU 13 SGC 10 INT 13 CHA 10

DEX 12 AGI 13 CON 14 STR 13

LP 31 AE - KP - INI 12+1D6

DO 7 SPI 1 TOU 2 MOV 7

**Unarmed:** AT 12 PA 6 DP 1D6 RE short

**Club:** AT 12 PA 5 DP 1D6+4 RE medium

**Woodcutter's Axe:** AT 11 PA 6 DP 1D6+3 RE medium

**Short Bow:** RC 11 DP 1D6+4 RT 1 Actions RA 10/50/80

**Ammunition:** 10 + D6 arrows

**PRO/ENC** 1/0 (heavy clothes) (armor modifiers already included)

**Special Abilities:** Forceful Blow I

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Negative Trait (Greed)

**Skills:** *Body Control 5, Empathy 3, Feat of Strength 6, Intimidation 5, Perception 5, Self-Control 5, Stealth 6, Willpower 4*

**Combat Behavior:** Burgol and Ragna prefer to ambush or attack when they have superior numbers. Also, they prefer to attack from a distance if an opponent is skilled or well-armed.

**Escape:** Loss of 50% LP

**Pain +1 at:** 23 LP, 16 LP, 8 LP, and 5 LP or less



as stone (the door has 1,000 structure points). The lock is made from the finest dwarven steel, and, against all odds, still works. If the heroes pick the lock with a *Pick Locks* (*Bit Locks*) check with a penalty of 2, they can pull the door open with a cumulative group *Feat of Strength* (*Lifting*) check (max. three heroes, 10 QL).

If the heroes haven't already met up with Jasper, Burgol, and Ragna, they do so now, in which case they entered the room to find the thieves attempting to open the **treasure chamber (18)** door. The final combat begins.

### The Treasure Chamber (18)

#### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*You manage to open the heavy door by throwing your full weight against it. The light from your lamps fills the room, and you shield your eyes as it reflects off the mountains of gold and silver in the room. Imagine... all this treasure just sitting here, waiting for decades to be rediscovered! Gold, jewelry, splendid weapons, silverware... never in your lives have you seen so many valuable objects in one place.*

The treasure room contains chests full of silver coins (and some ducats), jewel-encrusted cups, large rings, heavy necklaces, ornate weapons, the finest clothes of silk and damask, silverware, and punched, ornamental plates—everything the daring Kobolds stole from rich traders and careless nobles throughout their long career.

Heroes with the negative trait *Greed* must make a *Willpower* check with a penalty of 3 or claim the treasure for themselves at once. They can think only of their new riches and begin to ponder the question of how to transport as much as possible out of here.

With a *Commerce* check, heroes can try to estimate the value of the treasure, but it isn't easy.

#### Commerce check

**QL 1:** The treasure is worth roughly 1,000 ducats.

**QL 2:** The treasure's value really depends on demand, buyers' resources and the seller's trustworthiness. When selling large amounts of jewelry, buyers might suspect you of fencing stolen goods. If you aren't a noble or the leader of a trade house, you can only sell the goods for a fraction of their worth.

**QL 3+:** Much of the treasure—basically, everything but coins—bears family crests and signatures. You must either melt it down, which is hard work, or sell it to fences, which lowers your profit and creates suspicion that you are selling stolen goods.

### We Found a Treasure...

Treasure in a role playing game is always a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it's a fantastic reward for the rigors of an adventurer's life; but, on the other hand, the treasure could endanger game balance. Why bother to go out on adventures if the heroes already have all the money they could ever want? How do you keep a gaming session exciting if the heroes own dozens of magical weapons and artifacts? Use the following suggestions to maintain balance in your campaign. Don't make it impossible for the heroes to get the treasure home, as that would only cause frustration. But no one ever said it would be easy...

- **Transport**—Parts of the cave are flooded (**10**, **11**, and **12**), the pulley system in the **shaft (7)** is destroyed, and beyond that is a narrow corridor with a complicated **trap (6)** that must be crossed with ropes or boards. Even if the heroes manage to haul the treasure that far, they must defeat an angry bear and remove a **pile of boulders (1)** before they can get the treasure out of the cave. Then, they have a long march without roads or paths ahead of them. Even with the help of mules and donkeys, emptying the cave and bringing the treasure to Moorsend would take several days, if not weeks.
- **Selling it**—Heroes who don't at least have the social status *Lesser Noble* could be accused of selling stolen goods. The heroes might use a clever disguise to convince a buyer that they own the goods (competitive check), but many items bear a crest or personal emblem. Such items can only be sold in small quantities, or when accompanied by a good story.

The heroes can try a *Streetwise* (*Asking Around*) check to find a fence, but if they decide to go this route, they get only 10% to 20% of the valuables' true worth, depending on their negotiating skills.

Many of the borders also pose a problem. The heroes know guards thoroughly check their possessions at most city gates and county and kingdom borders. If the heroes carry



riches that don't match their social standing, their faces might quickly appear on wanted posters.

- **Melt It Down!**—It is possible to melt down identifiable pieces, but the heroes need the proper equipment to do so. If the heroes don't have a forge, they need someone who can supply the gear and keep quiet.
- **The Heroes as Targets**—Treasures inspire greed—a lesson the heroes should have learned by now. If they travel around with casks of treasure, or invest their new riches in showy items (fancy clothes, weapons, or jewelry), the heroes might become the target of robbers themselves. The heroes probably also face a flood of con artists, beggars, and unscrupulous merchants and hotel proprietors (which has a big effect on living expenses).
- **And What About Ethics?**—The heroes might wonder who really owns the treasure. Do they have any right to keep it? Does it belong to Moorsend, or the Kobolds' heirs? Do the Moorsenders really deserve the treasure? After all, their ancestors stole it. Should the heroes give it back to the heirs of those from whom it was stolen, if that can even be determined?

Some heroes might decide it would be best to donate the treasure to a temple, counter to the claims of the people of Moorsend and the true heirs—influential nobles and merchants who would make powerful enemies. That way, they could do justice (Praisos) or thank the gods for the riches afterward. If the heroes ask Alrik Witniken's advice, he suggests that they donate it to a temple.

- **No More Subtlety**—If you think the heroes will act irresponsibly with the treasure, dispense with subtlety. The moisture in the cave has rotted many of the support beams, and the cave might collapse at any moment. The cave supports might receive further damage during the final battle (for example, by a badly aimed blow, or a botch), which leads to a cave-in at a time of your choosing. Beams and boulders crumble down on the heroes, and they have trouble just getting out of the cave alive, let alone with any of the treasure. No matter when the cave collapses, this threat adds excitement to the showdown (“*You have X combat rounds to defeat the enemies if you want to get out of the cave alive...*”).

## Conclusion

Assuming the heroes rescue Gisbert, Bosper is overjoyed at their return. He invites them to stay with him for as long as they like, and organizes a celebration for them the next day.

Alrik tends to their wounds, and the villagers ask them a million questions: what became of Jasper, Burgol, and Ragna, what did the brigands' cave look like, and, especially, were the heroes able to save any of the treasure?

### The Heroes' Reward

The heroes receive **12 AP** each, in addition to any points they earned for putting out the fire, plus another **3 AP** if they brought Gisbert home alive and well.

As for treasure, the heroes may keep everything they managed to carry from the cave. If they capture the Ridgerock brigands (or can prove they were killed), the heroes receive a total bounty of 5 ducats per brigand.





# A Reluctant Groom



by Alex Spohr

Thanks to my playtesters: Rui Alexandre Costa Fraga, Nikos Petridis, Philipp Karl, Marc Jenneßen, Lutz Berthold, Marie Mönkemeyer, Katja Wollenberg, Daniel Simon Richter, Eevie Demirtel, and Lydia.

## Introduction and Background

Sheikan's colorful, peaceful world shattered like one of his illusions. He had learned about the letter from the as'Sarjabaran family only a few hours ago. After all those years, nobody—especially Sheikan himself—believed the marriage between Muhalla and Radajana would ever take place. All his prayers to Rahja had seemingly gone unheard. It had been arrogant to believe he and his beloved could ever live a happy life together—she, the well-respected, beautiful daughter of the Arinisha family, and he, a simple entertainer with a collection of artifacts from the School of Existing Pretense.

But Sheikan was not giving up. Maybe there was still some way to turn things around. Phex had blessed him with a sharp mind and many clever ideas. He would figure out a way!





## The Adventure

**Genre:** Travel Adventure, 1001 Nights, Love Story  
**Prerequisites:** Curiosity and a willingness to help  
**Location:** Zorgan, the Elburian peninsula, Elburum (Arania)  
**Complexity (Player/GM):** low/medium  
**Recommended Hero Experience Level:** Ordinary to Experienced

### Challenge Level

Combat	◆	◆	◆	◆
Social Skills	◆	◆	◆	◆
Nature Skills	◆	◆	◆	◆
<i>Living History</i>	◆	◆	◆	◆

Our second offering, *A Reluctant Groom*, is the tale of a young Aranian from a rich merchant family. His relatives hire the heroes to accompany the stubborn groom from Zorgan to Elburum, but he is desperate to escape his plight and is certain to make trouble for them. Unknown to all, the bride has another, secret suitor who would also love to see the wedding fail. Thus the heroes must deal with many problems on their journey.

## Selecting Heroes

This adventure is suitable for all heroes, even those who come from other regions or belong to other races. The locals in Arania perceive elves as some kind of djinn and look upon them with awe, childlike curiosity, and the hope for small miracles or the fulfillment of a wish. Likewise, the locals have a high degree of respect for dwarves.



If anything, the heroes should all have some martial capability, as their employer wants them to act as bodyguards, and a party comprised only of bards and Blessed Ones of Peraine might find the adventure too challenging. Magic and miracles are useful but not required to complete the adventure. A wholly non-magical group should have no trouble.

While veteran characters can enjoy *A Reluctant Groom*, the scenario is well suited for a group of brand-new or less experienced heroes as it is neither too difficult nor particularly lethal.

## Time and Place

This adventure takes place in modern Aventuria any time after 1028 FB, and is likely to take the heroes one to two weeks to complete.

## Adventure Background

### The Story Thus Far...

Some years ago, two Aranian families from Elburum—the as'Sarjabaran and Arinisha families—decided they could increase their profits by strengthening their trade alliance. Both families deal in foodstuffs. The as'Sarjabarans concentrate on shipping and trading, while the Arinishas produce grain and fruit. To seal the deal, the heads of the families decided that two children—Muhalla from the as'Sarjabaran family and Radajana from the Arinisha family—would marry in twelve years' time.

However, the two families could not have foreseen the civil war, instigated by renegade Princess Dimiona of Zorgan, that would divide Arania a short time later. As a Heptarch, Dimiona made Elburum the capital of her dark kingdom, which she called Oron. The Arinishas stayed in Elburum and tried to make the best of the situation, but the as'Sarjabarans fled to Zorgan to escape the Oronians. There they managed to rebuild their business, but they lost contact with the Arinishas.

Many years later, the political situation in Arania calmed down with the defeat of the Heptarch Dimiona. The Arinishas reestablished contact with the as'Sarjabarans and pushed for the overdue marriage to take place. Feruja, the head of the as'Sarjabarans and the mother of Muhalla, had not forgotten the deal, and as a woman dedicated to Phex, she wanted to keep her word, fulfill the deal, and revive their business with Elburum. However, her son Muhalla is a womanizer who can't imagine tying himself to one woman—especially one whom he hasn't met.



Feruja believes Muhalla will never marry her willingly and might even run away during the journey to Elburum. She wants to hire resourceful men and women to accompany him and, if need be, prevent him from disgracing the family. Since there are few mercenaries available in Zorgan at this time of year, she seeks agents of fortune and other adventurers.

In the meantime, the showman Sheikan, who serves the Arinishas, has fallen in love with Radajana. The impending marriage has made him despair, and he is taking steps to prevent the wedding. He plans to make the groom disappear until both families have a falling out and cancel the wedding. He saved his silver for this purpose and hired Ferkina mercenaries to intercept Muhalla's retinue on the journey.

### ...And What Might Happen

The wedding preparations in Elburum are already underway, but Muhalla is still unwilling to see it through. Feruja's nephew Taref, a tavern owner, also seeks escorts to bring Muhalla to Elburum safely. In the days before the wedding, the heroes stay at Taref's tavern. While the heroes sleep, rogues try to rob them, and they must defend themselves. Their display of prowess makes Taref believe he has found the right people for the job. He tells them of the imminent wedding and offers them coin in exchange for escorting the stubborn groom to the Arinishas.

The heroes travel with Muhalla and some as'Sarjabaran servants to Elburum. They might expect some general trouble, but not specifically from Sheikan. If his plan to abduct the groom and keep him hidden succeeds, Sheikan will get to spend the rest of his life with Radajana.

## Introduction

### The Mhaharanyat of Arania

**Borders:** The mighty Gadang River, the mountain range known as the Wall of Rashtul, and the wide Baburian Basin.

**Terrain:** Zorgan land along the Barun-Ulah is fertile and densely populated. East of the river it is flat, becoming hillier toward Rashtul's Wall. Baburia with its many irrigation channels is very fertile, as are parts of the Elburian peninsula, the fever swamps of the Yalaid, which are overgrown with mangroves and cypresses, and the Oronian Highlands.

**Important Towns:** Zorgan (20,000), Baburin (13,000, plus many pilgrims), Elburum (9,500).

**Inhabitants:** 680,000 humans, including 170,000 Middenrealmsers

**Political Affiliation:** Mhaharanyat of Arania

**Government:** Tulamydian aristocracy with feudalistic traits and matriarchal influences under the Mhaharani Eleonora Shahi and her husband Arkos Shah.

**Divine Worship:** Twelvegods (focusing on Peraine, Phex, and Rahja)

**Trade Goods:** Grain, tropical fruits, wine, marble, timber, jewels, cloth, ostriches, and horses

Arania is a country shaped by Middenrealmish and Tulamydian culture, with fertile soil, skilled traders, and diligent craft workers. Women have a higher social standing than men. In Zorgan, women are the heads of their families, and women fill all important government offices and positions. This custom often leads to conflicts with the patriarchal Tulamydian city-states, the Caliphate, and the Ferkina tribes in the mountains.

Arania suffered much in its battle against the Heptarchs, the heirs of Borborad the Demon Master, and it is said that some of Arania's nobles are still loyal to Moghuli Dimiona of Zorgan. Daily life is punctuated by confrontations with the remnants of the Borbaradian threat. The once-divided land is slowly reclaiming its memory of ancient Tulamydian traditions, namely the systematic exploration of ruins to recover old relics.

### Short Aranian Glossary

**Dimiona of Zorgan:** Witch and younger sister of the hereditary prince, Arkos. As a Heptarch and a worshiper of Belkelel, she founded the Moghulate of Oron after a civil war, but she was eventually overthrown.

**Elburum:** Capital of the sultanate of the same name. Booming trade town and former capital of the Moghulate of Oron.

**Elburina:** a well-built road connecting Zorgan and Elburum. Highwaymen, mounted brigands, and even the wild Ferkinas often attack trade caravans in the highlands beyond the settlement of Keshal Taref.

**Elburian Highlands:** Hills on the Elburian Peninsula between Zorgan and Elburum. Called *Djerim Yalath* in the Tulamydian language, the area's forests and grasslands are harsher than in most other regions in Arania.

**Ferkina(s):** wild mountain folk with primitive customs. They despise townsfolk, whom they call *Valley People* (see the Culture Description on page 72).

**Moghulate Oron:** formerly part of the Shadowlands; Moghuli Dimiona's tyranny divided Arania for several years. Most inhabitants worshiped the archdemoness Belkelel, since Dimiona derived her power from her shard from the Demon Crown.

**Shah/Shahi:** King/Queen

**Zorgan:** Rich trade town and capital of the Mhaharanyat of Arania.



## What Does My Character Know About Arania?

Heroes from Arania are probably already familiar with the following details, as are people from a bordering region. Some heroes from other countries might also know a bit of this knowledge, so either introduce the following as general knowledge from time to time, or allow the dice to decide.

### Religion Check +2

QL 1: Most people in Arania worship Rahja, but many also respect Peraine and Phex as well. The Holy Grove of Anchopal is an important pilgrim destination for the Church of Peraine.

QL 2: Citizens predominantly worship the Twelvegods. Worshipers sometimes have confrontations with followers of Rastullah, mostly in Gorla.

QL 3+: Many witches live in Arania, worshipping Satuarla and wanting to heal the primeval giantess Sumu. Some say that after the fall of Oron, demon-worshipping cults of Belkelel remain hidden in society.

### Geography (Arania) Check +2

QL 1: Arania is a Tulamydian kingdom, or to be precise, a Mhaharanyat.

QL 2: The kingdom lies in the east of Aventuria, on the coast of the Gulf of Perricum. Zorgan is a splendid trade town on the Barun-Ulah and the seat of the ruling couple.

QL 3+: Arania's closest neighbors are the Middenrealm's Margravate of Perricum and the city-states in the Lands of the Tulamydes.

### Etiquette (Rumors) Check +2

QL 1: Eleonora Shahi is the queen, or shahi, of Arania. Her husband Arkos is the shah.

QL 2: Arania was a province of the Middenrealm for many centuries. Today, it is independent and ruled by the shahi, a queen.

QL 3+: Aranian nobles, as well as the wealthy aristocracy, are torn between two worlds: they openly display their Tulamydian heritage, but they do not want to abandon the pyramid-like feudal structure of the Middenrealm. Conflicts often arise between traditional Tulamydian Aranians and those who identify more with their former Middenrealm conquerors.

## Chapter I: The Tavern of the Red Camel

In this chapter, the heroes check in to a comfortable inn in Zorgan where they encounter a surly mercenary named Dobran. During the night, Dobran and some other criminals attempt to break into the heroes' rooms. The heroes drive away the robbers and earn the respect of the innkeeper Taref, resulting in a job offer to escort his cousin Muhalla to Elburum.

The story begins in Zorgan. The heroes' reasons for being here depend on the group's background.

- Maybe the heroes arrived here with a caravan from Perricum. In this case, the trade lords arranged for their mercenaries and companions to spend the night here.
- The heroes might be only passing through on their way north or south.





- Maybe the heroes want to ask for a service from the Magical School of Existing Pretense (illusion mages), or perhaps an assignment from another magic school brought them here.
- The group may intend to visit some of the city's many temples. A Blessed One of Rondra might need to pass on an important message, a Blessed One of Hesinde might be seeking a rare book, or the heroes might be delivering an important document to the Temple of Phex to seal a deal.
- The influential trade alliance of the Mada Basari might employ the heroes in Arania, since it has its main office in Zorgan.
- The heroes might be in town for the famous Gathering of Bards, which takes place annually between the 7th and 12th of Peraine, in the towns of Bethana, Honingen, Norburg, and Zorgan, and is visited by poets and singers from all over Aventuria.
- Many people come here to visit the city's famous rose gardens, hoping for an encounter with the delightful rose djinn.

## Zorgan, Town of Moonsilver

**Region:** Mhaharanyat of Arania

**Inhabitants:** 20,000

**Governance:** Seat of the ruling couple (Mhaharani Eleonora Shahi and Arkos Shah)

**Temples:** Temples for all of the Twelvegods

**Trade and Commerce:** Mostly grain and fruits, although anything may be bought in Zorgan

**Important Taverns:** Hotel Old Zorgan (Q5/P6/B15; expensive, posh hotel); Old Zorrigan Inn (Q2/P2/B8, simple inn); Red Camel (Q3/P3/B24, see page 44); White Camel (Q2/P4/B12; very expensive inn); Paranja's Grove Tea House (Q4/P4; comfortable), Flamingo Nest (Q3/P4; colorful and popular tavern), Scolding Kettle (Q1/P1; miserable dive), Wavebreaker (Q4/P4; harbor pub); Radija's Treasure (Q3/P3; bordello).

**Special:** Magical School of Existing Pretense (mage's academy, gray, illusion magic); Moonsilver Palace (splendid main office of the Mada Basari, a Phexian trade alliance); Mirror Palace (residence of the Mhaharani); Scribes' School; Typographical Institute (makers of books); Rose Garden; Krak al'Shah (the Royal citadel)

**Mood in Town:** open-minded trade town; capital of Arania; residents look proudly to the future, and refuse to talk about the city's dark past.

Zorgan functions as the capital of Arania and the residence of the Mhaharani and her husband. The bazaar quarter Sulaminiah, with its exotic fragrances, tastes, and dedication to the favored Tulamydian gods Rahja and Phex, sits at the heart of the trade city, which pulsates with life. Here, people meet, celebrate, and haggle for every *kurush*

### A Selection of Typical Tulamydian Names

For various reasons, the heroes may encounter numerous characters that are not integral to the story. Examples include a shrewd grocer who sells the heroes provisions before they begin their journey, or a little street urchin with a gap-toothed smile who offers to show the heroes the city for a little baksheesh (a gift or favor). To keep these people from remaining nameless, we provide a list of regional names in the *Appendix* (see page 95).

(a coin equivalent to a kreutzer). In the rural and quiet neighborhoods of Shamiran and Kenragird, craft workers quietly ply their trades, and the Palace Quarter, only fully open to high society, rules over the city.

Thieves and beggars still inhabit Zorrigan, the old town, conducting their forbidden deals among the many forsaken, crumbling buildings. The Zorganers' zest for life and hospitality easily obscures the dark past of the demon realm of Oron. Some rumors say followers of the archdemoness Belkelel still hide within the city.

At some point, the adventurers look for a place to spend the night in one of the many taverns of the city. If they ask, locals recommend the *Red Camel*, a small caravanserai in the Sulaminiah neighborhood. It is a fine establishment, and the innkeeper, a eunuch named Taref, is very hospitable.

A group of mercenaries is also staying in the *Red Camel*. The six men belong to a unit that accompanied a trade caravan from Perricum and they spend their pay on card and dice games. Their leader, a crude man named Dobran, takes an interest in the heroes upon their arrival, perhaps seeing them as rivals.

### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*The Red Camel: many Zorgans mentioned this tavern when you asked for a nice but affordable inn. The inner yard is visible from the street. Eager servants take horses to the stables and sleepy guards sit by a well and doze. A chubby, bald man with large, protruding eyes talks with a group of merchants. When he sees you, he leaves the group, walks towards you, and bows several times. "Oh, honorable Effendis!" he says, "You seem to have traveled far. Step into the Red Camel and leave your worries behind. Here you will find a clean bed, good date wine, and a filling meal. By Rahja and Travia's graces, a sharisad performs tonight. Come in, come in. Welcome!" He then shows you to your rooms, which are adjacent and very clean and tidy.*



### 🏠 Taref as'Sarjabaran

**Short Description:** 33; masterful innkeeper; talkative host; excellent service provider; bald, with dark skin; slight bulging eyes; chubby; unexpectedly high-pitched voice; always wears a caftan and slippers made from precious cloth; exaggeratedly, almost submissively friendly.



**Function:** Taref's Red Camel is a common destination for heroes in Zorgan and often the gateway to exciting adventures. Heroes might encounter Taref in other publications. In this scenario, he is an odd innkeeper and host who later provides an opportunity for a paid assignment.

**Background:** The Red Camel is Taref's pride, and his guests' satisfaction is his highest goal. With a merchant's talkativeness, he continually mentions the comforts of his caravanserai and insults his rivals in off-hand comments, focusing on his neighbor Feruzef, the innkeeper of the White Camel. Taref's family used to live in Elburum, but they fled when Dimiona rose to power. Taref was captured by Ferkinas during the escape, and one of his jailors mutilated him. Most people call him *eunuch* behind his back. Whenever asked about these events, the innkeeper falls silent.

**Role Playing Tips:** Taref comes across more as a cunning merchant rather than an innkeeper devoted to Travia. Talk with a soft, high-pitched voice and emphasize sentences with wide gestures. Bow often and flatter the guests by giving colorful descriptions of their exceptional features ("O sublime mistress of the djinn" for a mage, "O powerful son of the tiger" for a fighter). Taref often refers to himself as "unimportant" or "unworthy" as compared to the heroes.

**Fate:** Taref might appear as employer or host in future publications.

**Important Stats:** *Lipreading*, *Area Knowledge (Zorgan, Elburum)*, *Trustworthy*, *Negative Trait (Greed)*, *Empathy 14 (14/14/15)*, *Fast-Talk 11 (12/14/15)*, *Prepare Food 14 (14/12/12)*, *Streetwise 12 (14/14/15)*, *Willpower 12 (12/14/15)*; SPI 2

**Combat Behavior:** Taref does not fight; he has guards for that.

*"Come in—my house is the best in town, Effendis. Do not listen to the lies Feruzef tells about his own house, the White Camel. You will find fleas and lice there! Come to my place for clean beds, musicians, and good food!"*

### 👤 Dobran

**Game Stats:** see page 52.

**Short Description:** 20s; skillful mercenary; dark brown hair and beard; brutal demeanor; many scars on his shoulders and neck; muscular and well built; rarely smiles; short-tempered; vengeful.

**Function:** A henchman working for the antagonist. An unimportant but dangerous opponent.

**Background:** Dobran is a criminal and a mercenary who has survived solely on his strength and threatening aura. He thinks only about himself and money—and not necessarily in that order. Dobran has been traveling on behalf of various employers and has only recently returned to Zorgan.

**Role Playing Tips:** Talk with a rough voice. Use short sentences, and cast disparaging glances at the players. Do not hesitate to hit the table in rage.





**Fate:** Dobran does not appear in future publications. If the heroes do not slay him, he can be used as a recurring villain.

“We will meet again!”

“You will regret this, I promise you!”

### A Pleasant Evening

The heroes have the opportunity to relax and enjoy themselves with the following activities that evening.

- A dancer named Mahira (21; long black hair; jingling jewelry; sensuously dressed; *Dancing* 12 (12/15/14), *Willpower* 6 (13/13/15), SPI 2) and some musicians perform in the yard
- A snake charmer or a storyteller shows off the appropriate talents
- There is also food available. Taref not only serves the typical tavern fare, he also offers Aranian specialties (like marzipan and ostrich eggs)
- The heroes might witness an argument between Taref and his neighbor Feruzef, the innkeeper of the White Camel, regarding who’s inn was established first, which is better, and who has Phex’s favor

### A Sore Loser

At some point during the evening, one of the mercenaries invites a hero to play a game of dice or cards. To simulate play, use a cumulative check on *Gambling (Card Games or Dice Games)*, with a check interval of 15 minutes.

All participants roll each round. The winner is the one who achieves 10 QL first. The mercenaries have *Gambling* 6 (11/11/13). If more than one participant achieves 10 QL in the same round, the one with the most QL wins. In case of a draw, continue making cumulative *Gambling (Card Games or Dice Games)* checks until one gains more QL than the others. Any number of checks is possible to achieve 10 QL. Bets are made in silverthalers, and the winner receives three times the amount wagered.

During the game, when a hero wins quite a lot from Dobran, the thug jumps up, shouts in rage, and accuses the hero of cheating (“You’re cheating, you bastard!”). There might even be a short brawl, which leaves Dobran angrier than before. He does not do anything more now, as Taref’s guards quickly arrive.

### Prices in the Red Camel

Tulamydes love to haggle, but this custom does not apply to the prices of meals and drinks in Taref’s house. Characters may haggle about the price of their accommodations as much as they like. The Red Camel has only single rooms and no common room.

#### Selection:

Pot of water	6 kreutzers
Pot of tea	7 kreutzers
Cup of spirits	2 halers
Cup of wine	3 halers
Simple meal	5 halers
Sweets (marzipan)	6 halers
Ostrich egg omelet	6 halers
Room (per night)	3 silverthalers

The heroes may pay in Middenrealmish or Aranian currency. Taref prefers *dinars* (ducats), *shekels* (silverthalers), *hellah* (halers), and *kurush* (kreutzers). Customers with Aranian coins enjoy an advantage when haggling: *Commerce (Haggling)* checks receive a bonus of 1 when paying with the local currency.

Dobran forms an evil idea: He wants to teach the heroes a lesson and get rich on their gold and silver. He reasons that robbing the heroes would be much more rewarding than risking his life in a skirmish.

### An Attack in the Night

Dobran acts when at least most of the heroes have gone to their rooms. After losing while gambling or noticing that one of the heroes is wealthy (because of visible gold or excellent weapons), the thug sought out some friends in Zorgan to help him ambush the heroes. Other mercenaries from his unit weren’t interested in the crime, so Dobran had to employ shady characters.

In the middle of the night, Dobran tries to sneak into the room of the hero he thinks is a cheat. Dobran makes quite a bit of noise, as he is wearing armor and the old caravanserai’s floorboards creak. One of the rogues moves





to unlock the door. Luckily, the lock gives the rogue more trouble than expected, and it takes him **5 combat rounds** to open the door. By the time the thieves enter the room, the heroes are awake and ready to react.

5 combat rounds after the heroes confront Dobran and his henchmen, Taref's guards ring an alarm bell in the center of the yard. Then, **7 additional combat rounds later**, 1D3+3 guards arrive to join the fight against the thieves. Insert the following events into the scene for flavor, as desired.

- A hero might fall over the banister on the second floor (check on *Body Control (Combat Maneuver)* to catch hold of something, and *Climbing (Walls)* to climb back up again; each attempt costs 1 action). The villains might fall, too (when they botch, for example). The banister is 16 feet above the floor (see *Falling Damage* in the *Core Rules*, on page 340).
- Dobran is the only one who is heavily armed, so he acts much more aggressively. Even if injured, he does not surrender immediately. His rage makes him careless and he attempts risky maneuvers.

- The villains climbed in through the window of an empty room on the second floor, and they must return there if they wish to leave unhindered. The heroes could impede their escape by cutting their rope as they climb down the building. The window is 16 feet above the street. For Dobran's stats, see page 52.

-  Increase the number of villains and/or delay Taref's guards.

-  Taref's guards arrive sooner than expected and drive away the villains.

Hopefully, the heroes win and Dobran either escapes or gets captured. The same goes for the rest of his gang. If the heroes have trouble defeating the thieves for some reason, Taref's guards provide just enough assistance to tip the balance in the heroes' favor.

The Zorgan City Guards take Dobran and any other captives to a small garrison for interrogation, and dole out their punishment later.

### Thugs

COU 13 SGC 11 INT 13 CHA 11

DEX 13 AGI 14 CON 12 STR 12

LP 28 AE - KP - INI 14+1D6

DO 8 SPI 1 TOU 1 MOV 8

**Unarmed:** AT 12 PA 8 DP 1D6 RE short

**Dagger:** AT 12 PA 8 DP 1D6+1 RE short

PRO/ENC 0/0

**Number:** (# of heroes)+1, at a minimum

**Special Abilities:** Improved Dodge I

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Negative Trait (Greed)

**Skills:** *Body Control* 7, *Empathy* 3, *Feat of Strength* 8, *Intimidation* 5, *Perception* 5, *Pick Locks* 6, *Self-Control* 4, *Stealth* 4, *Willpower* 4

**Combat Behavior:** The thugs fight wildly and overconfidently. They have no concept of tactics.

**Escape:** Individual thugs flee after suffering *Pain II*. When half escape or get incapacitated, all remaining thugs try to flee.

**Pain +1 at:** 21 LP, 14 LP, 7 LP, and 5 LP or less

### Dobran's Death

Dobran can die during this fight without disrupting the plot. This scene establishes a villain the heroes can easily hate, but if Dobran dies, Sheikan finds another villain to take his place (maybe one of the rogues who survived this combat). Otherwise, once Sheikan learns the heroes intend to escort Muhalla, he secretly studies them from a distance while he makes plans to interfere with their journey to Elburum.



### After the Attack

Taref learns about the thieves shortly after the guards arrive. He asks for the heroes' forgiveness with many ingratiating words and even offers to replace any broken possessions. If the characters accept his generosity, he still offers them the escort mission, though he offers only half the fee he originally intended to pay. Either way, Taref believes the adventurers are capable of escorting Muhalla safely to Elburum.



## Chapter II: Wayward Cargo

### Part 1: The Assignment

In this part of the adventure, the heroes take charge of a difficult cargo: Taref asks them to escort his cousin Muhalla to his wedding in Elburum. Before the assignment can even begin, the heroes face some problems, as the groom isn't happy about his mother's plans for him. Also, Dobran escapes from the dungeon. The heroes have made a dangerous enemy.

#### The Next Morning

The events of the previous night convince Taref that the heroes are the perfect company for Muhalla. He asks them with elaborate words during breakfast, he asks them whether they are interested in escorting a relative to his wedding in Elburum on behalf of his family.

As payment, he offers the heroes **3 silverthalers each, for every day of the journey plus a 3 ducat bonus, total**, when Muhalla is married. The large reward should serve as a clue that few candidates are interested in the assignment and that the journey might be dangerous.

Heroes may attempt to haggle for a better fee. The person speaking on the other heroes' behalf should make a competitive check using *Commerce (Haggling)* against Taref. This is not without risk: the winner may increase (or reduce) the fee by 10% per net QL (maximum 50%).

#### The as'Sarjabaran Family

Once the heroes accept the assignment, they may visit the residence of the as'Sarjabaran family. It is a square, white building featuring several onion-shaped domes made of ceramics, situated within a lush park filled with many types of palm trees.

#### 🏰 Feruja as'Sarjabaran

**Short Description:** 45; genius trader; head of the as'Sarjabaran family; petite; piercing gaze; expensive, colorful clothes and jewelry; confident demeanor; regal bearing.

**Function:** Employer, stern family leader, cunning trader.

**Background:** As the head of her family, Feruja wants to raise her family's failing prospects by marrying her son to a venerable family from Elburum. She cares little for the heroes, but she respects their courage and trusts Taref's decision to hire them.



**Role Playing Tips:** Watch the players through sleepy eyes and strike a comfortable pose, but don't relax completely. Make slow, dramatic gestures and speak with a calm voice. If anyone interrupts or disagrees with you, remind them in a sharp voice that you are the lady of the house.

**Important Stats:** *Commerce* 16 (14/14/15), *Empathy* 16 (14/14/15), *Fast-Talk* 15 (14/14/15), *Intimidation* 6 (14/14/15), *Perception* 13 (14/14/15), *Self-Control* 12 (14/14/12), *Willpower* 14 (14/14/15), SPI 3.

Feruja greets the heroes coolly, unless one of them is a noble or otherwise possesses high social standing (for men, social status 3+; for women, 2+ is enough; see *Core Rules*, page 338). She asks some questions about the heroes' skills but does not require much evidence of their bravery.

#### The Groom

##### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*With a casual gesture, Feruja sends a slave for her son. You look at each other in silence as you wait for him to arrive. A sudden commotion interrupts the awkward silence, echoing through the tiled corridors of the estate. Feruja smiles apologetically as two house guards lead a young, handsome man in his early 20s into the room. He stands before his mother like a captive, keeping his head lowered. A moment later, he sizes you up with his gaze. Apparently, this is the young man you are to escort to his wedding.*

The players might wonder why Feruja treats her son that way. They should quickly grasp why when she introduces the heroes to Muhalla and announces that they will accompany him to Elburum.

The young man protests and tries again to explain to his mother that he will not marry. "Mother! How often do I have to tell you," he begins, launching into a list of complaints. The stern family head ignores his protests and turns to the heroes. She makes the following clear.

- She apologizes that they had to see this.
- Muhalla has tried to avoid the wedding several times over the last few weeks.
- She saw no alternative but to place him under house arrest.
- The heroes must keep a close eye on him.
- When she finishes explaining the task to the heroes, she makes it clear to Muhalla that the wedding will take place.



### 🏰 Muhalla as'Sarjabaran

**Short Description:** 22; experienced playboy; passionate lover; black hair; brown eyes; groomed mustache and neatly trimmed beard; loves freedom and women (both at the same time, if possible).

**Motivation:** Enjoy life; commune with the goddess of love, Rahja, via intoxicating herbs, al'kohol, and lovemaking.

**Agenda:** Avoid the wedding, escape the heroes (or convince them to work for him); Muhalla cannot imagine spending his entire life with only one woman, especially one he has never seen.

**Function:** The reluctant package; Muhalla will try anything to sabotage the journey and get away from the heroes. He might slip away just as the situation turns dangerous and the heroes have no time to chase after him. In the end, the players should be glad to finally be rid of him.

**Background:** As a son of a wealthy family, Muhalla grew up with no worries, sheltered from reality. He has never known hardship, and since he is an Aranian man, it is possible that he never will carry any responsibility. He has devoted his life to leisure and the pursuit of women, which he practices with eloquence and flattery. He is driven by passion and is not interested in his family's Phex-pleasing trade or his arranged marriage.

**Role Playing Tips:** Wear a cocky smile. Flirt with female heroes and describe their charms with flowery words. Leave them no doubt that they will not be able to resist your charms. If the heroes corner him, for example when he tries to slip away, he offers any absurd white lie he can think of to avoid the wedding.

**Fate:** Muhalla's fate lies in the hands of the heroes. Maybe they succeed in getting him married off, or maybe the heroes find a way to help him escape. He might even die on the journey, maybe when fleeing the Ferkinas, but if he does, the heroes should beware Feruja's rage.

*"O most beautiful of all roses! Your fragrance carries me to the land of sweet dreams, and when I see you, I can think of nothing else!"*

*"A wedding is a constraint, and constraints are repugnant to the goddess Rahja. Will you help me or not?"*

*"Hello, friends, all is well. I dropped a dinar and it rolled away. I just wanted it back. No reason to draw your weapons! What? Of course it could roll two miles through the city. This place is very hilly!"*

### Muhalla as'Sarjabaran

COU 13 SGC 12 INT 13 CHA 14

DEX 12 AGI 12 CON 12 STR 12

LP 30 AE - KP - INI 13+1D6

DO 6 SPI 1 TOU 1 MOV 8

Unarmed: AT 11 PA 6 DP 1D6

RE short

PRO/ENC 0/0

**Special Abilities:** Native Tongue Tulamidya III, Garethi II, Area Knowledge (Zorgan)

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Good Looks I / Personality Flaw (Vanity), Negative Trait (Curiosity)

**Skills:** Body Control 4, Empathy 5, Fast-Talk 7, Feat of Strength 2, Perception 5, Riding 5, Seduction 8, Self-Control 2, Stealth 7, Willpower 2

**Combat Behavior:** Muhalla is a coward, at least in violent confrontations. He avoids combat by either fleeing or surrendering.

**Escape:** Muhalla flees if he loses LP or suffers Pain I.

**Pain +1 at:** 23 LP, 15 LP, 8 LP, and 5 LP or less.



### Last Minute Concerns

Before they go on their way, Feruja summons the heroes one last time and gives them the first two pieces of information listed below. She mentions the third point only if the heroes ask about it.

- 🔴 **The Warning:** Feruja is afraid Muhalla might not be the only one who opposes the wedding. As an influential merchant family, the as'Sarjabarans have enemies who might want to prevent an alliance of two wealthy houses. The heroes should be wary of any disturbances.
- 🔴 **The wedding must take place:** ... and soon! The families arranged it a long time ago, and it should have already taken place. Canceling the wedding could result in an irreparable rift between the families. This must be avoided.
- 🔴 **The contract:** If the heroes ask to inspect the wedding agreement, Feruja allows it. A successful check with Law (Arania) confirms the contract is legal, valid, and sworn before Phex. The document says the wedding must take place in Elburum, following the tradition of the Arinishas, which means the groom must come to the bride (and not the other way around).

Feruja ends the meeting by instructing the heroes to wait for Muhalla and his servants in Taref's taproom at sunrise the next day. There the journey begins.



### A Task For Veterans?

If the heroes' reputations precede them, Feruja might contact them without help from Taref. If so, she offers them a payment of 25 ducats, total, for the task.



### Dobran Has Escaped!

If the heroes handed Dobran over to the authorities, they receive a message from the guards the following night saying that Dobran has escaped from prison. How he managed to escape is unclear, but he seems to have left all of his clothes behind. The guards advise the heroes to be careful, as the mercenary leader is notoriously vengeful.

If at least one character has an excellent reputation (social status of 3+), the heroes may visit the garrison and ask some questions. Of course, the heroes have no authority in the garrison and are admitted only out of respect. It is inappropriate to chide the guards for their failure. Allow some piercing questions by the heroes, but do not let them overstay their welcome.

A detailed investigation is only possible if the heroes are Aranian nobility or present a dispensation from a Zorgan judge. Otherwise, Dobran's escape remains a mystery to them.

### Looking For Clues at the Prison

- The guards are embarrassed that Dobran escaped and are especially accommodating to the heroes.
- The guards saw nobody in front of the stairs leading down to the dungeon. A successful *Empathy (Sense Deception)* check reveals the guards are telling the truth and apparently have nothing to do with Dobran's disappearance.
- Someone picked the (very simple) lock with two long nails, which are only found with a *Perception (Spot or Search)* check with a bonus of +1.
- Dobran had to undress because he escaped using an invisibility spell, and his clothes—a simple shirt, pants, boots, and pieces of his armor—remain in his cell. The rest of his gear is still in the armory.
- The prisoner in the cell next door, Kamed (34; brown skin; black hair; gaunt; tooth gap; itchy skin, *Willpower* 3 (12/12/12), SPI 1), heard voices during the night but has not told the guards about this.

### Who Is Behind the Escape?

Sheikan learned about the events from Mahira the dancer, who performed the first evening at Taref's. Also, Alev, a servant of the as'Sarjabaran family, told Sheikan that the heroes were hired to accompany Muhalla to Elburum. Sheikan believes Dobran has reason to take revenge against the heroes and therefore would be better at coordinating an ambush than the Ferkinas he chose as henchmen. The showman goes to the trouble of freeing the mercenary himself, to win him over.

Sheikan used two invisibility amulets, with a total of three *Visibilis* spells stored in them, to enter the garrison unseen and sneak past the guards at the stairs. The lock posed no problem for the skilled entertainer, and he picked it quickly with two long nails. The second *Visibili* amulet turned the mercenary invisible, too, so that both could get away without being noticed. The mercenary had to leave his clothes behind because the spell only affects living creatures, not their possessions. Guards discovered the empty cell when they arrived the next morning to deliver breakfast.



An *Empathy (Discern Motivation)* +1 check reveals he knows more than he admits. He tells the heroes what he knows if they give him something in return (such as food, tobacco, or a bit of silver with which to bribe the guards) and make a competitive *Fast-Talk (Manipulation)* or *Intimidation (Threats)* check +1 versus his *Willpower (Resist Fast-Talk or Resist Intimidation)*.

Kamed heard two male voices engaged in a short conversation in the corridor. There were no names mentioned, but the stranger hired Dobran for a task that would give him an opportunity to take revenge on those who landed him in jail.

- A hero with suitable skills may spend an hour and discover weak traces of magic, although this avenue of research does not reveal which kind was used.

Regardless, the heroes have no further clues to go on. Even *Streetwise (Asking Around)* checks do not turn up anything useful. A successful check with a penalty of 3 does, however, uncover some vague clues about Sheikan's appearance (see page 54).



## Part II: The Journey to Elburum

So far, the heroes have accepted a job and met Muhalla. They have learned the groom is not happy with the wedding, and perhaps they know Dobran may be seeking revenge. It is high time to leave the city.

This section describes the journey to Elburum, during which Sheikan tries to abduct Muhalla. He hopes to delay the wedding and drive a wedge between the families, putting an end to the alliance. The heroes are in for a tough battle (and maybe a daring rescue mission, if the Ferkinas' ambush succeeds and Muhalla is abducted).

But first, the heroes must catch Muhalla, who disappears...

### Ready to Go...Or Not?

As Feruja promised, at dawn the next morning, Muhalla (see page 47) and the dwarven majordomo Beremosh arrive (see below) at the Red Camel. The diamond dwarf introduces himself and explains that he is overseeing the journey and its progress. He then introduces four servants who will be looking after a heavy chest (filled with clothes and wedding presents).

- Halef (60; scar on his face; unhappy that he must go to Elburum and tries to delay, as he was once tortured there; *Willpower* 5 (13/11/12), *SPI* 1)
- Omar (25; good-natured; curious; a bit clumsy; looking forward to the journey; *Willpower* 3 (12/13/14), *SPI* 1).
- Shafur (50; grumpy; moody; a bit domineering toward the other servants; *Willpower* 5 (13/11/10), *SPI* 1).
- Naslan (28; likes to drink too much; steals if given the chance; *Pickpocket* 7 (12/13/14), *Willpower* 5 (12/12/12), *SPI* 1).

The servants travel on foot, carrying the heavy box between them on a stretcher. Muhalla rides on a splendid horse, and Beremosh rides on a small pony.

### Beremosh Son of Birash

**Short Description:** 189; diamond dwarf; skilled and conservative servant; 4'5"; white hair; neatly combed beard; copper-red eyes; dwarf-sized Tulamydian-style clothes (harem pants, vest, turban, wide sash); round belly and hairy chest.

**Function:** Muhalla's caretaker who enforces Ferja's will; maybe an obstacle for the heroes if they divert from their task.

**Background:** Beremosh has been serving the as'Sarjabaran family for more than one hundred years and is very happy

with his job. He is from Fasar but is so accustomed to human culture that he even prefers the clothes. He was ordered to deliver young Muhalla to Elburum, and true to his stubborn dwarf roots, he will do just that.

**Role Playing Tips:** Talk in clipped sentences. Give other travelers clear commands and act stubborn, no matter how intelligent the players' arguments might be. Unexpected events can leave Beremosh severely shaken. In such cases, the heroes must take over.

### Beremosh son of Birash

COU 12 SGC 14 INT 13 CHA 13

DEX 13 AGI 10 CON 13 STR 13

LP 37 AE - KP - INI 11+1D6

DO 5 SPI 3 TOU 2 MOV 6

Unarmed: AT 12 PA 7 DP 1D6 RE short

PRO/ENC 0/0

**Special Abilities:** Forceful Blow I

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Negative Trait (Stubborn; hard to convince even with logical arguments)

**Skills:** *Body Control* 3, *Commerce* 10, *Empathy* 7, *Feat of Strength* 5, *Intimidation* 4, *Law* 12, *Math* 7, *Perception* 4, *Self-Control* 11, *Stealth* 6, *Willpower* 8

**Combat Behavior:** Beremosh is no fighter but he defends himself if necessary. He prefers having servants or heroes solve problems and protect him.

**Escape:** Loss of 25 % LP.

**Pain +1 at:** 28 LP, 19 LP, 9 LP, and 5 LP or less.

### On the Run

#### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*You tie your last piece of luggage to your horse and pause to wipe the sweat from your brow. Finally, it is done. You nod toward your traveling companions and gesture for them to mount up. Just as you are about to depart, however, a long caravan pushes its way through the narrow street, heading toward the market. Mercenaries walk beside the camels and claim their imagined right-of-way with rude shouts. Like a wedge, they thrust between you and push you toward the edge of the alley. You stare down the road, trying to judge the length of the caravan, when a sudden movement catches your eye....*



Ask for a *Perception (Spot)* check from the players. On a success, they notice Muhalla—separated from the heroes by the caravan—taking his chance. In one smooth movement, he slides from his horse, pushes through the crowd, and dashes up the alley toward the market.

A wild **chase** begins; use the rules found on page 349 in the *Core Rules*. Muhalla has a head start of 15 yards minus (2 x QL of the *Perception (Spot)* check used to notice his escape).

Use the following scenes to add excitement to the chase. As most of these scenes are obstacles, they increase the number of rounds of the chase (usually 5).

- Muhalla dives into the visitors, vendors, and suppliers milling about in the bazaar. He knocks down a rich merchant who lies on the ground, cursing loudly and grabbing at nearby people to regain his footing. Avoiding the merchant (or leaping over him) requires a *Body Control (Acrobatics or Jumping)* check with a penalty of 1. On a failure, the hero suffers the state *prone* for a round and cannot roll for the chase.
- Muhalla kicks down one of the support legs of a melon merchant's tent. The stall collapses and melons roll all over the street. The heroes must make a Dodge check. On a failure, they cannot roll for the chase this round.
- An entertainer's monkey throws dates at the heroes (*Self Control (Ignore Distractions)* check with a bonus of 2). If the check fails, the hero's next check for the chase suffers a penalty of 1.
- A donkey cart blocks the way. Muhalla tries to roll under it (*Body Control (Acrobatics) 4 (12/12/12)*). Heroes who want to follow must make the same check. A character who fails cannot make a chase check for this round, losing ground. In subsequent rounds, the check to bypass the cart receives a bonus of 3.
- A carpet merchant unrolls his best carpet for a customer just after Muhalla runs past. The heroes must make Dodge checks to avoid damaging the expensive carpet. Those who fail cannot roll for the chase for the round.
- Muhalla pushes through a seated group of people listening to a *haimamud* (storyteller). When the heroes try to push through as well (*Body Control (Acrobatics)* check), the *haimamud* grows angry. He rants about the rude disturbance and tries to impede the heroes.

• The heroes should eventually succeed in catching Muhalla. If Muhalla appears likely to escape the heroes, his path is blocked by two city guards who believe he has stolen something from the heroes. This has the effect of halving his points from the chase.

• The city guards see only the heroes, deem their behavior suspicious, and pursue them (*Body Control 6 (13/13/12)*, MOV 7, distance to the heroes 1D3+3 yards).

Even if Muhalla loses the heroes, they eventually find him. How long this takes, though, is determined by a cumulative group check using *Streetwise (Asking Around)* with an interval of 1 hour. All heroes can participate.

### The Journey

The journey from Zorgan to Elburum takes seven or eight days (if there are no delays), thanks to the good-quality Elburnia Road, which stretches between the two cities. The journey promises to be relatively straightforward.

Caravanseries and settlements spread out along the route, giving the heroes the chance to sleep under a roof every night. Beremosh expects trouble only beyond Narhuabad, about a day's journey ahead of Zorgan, as the wild Ferkinas in the highlands sometimes attack travelers.

### Random Encounters and Events

The lovely landscape of Arania surrounds the heroes. The climate is mild, and fragrant oranges, wheat, and dates grow in the fields. Cows and ostriches (the typical domestic livestock) graze left and right of the path. Feel free to introduce some encounters with other travelers, mainly traders and craft workers, but also some Aranian peasants. The heroes have time for a greeting and some small talk, but nothing more involved.





## Necessary Encounters and Events

### The Insinuations of Muhalla

During the journey, when Beremosh is distracted talking to the other servants, Muhalla approaches the heroes and tries to convince them to let him go.

- “Would you want to marry someone you have never seen before?”
- “It’s my life! If my mother wants to make political deals through marriage, let her marry into this family!”
- “You enjoy your freedom, go wherever you want, and yet you want to take this freedom from me? This is not fair!”

- He quotes the commandments of Rahja, who abhors forced unions, tries appealing to the heroes’ principles, and even promises them gold. He tries to seduce female heroes. If the heroes show no sympathy, he might try to run away again, perhaps by disguising himself with a turban and a veil and sneaking out of the caravanserai early in the morning to leave with another caravan.

### The Heroes’ Dilemma

Some heroes in the group may have critical or doubtful views on forced marriages. They might even argue among themselves. Disadvantages such as Principles come into play here. Muhalla quickly takes note of who appears to be on his side. He tries to convince them (particularly any females) to help him because it is their duty as heroes. In the end, the heroes must reach a decision that suits them, maybe through some kind of compromise.



### The Ferkina Attack

#### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*After traveling the Elburnia Road for several days, you pass through the Oronian Highlands, which are called Djerim Yaeleth. Rocks and wide steppes dominate the landscape, and only a few gnarled trees with wide treetops rise from the grass, which itself grows almost as tall as a man. The sun burns down on you unrelentingly. A few hours ago, you passed the historic monastery of Keshal Taref, where, as Beremosh informed you, the forces of Oron were defeated a few years ago. The settlement of Smijad, your next stop, lies somewhere ahead of you. Suddenly, [hero with the highest Perception stat] stops and stares questioningly into the tall steppe grass off to your right.*

The hero noticed a strange glint within the high grass. Other characters also see it if they succeed on a *Perception (Spot)* check with a bonus of 2.

Something shiny lies partially hidden in the grass, but from this distance, it is not possible to determine exactly what it is. A hero who wants to identify it must leave the road. Beremosh and the servants refuse and wait on the road. Muhalla himself grows curious and walks towards the glistening thing before the dwarf can protest.

#### The Glistening Object

Any heroes who move closer to the weird glistening object spot a fist-sized (!) diamond through the grass, about 60 feet from the road, lying on a knee-high rock. There is no evidence suggesting anyone is hiding there, and nobody finds trampled grass, meaning this object either fell from the sky or else has been here many days.

#### The Ambush

Dobran and the Ferkinas have hidden themselves on the left side of the road and attack as soon as any heroes reach the rock. They overwhelm Beremosh and the servants, who are too distracted by the sparkling object to notice the attackers in time.





### Ferkinas

COU 14 SGC 10 INT 13 CHA 9  
DEX 12 AGI 13 CON 14 STR 13  
LP 30 AE - KP - INI 14+1D6  
DO 7 SPI 1 TOU 2 MOV 8

**Unarmed:** AT 14 PA 7 DP 1D6  
RE short

**Club:** AT 14 PA 5 DP 1D6+3 RE medium

**Spear:** AT 14 PA 7 DP 1D6+4 RE long

**PRO/ENC** 0/0

**Number:** (# of heroes)+2

**Special Abilities:** Native Tongue Ferkina III,  
Tulamidyia II, Forceful Blow I

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Negative Trait  
(Superstition)

**Skills:** Body Control 6, Empathy 3, Feat of Strength 6,  
Intimidation 7, Perception 6, Self-Control 7, Stealth 6,  
Willpower 3

**Combat Behavior:** Ferkinas prefer to attack their  
opponents with superior numbers. They use  
Forceful Blows only when facing a tough or strong  
enemy, such as an obvious warrior, or an armored  
character. They do not attack women, which they  
view as spoils of war, not as opponents.

**Escape:** Loss of 50% LP; if half of them are  
incapacitated, the rest flee.

**Pain +1 at:** 23 LP, 15 LP, 8 LP, and 5 LP or less.



### Dobran

COU 15 SGC 11 INT 13 CHA 11  
DEX 13 AGI 13 CON 14 STR 14  
LP 33 AE - KP - INI 13+1D6  
DO 6 SPI 2 TOU 2 MOV 7

**Unarmed:** AT 15 PA 8 DP 1D6  
RE short

**Saber:** AT 15 PA 8 DP 1D6+3 RE medium

**PRO/ENC** 3/1 (leather armor) (includes armor  
modifiers)

**Special Abilities:** Inured to Encumbrance I, Feint I,  
Forceful Blow I

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Negative Trait  
(Greed, Vengeance)

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

**Combat Behavior:** Dobran prefers to fight against  
opponents he deems weak. He uses Feints and  
Forceful Blows to defeat them quickly.

**Escape:** Dobran surrenders or flees only after  
suffering two levels of *Pain*.

**Pain +1 at:** 26 LP, 17 LP, 9 LP, and 5 LP or less

**Special:** Remember that Dobran might have fewer  
LP if the heroes fight him a second time. He had  
Regeneration Phases since the fight in the Red  
Camel, but he did not necessarily recover all of  
his LP.



Alas, the find is too good to be true. Sheikan used a magical artifact to cast the illusion spell *Oculus Illusionis*, which deceives the sense of sight, and make a simple stone look like a sparkling diamond.

He predicts that the heroes' curiosity (or their wariness) will play into the ruse, and that the promise of great wealth will entice some of them to take a closer look at the strange glistening object in the grass.

The spell has QL 1. All other illusion rules apply (see *Core Rules*, page 259). To see through the deception, the heroes may make a competitive check using *Perception (Spot)*.



The ambushers act quickly and efficiently. If possible, they first grab people who come too close to the grass and discourage them from screaming by holding a blade to their throats. With a finger to their lips, they warn others (including heroes still on the road) to be silent. If one of the ambush victims on the road raises an alarm, the Ferkinas cut the throats of NPC hostages, and battle is joined.

If the ambush succeeds, the Ferkinas quickly restrain Beremosh and the servants, preventing them from assisting the heroes in the fight. Two Ferkinas stay back while the rest move toward Muhalla and the heroes at the diamond.

#### Noticing the Ambush

The attackers are well hidden in the tall grass. Heroes who remain behind on the road only notice them with a competitive *Perception (Detect Ambush)* check with a penalty of 2 versus the Ferkinas' *Stealth (Hide)*.

#### The Battle Against the Ferkinas

Half the Ferkinas carry clubs, the other half carry spears. They intend to capture Muhalla. The Ferkinas do not want to kill the heroes but will do so without hesitation if the characters defend themselves. Ideally, they manage to surprise the heroes and force them to surrender before weapons are drawn. To surprise the heroes, the Ferkinas must make a competitive *Stealth (Sneak)* check versus *Perception (Spot)* with a penalty of 1 (due to distraction). Heroes who fail to notice the opponents suffer the state *surprised*.



Take note: the Ferkinas mainly fight male heroes, especially those who appear to want to fight (those who have drawn a weapon, for example). They ignore weaker males and unarmed women as long as those characters do not resist. Dobran chooses an especially hated hero as the target of his attacks, preferably the one whom he thinks cheated him while playing cards.

Any heroes on the road who are surprised or who surrender get tied up and left behind. Dobran has the Ferkinas under control and can prevent a massacre, but they take the opportunity to beat an especially tough enemy into unconsciousness (5 LP and less, leading to 4 levels of *Pain*).

If the heroes cannot free themselves from the bindings (cumulative *Body Control (Squirm)* checks, 1 CR, 7 attempts to gather 10 QL, otherwise the check fails), a caravan comes along and saves them later that day.



## Abducted

### Optional Content

If the Ferkinas manage to kidnap Muhalla, they take him to a cave two days' journey to the north, somewhere in the mountains of the Djerim Yaeleth, for safekeeping. They have instructions to keep Muhalla there for about a week. Sheikan then meets them to give them their reward and free Muhalla.

The heroes may try to find Muhalla. The Ferkinas are easy to track (*Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* check with a bonus of 3), but freeing him proves much more difficult.

Three Ferkinas attend to chores in the small cave. Muhalla sits in the back part of the cave. Guards prepare their food at a campfire in front of the cave's entrance. There are always at least two guards on watch. If Dobran is here, he waits in the cave as well. He is in a bad mood and argues with the Ferkinas' leader Ussuf (35; matted full beard; greasy hair; empty right eye socket; prideful; short temper; always trying to prove his courage, as he fears for his position).

### Muhalla's Rescue

Let the players create a plan to rescue Muhalla. Keep the following guidelines in mind when they put their plan into action.

- A frontal attack is risky, less so if some of the Ferkinas were injured during their earlier encounter with the heroes. If the heroes were able to heal themselves, they have an advantage.
- Sneaking into the cave to free Muhalla requires a competitive *Stealth (Sneak and Hide)* check versus the Ferkinas' *Perception (Spot)*. Award a bonus to the check if the heroes employ a good distraction. Maybe one of the heroes casts the *Visibili* spell, using Sheikan's own tricks against him.
- If the heroes wait for the argument between Dobran and Ussuf to become violent, the guards become distracted during the brawl, and the heroes gain a bonus of 2 to *Stealth (Sneak and Hide)* checks.

• Muhalla realizes he was abducted to prevent the marriage, and he is content with his captivity. If he spots the heroes attempting a rescue, he shouts, breaks an item, or otherwise tries to alert the guards and foil the plan. Note that he would never intentionally risk the heroes' lives.

### Clues About Sheikan

If the heroes manage to defeat Dobran and the Ferkinas, they can question their captives (successful *Intimidation (Threats)* with a bonus of 1) to learn (another) clue about Sheikan's involvement.



## Chapter III: A Question of Ethics

This final section of the adventure sees Sheikan making one more desperate attempt to prevent the marriage, but he falls into the heroes' hands and they learn about his motivation. Armed with this knowledge, the heroes must make a decision when they reach Elburum. Should they force Muhalla to marry, or do they find a way to help Muhalla, Radajana, and Sheikan find happiness?

### Sheikan al'Maruwaduru

**Short Description:** 25; masterful entertainer and prestidigitator; dark brown hair; long curly mustache; caftan with various made-up magical signs; pointed slippers; eccentric entertainer with a love for theatrics; madly in love with Radajana.

**Motivation:** Sheikan is deeply in love with Radajana and has been wooing her for a while. The sudden resurgence of the arranged marriage is a great obstacle to his plans.

**Agenda:** He wants to prevent the marriage at any price, preferably before Muhalla reaches Elburum. With the help of the Ferkinas, Sheikan wants to capture his rival and keep him out of sight until the two families fall out over the canceled wedding. Sheikan is a rogue but not a killer. Unless his own life depends on it, he does not commit murder—though the Ferkinas might.

**Function:** Eccentric opponent, but one who hides a sad existence. Sheikan never had much magical talent, but he became a fair stage magician, accomplishing with dexterity and speed what true mages do with magic. For some years, he has worked as an entertainer and court artist for the Arinisha family.

He is in love with Radajana and believes she feels the same way. When he learned about the renewed attempt to enforce the arranged marriage, he fell into despair. He intends no harm to Muhalla, he just wants to make him disappear for a while.

**Role Playing Tips:** Sheikan loves a big entrance. As a man of the stage, he employs pathos and flair to address his audience—even if it is only made up of a few persons. Make sweeping gestures and speak loudly and clearly, as if talking from a stage. When the opportunity arises, laugh like a villain.

**Fate:** Sheikan's fate rests wholly in the players' hands. It is possible that the heroes kill him, or maybe they help him stay with his true love.

**Special:** His excellent connections to the School of Existing Pretense in Zorgan (mage's academy, illusion magic), where he sometimes works as a teacher in the art of prestidigitation, have allowed him to gather a number of artifacts he uses to enhance his performances.

*"Mwa-ha-ha-ha!"*

*"I have more skill in my little finger than you have in your whole hand."*

*"By Rahja, have mercy, effendis! It's not my fault the lovely goddess has given my heart to somebody who does not deserve a rogue like me."*

### Sheikan al'Maruwaduru

COU 14 SGC 12 INT 15 CHA 15

DEX 16 AGI 13 CON 11 STR 12

LP 31 AE - KP - INI 14+1D6

DO 7 SPI 2 TOU 1 MOV 8

Unarmed: AT 13 PA 7 DP 1D6

RE short

PRO/ENC 0/0

**Special Abilities:** Native Tongue Tulamidya III, Ferkina II, Garethi III, Area Knowledge (Elburum: Zhinbabil, Zorgan: Sulaminiah), Skill Specialization *Gaukelei* (Hiding Tricks)

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Talent (*Gaukelei*) / Personality Flaw (Vanity)

**Skills:** Body Control 6, Empathy 10, Fast-Talk 8, Feat of Strength 3, *Gaukelei* 14, Intimidation 3, Perception 9, Self-Control 6, Stealth 9, Willpower 5

**Combat Behavior:** Sheikan is no fighter. He lets others fight for him.

**Escape:** Sheikan flees when he loses 10 LP.

**Pain +1 at:** 23 LP, 16 LP, 8 LP, and 5 LP or less.



### Sheikan's Invisibility Amulets

**Description:** Three white, shimmering moonstones adorn the fan-shaped area of this filigreed amulet made of silver. In this or similar forms, such amulets are most common in the Lands of the Tulamydes. As with the spell, they make only their wearers, not their clothes and equipment, invisible.

**Effect:** Spell storage with 3 *Visibili* (9 SP, 15 minutes duration); activate by pressing on one of the moonstones

**Cost:** 76 AE, plus 8 additional permanent AE

**Price:** 1,730 silverthalers



## Sheikan's Second Attempt

After his first plan fails, Sheikan travels to Smijad, the last large settlement on the road to Elburum, where he tries to kidnap Muhalla himself. He uses his *Visibili* amulet to sneak into the heroes' accommodations in the caravanserai.

He tries to use a sleeping drug (Marbo's Rest) to sedate (hopefully) the already sleeping Muhalla. A horse with a single-axle cart waits outside to carry the unconscious groom away. Despite all this preparation, his plan is quite risky due to the heroes' presence, but Sheikan acts with the courage of desperation.

The *Visibili* amulet hides Sheikan from sight, but it does not conceal the noise he makes. If a hero is standing guard



### Marbo's Rest

Sheikan's sleeping drug, which is known as *Marbo's Rest* in the Lands of the Tulamydes, is a mixture of various minerals. It is often mixed into drinks to hide its mild taste.

**Level:** 8

**Type:** Ingestion poison, mineral poison

**Resistance:** Toughness

**Effect:** State *unconscious* /1 level of *stupor*

**Start:** 10 CR

**Duration:** 10 minutes

**Cost:** 600 silverthalers

on night watch, a successful *Perception (Spot)* check reveals the creaking of floorboards or the groan of a door's hinges. Another check allows the character to notice sudden tracks in the dust of the inner courtyard.

When Sheikan enters Muhalla's room, any heroes sleeping in the same room as Muhalla wake up with a *Perception (Spot)* check with a penalty of 3.

If nobody notices Sheikan, he administers the sleeping drug to Muhalla and drags him away. The dragging sounds reduce the penalty to the *Perception (Spot)* check to 1.

Heroes who wake up in time see Muhalla's unconscious body moving toward the entrance as if being hauled away by a ghost.

### Sheikan Fails

If the heroes wake up in time and notice the abduction, Sheikan tries to escape but surrenders without a fight, as he is no warrior. The heroes must decide what to do with him. If questioned, he tells the heroes his tragic story and then begs for mercy. He is overjoyed if the heroes decide to help him in any way, but he also meekly accepts whatever punishment they deem appropriate (as he has endangered their lives).

### Wedding or Cold Feet?

The heroes face a dilemma: they can force an unwilling groom to marry a stranger, and by doing so prevent another man from marrying the woman he loves, or they can help true love prevail and set Muhalla free, but at the cost of drawing the ire of an influential Aranian merchant family. If the heroes are thinking clearly, they might realize that, in all this confusion, nobody has asked the bride for her feelings on the subject. The heroes might want to get her opinion before making any rash decisions.



## Elburum, the White City

Region: Mhaharanyat of Arania

Inhabitants: 9,500

Ruler: Sultana Iphemia of Narhuabad (1028-1035 FB), Jashild saba Delilah (1035-1037 FB), Shanya ash Shaya (1037 FB-present)

Temples: Hesinde, Peraine, Efferd, Phex, Rahja, Shrine of Rur and Gor

Trade and Commerce: Mainly grain and fruits, but many products are available here

Important Taverns: Elburian Court (Q4/P4/B12; room with a view of the palace), Sultan's Court (Q3/P5/B20; overpriced inn in the harbor district), House Yulmin (Q2/P1/B10; simple but cheap inn), Shebaoth (Q4/P5/B7; family inn), Namah Bathhouse (Q4/P4).

Special: Fire slime (glowing, orange-colored, seasonal algae bloom in the bay); Rose Bridge (arched bridge planted with thousands of roses); Peacock Palace (white stone residence of the sultana, known for its peacocks); Elburia (harbor island with a run-down entertainment district); New Rose Garden (surrounding the former temple of Travia); Stele of Eternal Victory (commemorating the War of Liberation)  
Mood in Town: Elburum presents itself as urbane and tries to win back the respect it lost during the Oronian rule as it roots out the hidden remnants of the Heptarchy.

Whitewashed buildings, bright marble, and a sea of roses greet visitors in Elburum, which for centuries has been known as the White City. A few years ago, the rogue princess Dimiona ruled as Moghuli in the name of the archdemoness Belkelel, and the terrors of those times left the city's inhabitants emotionally scarred. Many are glad that it is over, but few who remember those times can say they played no role in the terror, so the Elburumans try hard to hide the shadows of their past with a smile, whitewashing their problems as they do their houses. Even if nobody admits it, some of them secretly wish for a return to those days.

### Radajana Birshensunya Arinisha

**Short Description:** 19; inexperienced and naive young woman; Tulamydian beauty; long black hair; green eyes; seems to know only two emotional states: exaltation or deep depression.

**Function:** Muhalla's bride-by-arrangement and Sheikan's true love; the rivalry for her favor is the primary motive for the adventure.

**Background:** Radajana is fickle and quickly falls in love with anyone who flatters her. The marriage announcement fueled her powerful longing for a fairy-tale wedding, but her countenance turns sad when anyone mentions her groom-to-be. She fears marrying a man she does not love.

When Radajana sees Muhalla for the first time, she does "fall in love" with him, but only because it is appropriate to love the man one marries. This love might disappear just as quickly, though, the moment another man flirts with her.

**Role Playing Tips:** When Radajana feels, she feels strongly. If she loves someone, she adores that person. If she hates someone, she wants that person to die from zorganpox. She changes easily between these two extreme states. Nobody, least of all the heroes, understands her mood swings. What makes her happy today might be a reason for a flood of tears tomorrow.

**Fate:** Whether Radajana gets married, and to whom, rests in the group's hands.

**Important Stats:** Good Looks I / Personality Flaw (Vanity); *Dancing* 7 (12/14/13), *Empathy* 5 (12/12/14), *Self-Control* 2 (12/12/13), *Stealth* 3 (12/12/13), *Willpower* 5 (12/12/14); SPI 1, TOU 1

*"Have you seen how he looks at me? By Rahja, he loves me!"*

*"Only asked for directions? Are you joking? He was flirting with her, the monster! I always knew it, he simply doesn't want me..."*

The heroes can gain an audience with Radajana by introducing themselves as Muhalla's companions, thus finally giving him a chance to meet her. The heroes might also meet her in town. To gain a private moment with her, they must first distract her three bodyguards.

### Possible Endings

No matter what the heroes decide in the end, there is no right or wrong answer. The heroes choose how the story ends, determining whether the wedding takes place or finding another solution for the dilemma.

There are certainly many other possibilities besides the ones listed below for the players to wrap up the story. Even a solution like in *Romeo and Juliet* (a pretend suicide) is possible. Challenge the heroes with obstacles. Do not make it impossible for them to win, and if they succeed, they should have the feeling of having really worked for it.

### The Contract Fulfilled

The heroes decide to fulfill their contract and insist that the wedding take place. When Muhalla sees Radajana for the first time, he discovers that things are not quite as bad as he expected and admits that his mother has selected a lovely bride. He changes his mind about the wedding, though he is not sure if he is ready to give up his playboy life just yet. "Neither lusty Rahja nor stealthy Phex can have a problem with that," he says to himself.



The naive Radajana is overjoyed about Muhalla's sweet words of love and believes she has truly found her Prince Charming.

Sheikan is the only loser in this situation, but considering what he was willing to do to keep Radajana to himself, this is probably fair. He feels no anger toward the heroes and is happy just to be alive. Nevertheless, in a later adventure he might appear as an enemy—or as a reluctant ally.

#### True Love

The heroes are impressed by Sheikan's determination and decide to help him. Muhalla is happy with this as well, because it frees him from an unwanted union. Naive Radajana falls in love with Sheikan after the heroes tell her the tale of his dedication. The decision to derail the wedding is mainly a question of ethics, but if they choose this route, the heroes must still face some serious obstacles.

- Beremosh, the family's dwarf servant, stubbornly insists on the arranged marriage. He gave Feruja his word, and he reminds the heroes that they did, too. He resists simple persuasion, but up to three adventurers may try to change his mind with a cumulative check using *Persuasion (Conversation)*, 1 day, 7 attempts. If they succeed, he agrees. Otherwise, the heroes might have to sabotage the wedding behind the dwarf's back.
- Feruja as Sarjabaran insists on the arranged marriage (and the trade agreement), as its cancellation would embarrass her publicly. She stayed in Zorgan, so the heroes cannot easily consult her while they weigh their options, but they should avoid appearing before

Feruja again unless they invent a good excuse for their failure to fulfill their contract.

- Radajana's mother, Birshen Esmaldasuni Arinisha (52; 5'6"; long black hair; heavy make-up and perfume; wears clothes made of silk and gold; cunning merchant; tries to turn everything to her advantage), must be convinced as to why the marriage to an entertainer would be better than the alliance between two great merchant houses. She fears for her credibility but her merchant nature allows her to cancel the agreement if she becomes convinced that a greater advantage lies elsewhere.
- The heroes might convince Radajana and Sheikan to elope, and assist them in their escape from Elburum. Muhalla would be free, and his mother (and the heroes) would save face. Radajana must be convinced to accept this plan (*Fast-Talk (Manipulation)* check with a penalty of 4, because the spoiled daughter of a rich house does not really want to give up her family's wealth). Once convinced, however, she helps Sheikan in any way possible. He must then smuggle his beloved past the house guards and get her on a carriage, or, better yet, a ship.

#### A Marriage of Convenience

The heroes might think of a compromise that gives all sides a way to save face. The problem is convincing everyone else that it does.

The details are as follows. To appease both families, Muhalla and Radajana get married, but it is secretly a marriage of





convenience. Muhalla may continue to have secret affairs with other women, but Radajana and Sheikan must also meet in secrecy. This option requires a lot of convincing, as everyone involved must make compromises.

- Muhalla must publicly marry and could only have affairs in secret. He could never acknowledge any child he might father with another woman.
- Radajana loves with all her heart and does not want to hide her love. She finds the thought of a secret affair with Sheikan very unpleasant.
- Sheikan does not want to spend the rest of his life sneaking in and out of Radajan's house. He wants to be happy and grow old with Radajana, and cannot stomach the thought that she might have to bear another man's children just to keep up appearances.

Convincing the three unhappy lovers to accept this option requires a cumulative *Fast-Talk (Manipulation)* check, 1 day, 7 attempts.

### The Scandal

The heroes could arrange a sham: Shortly before the wedding—preferably on the same day—someone catches Muhalla with another woman. The greater the number of witnesses, the greater the embarrassment for the Arinisha family, and the wedding would have to be canceled.

- Muhalla must be convinced to participate (*Fast-Talk (Manipulation)* check with a penalty of 2). If he does,

his mother might disown him for staining the family honor—an unpleasant but acceptable fate for the freedom-loving vagabond.

- Sheikan happily supports the heroes in any way he can (maybe with his magical artifacts).
- The plan might also work the other way around, that is, by convincing Radajana to be seen kissing Sheikan in public (*Fast-Talk (Manipulation)* check with a penalty of 2).

### What About Dobran?

Mercenary Captain Dobran has had enough of the heroes after two defeats. If he survives, he probably winds up behind bars or in hiding, licking his wounds and thinking about vengeance. Maybe he returns in a future adventure as a lead villain or henchman with a personal grudge against the heroes. As a mercenary captain, he can appear anywhere in Aventuria—and he is slow to forget his anger.

### The Reward

The heroes deserve a reward for their efforts. No matter how the adventure ends, the heroes each earn **15 AP**.



# Ishlunar's Treasures

by Daniel Simon Richter

Thanks to Peter Diehn, Chris Gosse, Andrea Richter, Michael Masberg, and Alex Spohr. Special thanks to Jörg Raddatz for the very inspirational *Bastrabun's Ban*.

## Introduction and Background

*"When the legionaries come, we go. That preserves the balance, as those who follow us will make up for our failings. Yet, we still have teachings and wisdom to share. Our lore of the Great Nest must pass to the faithful. To preserve it, we will hide our knowledge in ways a believer will know, but a nonbeliever will stare at it and not understand."*

—Madahajida, High Sister of Tarshoggyn, to a student, 339 FB

*"My grandfather brought this blanket from Maraskan. It warmed him in winter when he was young. It is good enough to keep out the cold of the Praios-cursed desert, right?"*

—Donator Lumini Helarion d'Amal, to Priest-Empress Amelthona, in the Khôm Desert, 455 FB

*"These Praiotes are truly stupid! They would let all knowledge of a treasure lie with their dead in the desert. The only question is whether we can decipher their clues. I will ask Mother Ilaris herself."*

—Iphenon of Sulaminiah, Ilarist, Mentor of the Paths, at the same location, 802 FB

*"What a splendid weave! It is so colorful that it will draw Rasha's gaze to me. Bring these whimpering weaklings to the buskurdh!"*

—Bashur, Shah of the Merech, in the foothills of the Khoram Range, 802 FB

*"He was delicious, the tiny man, and I will keep this blanket as a trophy."*

—Ishlunar the cave dragon, 1019 FB





## The Adventure

**Genre:** Wilderness adventure, expedition

**Prerequisites:** None

**Location:** the Khoram Range in the Lands of the Tulamydes

**Date:** modern

**Complexity (Player/GM):** Low/medium

**Suggested Hero Experience Level:** Inexperienced to Experienced

### Challenge Level

Combat



Social Skills



Nature Skills



**Living History**



**Ishlunar's Treasures** takes place in the Lands of the Tulamydes, where the mountains of the Khoram Range meet the merciless Khôm Desert. With only a little work, however, this adventure may be set anywhere in Southern Aventuria that has mountains and dragons.

Arch-abbess Kerime al'Kadim, a member of the Hesindan Draconite Order in Khunchom, asks the heroes to retrieve a special item from a dragon's hoard in the Khoram Mountains. The item in question is an *As'Haima*, a colorful, Maraskan-made cloth that secretly forms a map when folded in the right way. But this isn't just any old map. The High Priests of Rur and Gror created it in the Maraskan city of Tarshoggyn before the time of the Emperor-Priests. The map points the way to the nest of the Skrechu, an ancient and deadly chimera.

As the heroes travel through the mountains, they must risk the elements as well as barbaric tribes of Ferkinas, only to discover that the dragon still lives. Ishlunar won't simply hand over a piece of her treasure. She wants something in return—specifically, she wants the heroes to travel to the Mhanadi Delta and secure an object promised to her many years ago. The path is fraught with peril, and the heroes must fight a final, all-deciding battle and make a fateful decision if they wish to see their homes again.

## Background

Late in 339 FB, the High Siblings of Rur and Gror in Tarshoggyn, on the island of Maraskan, heard rumors that some fearsome lizard creatures had taken up residence in the Amdeggyn Massif. Scouts found no traces of such beasts and the report went ignored until a unit of infantry was mysteriously slain. Soon, temple acolytes began whispering about the Great Nest, a lair created long ago by the legendary Skrechu, a terrifying chimera.

### Short Tulamidyian Glossary

**As'Haima:** As'Haimas (Tulamidya: secret storytellers) are colorful pieces of cloth with encrypted messages woven into them. Folding them in a special way reveals their secret.

**Azfuloth Shard:** A former piece of the seven-pointed Demon Crown, associated with the archdemoness Azfuloth, the Mistress of Chaos.

**Ferkina(s):** wild mountain folk with primitive customs who despise the *bloodless*, as they call their valley-dwelling cousins in the cities (see the Culture Description on page 72).

**High Siblings:** Twins (maternal or fraternal) who lead the Temples of Rur and Gror; they share their duties.

**Ilarists:** an old sect formerly active in Arania, Mhanadistan, and on Maraskan; they rejected the gods and sought to understand the world using only their intellect. The Churches of the Twelvegods began persecuting them as heretics in 800 FB and soon drove them to extinction.

**Priest-Emperors:** the offices of the highest Blessed One of Praios (the Herald of Light) and the emperor of the Middenrealm were united in one person between 335 and 465 FB; these individuals were credited with building many splendid temples to Praios, but they were also known for their fanaticism and their bloody persecution of those with different beliefs.

**Rur and Gror:** the hermaphroditic creation deities of the Maraskans; their worshipers suffered brutal persecution at the hands of the Priest-Emperors.

**Skrechu:** also called the "Great Serpent of Maraskan." She is a chimeric fusion of a giant serpent and a human woman, bent on corrupting the world. Though created in 2000 b.FB, she survived through the ages by sleeping for decades or centuries at a time. Recently she obtained the Azfuloth shard, a powerful demonic artifact from the splintered Demon Crown of Borbarad. The shard greatly amplifies the chimera's powers, and few Aventurians, apart from Kerime al'Kadim, know of its existence.

As the High Siblings struggled to gather more information, the Priest-Emperor ordered the Sun Legion to invade the island and begin exterminating the priesthood of Rur and Gror. Knowing that they would soon die, the High Siblings decided to reveal their knowledge of the Skrechu to all believers. They wove a map of the nest's location into an *As'Haima*, and recorded useful lore in the equally mysterious Leg-ga-leg script.

When the priests were killed, the *As'Haima* fell into the hands of a Sun Legionary who brought it to Gareth. It



passed through his family and eventually wound up in the Khôm Desert with his grandson, a Blessed One of Praios who was evangelizing in the desert for the Priest-Empress Amelthona II.

It passed through many more hands until it reached a Ferkina from the Khoram Range. The Ferkina then had the misfortune to be eaten by the cave dragon Ishlunar, who added the As'Haima to her hoard. It was seen there by the Bearers of the Seven Signs, a group of heroes who fought the Demon Master Borbarad.

Recently, this report fell into the lap of a woman named Kerime al'Kadim from Khunchom, Blessed One of Hesinde and Arch-Abbess of the Draconite Order, who had been studying the Skrechu for years. Believing that the lost As'Haima still sits in the hoard of the dragon, she hires a group of daring adventurers to retrieve it.

## The Lands of the Tulamydes

*"O father of simplicity! You look at your past and proudly call it history. But know this: the history of your land is only a heartbeat, a mere moment compared to this venerable ground. When you Gyldenlanders set foot on Aventuria, we Children of Djer Tulam already had a flourishing culture. Go to Fasar, Effendi, to the mother of all cities, and you will see true history. Or visit Khunchom, the Pearl on the Mhanadi, and look for the traces of the Diamond Sultanate. There you will see true greatness!"*

—a proud Tulamydian to a stranger, 1039 FB

*"To make a profit, they'd claim a rusty nail was an ancient relic... And by Phex, collega, they would succeed!"*

—a mage from the Academy of High Magic in Punin, 1038 FB

**Borders:** The Lands of the Tulamydes roughly stretch south of the Barun-Ulan, along the east side of the mighty Wall of Rashtul, the Khoram Range, and the Unau Mountains to the Chaneb.

**Landscape:** fertile plains, like the Balash, crossed by mighty rivers, such as the Gadang and Mhanadi; the hill country of Mhanadistan with its many lakes and brooks and cattle herds; dry Gorian Desert on a mesa; rough, remote mountain ranges; the Ongalo Highlands, the windy valleys, and the forested high plateaus of Thalusia.



**Important Cities:** Fasar (about 40,000, including 6,500 Middenrealms and 500 forest folk, plus 1,200 dwarves), Khunchom (20,000, including 5,500 Middenrealms and 900 Maraskanans, plus several dozen dwarves), Rashdul (8,500, including 6,000 Tulamydes and 2,500 Novadis, plus a few Middenrealms and dwarves), Anchopal (2,500), Thalusa (6,000).

**Population:** over 500,000 humans (85% Tulamydes, 8% Middenrealms, 5% Novadis, the rest Forest Folk and Ferkinas, also some dwarves and achaz)

**Political Ties:** Sultanate of Gorian, Great Principality of Khunchom, Sultanate of Rashdul, Sultanate of Thalusia, various free cities

**Government:** *Sultanates of Gorian and Rashdul:* Magocracy of the sultan (ruler: Sultan Hasrabal ben Yakuban); *Grand Duchy of Khunchom:* feudalism with Tulamydian influences (ruler: Great Prince Selo Kulibin); *Sultanate of Thalusia:* cruel despotism (ruler: Sultan Dolguruk); Fasar: city-state with several rival powers (the Eminences: small states with absolutist rulers).

**Veneration of the Gods:** Twelvgods, but not universally, as they often blend with older cults and local dieties, especially Phex (as Feqz) and Rahja (as Radsha); Rastullah; bull cults in Thalusia

**Trade Goods:** Cattle, ostriches, rice and other grains, (flying) carpets, mindorium (a magic metal), iron ore, spices, steel, silver, papyrus, glassware, ships, arts and crafts, weapons, armor, magical artifacts, slaves (in some towns).



Every local knows that the Lands of the Tulamydes are the cradle of Aventurian humanity, and despite centuries of occupation by Bosparanian and Middenrealmish forces, the people here are passionate, proud, and independent. In the Lands of the Tulamydes, the knowledge of a millennia-old culture blends with secret lore from long extinct races of lizardfolk. The land is fertile and produces two abundant harvests each year. Many of the region's potentates employ magic-using advisors, and are often powerful spellcasters in their own right. Since they covet each other's power, internal strife is common in the Lands of the Tulamydes.

For a glossary of Tulamydian terms and a pronunciation guide, see the *Appendix* on page 95.

#### A Selection of Typical Tulamydian Names

For various reasons, the heroes may encounter numerous characters that are not integral to the story. Examples include a shrewd grocer who sells the heroes provisions before they begin their journey, or a little street urchin with a gap-toothed smile who offers to show the heroes the city for a little baksheesh (a gift or favor). To keep these people from remaining nameless, we provide a list of regional names in the *Appendix* (see page 95).

#### What Does My Character Know About the Lands of the Tulamydes?

Heroes from Arania are probably already familiar with the following details, as are people from a bordering region. Some heroes from other countries might also know a bit of this knowledge, so either introduce the following as general knowledge from time to time, or allow the dice to decide.

#### Religions check with a bonus of 2

QL 1: The Twelvegods are worshiped in the Lands of the Tulamydes. The Novadis worship their one god, called Rastullah.

QL 2: In addition to the Twelvegods, countless other gods and ancient cults vie for attention. A special feature of the region is the worship of city gods. Each city has its own patron god. Phex (as Feqz) and Rahja (as Rasha) enjoy worship throughout the land.

QL 3+: There are also bull and dragon cults, and the mountain people talk of a spirit world.

#### Geography (Lands of the Tulamydes) check with a bonus of 2

QL 1: The Lands of the Tulamydes consist of a few sultanates and many city states.

QL 2: The Lands of the Tulamydes lie on the east coast, surrounded by the mountains of the Wall of Rashtul and the Khoram Range, and the Barun-Ulah and Chaneb rivers.

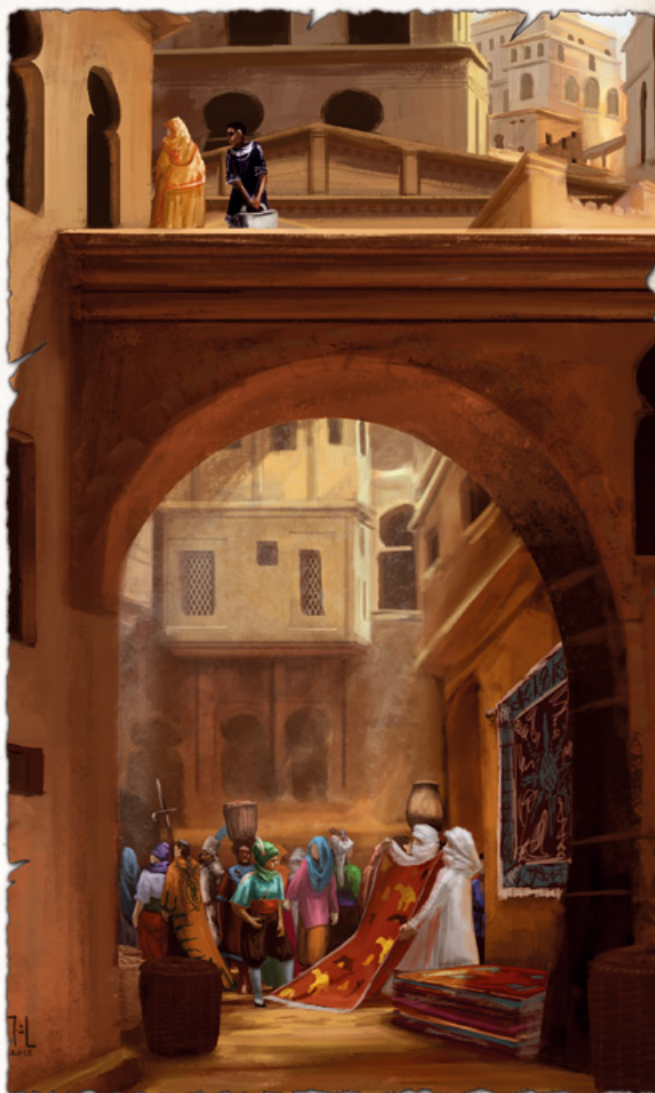
QL 3+: The closest neighbors to the Lands of the Tulamydes are Arania, the Novadi Caliphate, and the Far South.

#### Etiquette (Rumors) check with a bonus of 2

QL 1: The Lands of the Tulamydes consist of several sultanates and many city-states.

QL 2: The most powerful rulers in the region are the Great Prince of Khunchom, the Mage Sultan of Rashdul, and the Sublime Ones of the city of Fasar.

QL 3+: Most rulers of the Lands of the Tulamydes are enemies. Villages and even entire regions change hands with some regularity. Most rulers trace their ancestry to the brave fighters who warred against the native lizardfolk several thousand years ago.





# Chapter I: In the Name of the Serpent

The adventure begins in Khunchom, a melting pot of cultures at the mouth of the Mhanadi River. Kerime al’Kadim, the Arch-Abbess of the Draconite Order, hires the heroes to recover an As’Haima from the hoard of a cave dragon. This chapter consists mainly of gathering information about their destination and its dangers. The heroes set off for the mountains of the Khoram Range in Chapter II.

## Khunchom, the Venerable

### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*Khunchom the Splendid, the white flower in the soft, green arms of the eternal Mhanadi. This princely city deserves the nickname “the city that never sleeps.” Here the hot desert wind mixes with cool sea breezes and the smells of exotic spices and perfumes. Everywhere you see and hear merchants haggling with customers, and storytellers recounting lively fairy tales to rapt audiences. The streets are packed, and you marvel at the idea that the city becomes even more crowded in early Boron, when the annual showman’s festival takes place. It is as loud and busy as a Middenrealmer would picture a Tulamydian bazaar to be.*

Khunchom is an important trade port in eastern Aventuria, and as such, the heroes could be here for any number of reasons.

- Trade ships anchor in Khunchom before continuing their journeys north or east. Perhaps a hero makes a stopover here while en route to another destination.
- The markets of Khunchom offer many rare and exotic goods. Maybe the heroes have come here in search of a unique item?
- Khunchom is the gateway to the Lands of the Tulamydes. Expeditions to the Land of the First Sun and the Caliphate come and go every week.
- Khunchom is known for its mage’s academy, which focuses on the creation of artifacts. Heroes might come here to buy an artifact or hire someone to analyze an item they found during an earlier adventure. Foreign mages are welcome guests, as they can improve the academy’s knowledge of spells. The academy also has its own school for alchemists, which makes potions of all kinds.
- Khunchom is the site of the main Temple of Kor, and thus many mercenaries walk the streets, looking for new assignments. Classic adventurer groups might be here just for that reason.
- The annual All-Aventuria Meeting of Jesters takes place in Khunchom from the 24th of Travia to the 8th of Boron. This famous gathering draws crowds from many regions.
- The Healing Springs of Tsa, located in the goddess’ temple, are said to cure all wounds, diseases, and ailments.
- The Temple of Hesinde is known for its library, which gathers knowledge from all over the Lands of the Tulamydes. Many investigations into the history and secrets of the Tulamydes begin here.

## The Assignment

A Blessed One of Hesinde named Kerime al’Kadim invites the heroes to the monastery of Keshal Nanduria. She wishes to task them with finding the dragon hoard and recovering the As’Haima. As to why she chose the heroes, select one or more reasons from the following list.

- The heroes have already undertaken missions for the Church of Hesinde, and their reputation precedes them. When Kerime learns that the heroes are in Khunchom, she does not hesitate to send a messenger with an invitation.
- The group is already famous, especially in the Lands of the Tulamydes. Storytellers recount their adventures in the streets and alleys, and people recognize the heroes in the bazaar. Kerime wants to meet them.
- A former employer of the heroes is friends with Kerime or someone else from the Church of Hesinde. When he learns that Kerime is looking for adventurers, he recommends the brave heroes.
- One of the heroes comes from Khunchom or has a friend in the city. Kerime invites the heroes at the suggestion of the hero’s friend.
- Barkers and advertising posters are common in a city with so many mercenaries. The heroes might hear a barker announce that the honorable Kerime al’Kadim seeks virtuous heroes willing to work for the Church of Hesinde for good payment. The heroes report to the Draconites’ Keshal Nanduria monastery, near the Temple of Hesinde, at the corner of Khunchom Boulevard and Lord Istav Avenue. When they arrive, they learn they aren’t the only ones interested in the job when they encounter other well-qualified applicants, but in the end, the heroes receive the assignment.



## Khunchom, the City that Never Sleeps

**Region:** Tulamydian City-States, Great Principality of Khunchom

**Inhabitants:** 20,000 humans, including 5,000 Middenrealms, 900 Maraskans, and several dozen dwarves

**Ruler:** the Great Lord (currently, Selo Kulibin)

**Temples:** All Twelvegods except Firun; also Rastullah, Rur and Gror, and shrines of Aves, Swafnir, and Nandus; main Temple of Kor

**Trade and Commerce:** Important sea port with long-distance trading in all directions; spices (Khunchom pepper), tea, Khunchom steel and weapons, magical artifacts, alchemical potions, important transfer point for Maraskan goods; many large and small trading houses own kontors here.

**Special:** Dragon's Egg Academy (mage's academy, gray, artifact magic); Adamant Press (well-known printing house); House of the Codex (main Temple of Kor); Holy

Springs of Tsa; Palace Island; Maraskan Quarter (Astuzak); the annual All-Aventuria Meeting of Jesters, in early Boron.

**Mood in Town:** Colorful mix of open-minded and industrious people; lively; loud; fairytale-like.

The city's domed buildings and onion towers rise sublimely from the mouth of the Mhanadi. Khunchom is one of the most important harbor towns on the Pearl Sea and one of the oldest cities on the continent. It was built on the ruins of the lizard city of Yash'Hualay, and grew into the cultural center and hub for scholars and traders from across the continent. The Bosparan Empire, and later, the Middenrealm, ruled the city for many centuries. It gained its independence 50 years ago and quickly reclaimed its Tulamydian heritage.

Each year, in early Boron, countless entertainers, storytellers, musicians, and charlatans meet here to perform at the All-Aventuria Meeting of Jesters. The legendary Dragon's Egg Academy is famous across Aventuria. This traditional magic school is the source of most artifacts on the continent.

## The Arch-Hoard of Keshal Nanduria

### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*The sun has almost reached its peak by the time you arrive at the arch-hoard of the Draconites. Keshal Nanduria is truly splendid. The shimmering facade of the white, Eternal marble building is decorated with artfully burnished tiles set in a repeating pattern. These green-gold lacquered tiles not only give structure to the facade, they also hide the chimney-like vestibules which bring cool air to the building's interior.*

*You pass through a skillfully carved door depicting scenes from the tales of Hesinde and Phex, climb seven steps, and come to the entrance hall. The floor is covered by a large mosaic.*

*A woman in Draconite robes greets you and leads you to the upper floor. There you see a small golden statue standing in front of a painted mural that depicts the teaching goddess Hesinde, index finger raised, looking sternly at the viewer. The Draconite asks you to seat yourselves on one of the two decorated benches.*

If the heroes don't know each other yet, this is a good place for introductions. They have some time to become acquainted before entering the arch-abbess' study. A successful *Religions (Hesinde)* check reveals that she is a temple leader (title: High Teacher) of the Church of Hesinde.





## 🏰 Kerime al’Kadim, Arch-Abbess of the South

**Brief Description:** about 50 years old; brilliant Blessed One of Hesinde; expert on lizardfolk; masterful storyteller; black hair; dark eyes; green caftan decorated with gold; serpent choker made of bronze and silver; friendly, but reserved demeanor).

**Role:** the heroes’ mysterious, perceptive employer.

**Background:** Kerime became interested in old stories and myths as a young child, and now possesses an almost endless reservoir of wisdom. Her honorary suffix (al’Kadim; Tulamidya for *the Ancient One*) hints at the respect the Tulamyde woman commands.

She still enjoys listening to storytellers, and she sometimes makes short journeys to visit interesting haimamuds in other regions. She is one of only a few scholars who know of the existence of the Skrechu, and she understands the danger this un-creature poses to the Lands of the Tulamydes. She wants real knowledge about this hidden opponent, and she has put out a call to her servants to help defeat it. She hopes that the As’Haima will lead to the Skrechu’s nest, so she can destroy the serpent chimera. Kerime knows more than anybody about the lizard heritage of the Lands of the Tulamydes and can tell countless stories about it.

**Animosities:** the Skrechu and its lizard conspiracy, but also stupidity and insolence, which she faces with aloofness and mockery.

**Role Playing Tips:** Sit upright, keeping your head raised. Look people in the eyes as you speak to them. Speak slowly and with forethought. Use religious jargon. Don’t lose your cool—Kerime does not let her emotions get the best of her.

### The Mission

#### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*Myths or stories, recorded in books or on stones and clay tablets, seem to take up all the room in the arch-abbess’ study. The size of her collection is truly impressive. You also see the classic tools of storytellers: delicate Aranian shadow puppets, splendid Novadi dabras, precious mirhamionettes, a fine sitar, old Tulamydian gangas, a kabas flute, veils, and a bandurria.*

*The arch-abbess motions for you to sit at a low table made of finely engraved metal. She takes a long look at each of you with her dark eyes, which burn with indomitable strength, and then greets you with the pleasant voice that helps earn her praise as the greatest of storytellers.*



**Kerime al’Kadim,  
Arch-Abbess of the South**  
COU 14 SGC 17 INT 15 CHA 15  
DEX 10 AGI 11 CON 11 STR 12  
LP 29 AE - KP 42 INI 12+1D6  
DO 6 SPI 3 TOU 1 MOV 8  
FtP 3

**Quarterstaff:** AT 11 PA 8 DP 1D6+2

RE long

PRO/ENC 0/0

**Special Abilities:** Iron Will I, Lip Reading, Tradition (Church of Hesinde), Defensive Posture

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Blessed One, Good Looks I, Natural Orator / Negative Trait (Curiosity), Personality Flaw (Arrogance), Principles I (Church of Hesinde)

**Skills:** *Body Control 3, Empathy 16, Fast-Talk 14, Feat of Strength 2, History 18, Intimidation 2, Myths and Legends 18, Perception 12, Persuasion 12, Self-Control 11, Seduction 6, Stealth 3, Willpower 11, and many other knowledge skills 15+*

**Languages and Scripts:** fluent in all common languages; lizardfolk languages/scripts of at least level II; basic knowledge of almost all other languages

**Liturgical Chants:** all Twelve Blessings, liturgical chants of the Church of Hesinde with SR of 7 to 16.

**Combat Behavior:** Kerime does not fight. If attacked, she defends herself with liturgical chants such as *Peaceful Aura*.

**Escape:** depends on the situation, but no later than upon losing 50% LP

**Pain +1 at:** 22 LP, 18 LP, 7 LP, and 5 LP or less.

Kerime starts the conversation in Tulamidya. If the heroes can’t understand her, she switches to accent-free Garethi. In the Tulamydian manner, she flatters the heroes by addressing their reputation or by mentioning obvious traits (for example, by referring to a scholar/mage as “knowledgeable father of writing,” or naming a tall, strong, female warrior a “powerful daughter of a giant”). Tulamydes show politeness through flattery, which is especially helpful when their goal is to make an ally.

The Draconite is friendly and open seeming, but conceals her calculating mind for now. After some small talk intended to put the heroes at ease and establish common ground, she gets to the point.



### Key Information

- The Bearers of the Seven Signs were seven heroes who defeated Borbarad the Demon Master. They recorded their meeting with a dragon they encountered in the Khoram Range. The dragon had some impressive items in her hoard.
- It is a female cave dragon named Ishlunar.
- Cave dragons are large, growing up to 30 feet in length. Instead of wings, they have three or sometimes four pairs of limbs, and they are very agile and quick. Like their winged relatives, they can cast spells and breathe fire.
- Kerime does not know whether the dragon still lives, or even if her hoard still exists. Kerime is particularly interested in one item, which she calls a *mudra rajjiq* (Tulamitya: *woven riddle*). It resembles a flying carpet covered in ornamental embroidery.
- While researching the records of the Ilarists, a renegade and now-extinct Order of Hesinde, she came across the description of such a cloth, which reminded her of the item described by the Bearers of the Seven Signs.
- Kerime believes that the item they saw is indeed the same piece of cloth, and that it hides secret knowledge of the Ilarists. She wants to study this knowledge so she can reconstruct the Order's history.
- She asks the heroes to search the mountains, find the hoard, and retrieve the *mudra*.
- Just in case the dragon still lives, she hands the heroes a pouch of jewels worth about 50 ducats (the heroes can estimate its value with a check on *Commerce (Money Exchange)* with a penalty of 1), the idea being that they can exchange the jewels for the cloth, or perhaps purchase another item the dragon desires. If they discover Ishlunar is dead, the heroes may keep the jewels as a bonus.
- Kerime offers the heroes a reward of 10 ducats each, which she pays in advance. She offers another 50 ducats for bringing the cloth back to her in Khunchom. If they wish, the heroes may try to haggle over the reward (*Commerce* 7 (16/15/15), see *Core Rules*, page 208).
- Kerime asks the heroes to document their travels and pay special attention to their meeting with Ishlunar. If none of the heroes is literate, she asks them to report to her as soon as they return, so they don't forget any of the details.
- The Draconites provide the heroes with a map of Mhanadistan. Kerime thinks that the dragon cave lies in the southeastern corner of the mountain range.
- Kerime warns the heroes of the dangers of the mountains: The Khoram Range is home to various Ferkina tribes, wild mountain folk to whom courage means everything and life nothing. If asked, she can relate some rumors she has heard (see page 67), although she does not think they are all necessarily true and feels that some are exaggerated.



### Close to the Truth

Kerime al'Kadim offers information freely, but she does not tell the heroes the whole truth about the As'Haima (which she only refers to as the *cloth* or the *mudra rajjiq*). She is terrified of the power of the Skrechu and its agents, and does not want to attract their attention, which she feels would definitely happen if she mentioned that the As'Haima might prove of great use in the battle against the Serpent of Maraskan. She adheres closely to the truth (the cloth is hiding a secret message), but presents the information in a false context (by calling it secret knowledge of the Ilarists). She tries to give the heroes believable background knowledge without raising suspicions. At the GM's discretion, the heroes may try a competitive *Empathy (Sense Deception)* check versus *Fast-Talk*.





## Travel Preparation and the Road Ahead

Before the heroes set out for the wilderness, give them time to learn about their destination and its dangers, make their travel preparations, and obtain the proper equipment.

Khunchom is a natural place to shop for items, but this is not the heroes' last chance to do so. The bazaars of Rashdul or Mherwed also sell a variety of useful goods. Alternatively, the heroes could meet a caravan on the road and acquire anything they still need.

The heroes should have some questions about the coming challenges. If they don't ask Kerime directly, people they meet along the way give them the following information.

### Information about the Khoram Range

**Location:** This range separates the Khôm Desert from the Mhanadi Valley. The mountains are mainly sandstone, and the highest peaks reach a height of 9,000 feet. From Khunchom, this means traveling into the interior for several days, following the northern route through Anchopal and Samra on foot, or taking the southern route past Rashdul and Mherwed by boat, as it follows the flow of the Mhanadi River.

**Description:** The elements have cut deep gorges into the soft bedrock of the mountains, and their jagged nature makes them difficult to traverse.

**Climate:** The southern half of the range differs from the northern half. Except during Spring, the northern slopes receive much rainfall, making the land fertile. Permanent snow caps the peaks. The southern slopes are arid and inhospitable, and only the most rugged plants survive here. During the day, the wind carries hot desert air to the highlands, while at night, cold winds blow from the peaks to the valleys.

**Mounts:** People advise the heroes to leave mounts behind, as they are ill suited to the rocky terrain and are likely to suffer injury. The same goes for beasts of burden such as donkeys, mules, and camels, which, if abandoned above a certain elevation, would fall prey to local predators such as Khoram beasts.

**Political Affiliation:** The mountain range technically belongs to the Caliphate. The settlement area of the Novadi stretches from the Balash and the Green Plain north to the city of Rashdul, where they wield significant influence.

**Novadi:** The Novadi are a Tulamydian people with a proud equestrian tradition. They live mainly in and around the Khôm Desert, and believe in their one god, Rastullah, viewing themselves as his chosen people. They govern their life by strict beliefs known as the 99 Laws. Women play a

lesser role in this strongly patriarchal society, as men see them as weaker and in need of protection. Some Novadis view their horses or racing camels as more valuable than their wives. Unlike with the Ferkinas, the heroes won't have trouble with the Novadis and may even trade with them, as long as they respect their laws and culture.

**Dangers:** The Ferkinas are the greatest threat in the Khoram Range, as they defend their ancestral lands from all trespassers and attack travelers without hesitation.

The native wildlife is also very dangerous, as follows:

- Khoram beasts, wolf-like predators with black and yellow mottled fur, live throughout the mountains. They attack strong enemies only in packs. Otherwise, they follow targets for days, looking for weaknesses. People fear Khoram beasts because they attack caravans, scare away horses, and transmit diseases.
- Rummaging bugbears and Khoram diggers (a vicious, poisonous type of mole with yellow fur) tunnel throughout the mountains and are believed to be responsible for creating many mountain lakes and even a few gorges
- Many dragons are thought to live among the craggy peaks, though cave dragons appear to be most common

### Rumors about Ferkinas

For more information about Ferkinas, see page 72. Few Tulamydes have ever met a Ferkina, and even fewer have survived to tell the tale. Ferkinas are as terrifying to Tulamydes as the orcs are to Middenrealms, and the stories told about them are equally scary. As the heroes approach the lands of these mountain barbarians, they hear more rumors and see signs of increasing prejudice among the locals, as follows.

- Ferkinas are wild mountain barbarians (+)
- They live as nomads, mainly in the region of the Wall of Rashtul and the Khoram Range (+)
- These mountain barbarians attack caravans and travelers, and leave no survivors (+/-)
- They wear red bandannas and veils dyed with the blood of their slain enemies (+/-)
- Courage is especially important to a Ferkina warrior. Only travelers who display courage when attacked by a Ferkina can survive the encounter (+)
- The Shai'Aian tribe lives in the Wall of Rashtul, and the Merech tribe lives in the Khoram Range. (+)
- Each family has a leader called a *haran* (+)
- The Ferkinas worship dark mountain idols: a raging bull, a mare in heat, and other beings with animal shapes (+/-)



- They worship the divine couple (Rashtula, in the shape of a bull, and Rasha, in the shape of a mare) (+)
- Some tribes, which gave up life in the mountains, live in places such as Fasar or north of the Khoram Range (+)
- A Ferkina princess is the High Blessed One of the Temple of Rahja in Fasar (+)
- The Ban-Sharîda, of the Merech tribe, live north of the Khoram Range and do sometimes attack caravans, but they also raise herds of cattle and conduct trade with their neighbors (+)
- Dragons prefer to eat virgins (+/-)
- The mage's academy in Khunchom is nurturing a rare dragon's egg, which is where it got its name. (possible)

#### Rumors about Dragons

- Dragons died out with the other lizard races in the past (-)
- Dragons still live in mountainous regions such as the Khoram Range and the Wall of Rashtul (+)
- Dragons are giant, winged lizards that can breathe fire (+/-)
- Dragons can use magic (+/-)
- Dragons hoard gold and jewels, and sometimes weapons and similar items, and eat anyone who tries to rob them (+), but they do this only to annoy humans. (-)





- There are many different kinds of dragons, including emperor dragons, westwind dragons, purple worms, cave dragons, giant wyverns, pit worms, tatzelwurms, and tree dragons, to name just a few (+)
- The pashach (Tulamidyā: *emperor dragon*) *Shafr the Splendid* rules the Khoram Range and flies over the Oasis of Achan at least once a month (+/-)
- *Al'Shabra* (Tulamidyā: *Daughter of the Splendid*), an emperor dragon who lives near the town of Yiyimiris in the Khoram Range, probably claimed Shafr's old domain after he gave up his hoard 300 years ago and moved to the Horasian Empire (+)
- Other dragons include the massive cave dragon *Khorasan* (Tulamidyā: *cave dragon*), *Bul ash'Shayan* (Tulamidyā: *Guard of Jewels*), who has a fantastic hoard of treasure (guarded, according to legend, by magical and mechanical traps), and the young *Ishlunar*, a cave dragon who is said to be much smarter than most of her kind and also a brilliant alchemist (+)

### Equipment

Knowledge of their destination should convince the heroes of the importance of the following equipment.

- Equipment from the Wilderness Package (*Core Rules*, page 365)
- Several sets of clothes (conditions range from the cold heights of the Khoram Range to the flat Mhanadi Valley, which is touched by the hot winds of the Khôm Desert)
- A supply of healing herbs (*Core Rules*, page 380), as well as alchemical potions and even magical artifacts (*Core Rules*, page 379)
- At least one compass (*Core Rules*, page 378)
- Maps (prices range from 200 thalers for a rough drawing with a few landmarks, to 200 silverthalers for a detailed map that grants a +1 bonus to the first SGC check when rolling for *Geography* (*Lands of the Talamydes*))

All of these goods are available in the bazaars of Khunchom. The Dragon's Egg Academy, Khunchom's mage academy, produces magic artifacts (*Core Rules*, page 379). The *Chamib*

*al'Chimie*, the alchemy professors at the academy, sell nearly every kind of wondrous potion or magical elixir. For an appropriate baksheesh (gift, tip, or favor), they provide potions that are illegal in Khunchom.

### A Gift for the Dragon

If the heroes do their research on Ishlunar, they might want to purchase a present for her before setting out on their journey. They have heard that some dragons love precious stones, so the bag of jewels might also make an acceptable gift.

Let the players discuss ideas for what to give the dragon, but remember that the adventure hinges on the idea that the heroes do not arrive at the dragon's cave with the perfect gift (an alchemical ingredient), and must make a journey in Chapter III to obtain what the dragon desires. If the players spend too much time shopping for the wrong present, they could get frustrated.

However, if your players work hard and enjoy spending hours thinking about how to make the dragon happy, don't throw their hard work out the window merely to fit the adventure's requirements. You can reward their efforts in this case. First, before the heroes leave Khunchom, make sure they understand that Ishlunar is a skilled alchemist. If they buy rare alchemical goods from the Dragon's Egg Academy, they will not have to go on the side-adventure for the dragon later, thus shortening Chapter III (in this case, move the showdown with the Ferkinas up from Chapter III to Chapter II, before the heroes find the dragon's cave).

### The Journey to the Mountains

Once the heroes are ready to set out, Kerime organizes ship's passage to the Mhanadi Valley (to a location of their choice between Samra and Mherwed). The journey takes about 8 days. If desired, embellish the journey with information from the *Aventuria Almanac*. Otherwise, proceed to Chapter II, where the heroes begin to climb the Khoram Range.



## Chapter II: The Khoram Range

The climb up into the mountains begins after the heroes arrive in the Mhanadi Valley. In this chapter, the heroes must face the rigors of mountain survival and encounters with various Ferkina tribes as they search for the dragon's hoard. They might even meet a Novadi noble looking for his stolen wife or have a chance to observe a powerful dragon on the hunt.

Think of this chapter as simply a set of parameters to guide play. As the heroes climb from the valley to the highlands, they could have any number of possible encounters. Some encounters should be combative, others helpful. Be creative.

The heroes don't know exactly where to look for Ishlunar's hoard. The local inhabitants know where to start, but first the heroes must win their trust. The heroes meet the cave dragon Ishlunar at the chapter's climax.

The following section presents an overview of the mountains, their inhabitants, and their dangers. The adventure continues in *Howling Winds and Steep Slopes*, on page 73.

### The Region and its Inhabitants

#### The Khoram Range

The Khoram is a desert mountain range made of light-colored, bizarrely sculpted sandstone that dominates the massif. The constant, howling mountain winds have carved deep canyons, sculptured pillars, and rough bridges. The steep peaks rise to 9,000 feet. No trees or plants of any kind grow above 6,000 feet, where blowing sand is the traveler's only companion.

Climate differs greatly in the region along the range. The northern slopes receive an abundance of yearly rainfall, which fosters dense undergrowth, hundred-foot-high waterfalls, and a thick cover of conifers such as cedars, yews, and cypresses. During the dry season, in Spring, the Altoum winds blow from the south, and the only precipitation falls as snow on the peaks.

The southern slopes are characterized by the hot desert wind, which blows desert sand to the heights from the Khôm. During the night, icy winds whip down from the peaks. Vegetation here is thin, and instead of trees, the

slopes are covered with wild roses, thorn bushes, and cacti. The Ferkina tribes of Merech claim the mountains as their ancestral land, but the dragons have ruled here far longer.

#### Travel

The heroes face a hard climb. Depending on their chosen route up into the mountains, their goal is 40 to 60 miles away, at an elevation of 7,500 feet. At first, they make 10 miles per day, but as they climb higher, the craggy ground slows their progress to 3 to 6 miles per day at most. Thus, the heroes spend several weeks in the mountains.

Few creatures move through these mountains without leaving a trace, and often sounds and tracks give warning that something lurks nearby. Make hidden checks with *Perception (Spot)* or *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)*, or let the players describe how their heroes are keeping watch, and judge accordingly.

Note that pursuers can easily follow the heroes' tracks if they do not take care to conceal them (for example, by using the spell *Traceless*). This is especially true when the heroes move through the highland territory of the Ferkinas of the Ban Hadârri and the Ban Tirghûfa.

#### Encounters

##### Optional Content

Besides Ferkinas, the heroes might encounter the local wildlife. Khoram beasts and Khôm vultures live throughout the mountains, making them ideal for random encounters.





### Khôm Vulture

**Size:** 3 to 4 feet at the shoulder;  
wingspan 9 to 11 feet

**Weight:** 20 to 30 pounds

**COU 10 SGC 13 (a) INT 13 CHA 11**

**DEX 11 AGI 12 CON 12 STR 12**

**LP 15 AE - KP - INI 11+1D6**

**DE 6 SPI 0 TOU 0 MOV 1/20** (on land/in  
the air)

**Beak and Claws:** AT 12 DP 1D6+2 RE short  
PRO/ENC 0/0

**Actions:** 1

**Special Abilities:** Flying Attack (Beak and Claws)

**Skills:** *Body Control 5, Feat of Strength 7, Flying 7, Intimidation 7, Perception 9, Self-Control 9, Stealth 7, Willpower 7*

**Number:** 1, or 2 (mated pair), or 2D6+1 (flock)

**Size Category:** medium

**Type:** Animal, non-humanoid

**Loot:** 5 rations of meat (inedible), trophy (vulture  
feathers, 0.5 silverthaler)

**Combat Behavior:** Vultures are scavengers, not predators. They attack humanoids when their chicks are threatened, but usually flee when larger creatures come too close. Vultures sometimes attack two legged creatures that get too close to their meal, but only if the birds outnumber them, and only for 3 CR at most. Vultures fight to the death only to protect their chicks or when helping other vultures to protect theirs.

**Escape:** Loss of 50% LP; they fight to the death when defending their aerie; in other situations, they usually do not pursue targets for more than 3 CR (see Combat Behavior)

#### Animal Lore (Wild Animals)

• **QL 1:** Vultures are scavengers, and usually do not attack two-legged creatures, preferring to wait for them to die before approaching.

• **QL 2:** Many vultures circling in the sky are probably watching a dying animal—or a traveler in the desert who is not far from his flight to Boron's halls.

• **QL 3+:** Vultures defend their offspring to the death, and attack any person who comes within 30 feet of their eyrie when chicks are present.

**Hunt:** 0

#### Special Rules

**Pack:** Vultures who attack an opponent together receive a bonus of +1 attack per vulture after the first (maximum +4 AT).

**Pain +1 at:** 11 LP, 8 LP, 5 LP, and 3 LP or less



### Khoram Beast

**Size:** 6 feet long (without tail); 6 to  
7 feet (with tail), 3 to 4 feet high  
at the shoulder

**Weight:** 130 to 160 pounds

**COU 14 SGC 12 (a) INT 15 CHA 12**

**DEX 11 AGI 14 CON 14 STR 12**

**LP 24 AE - KP - INI 14+1D6**

**DE 7 SPI 0 TOU 0 MOV 11**

**Bite:** AT 13 DP 1D6+4(+disease)\* RE short  
PRO/ENC 0/0

**Actions:** 1

**Special Abilities:** Forceful Blow I

**Skills:** *Body Control 7, Climbing 3, Feat of Strength 7, Intimidation 5, Perception 8, Self-Control 5, Stealth 8, Swimming 3, Willpower 5*

**Number:** 1D3+3 (small pack) or 1D6+6 (medium pack) or  
2D20+20 (large pack)

**Size Category:** medium

**Type:** Animal, non-humanoid

**Loot:** 30 rations of meat (inedible), trophy (teeth, 2  
silverthalers)

**Combat Behavior:** unless extremely hungry or feeling threatened, Khoram beasts usually do not attack strong opponents or opponents with superior numbers.

**Escape:** Loss of 50% LP; flees when half of the pack dies or else has run away.

#### Animal Lore (Wild Animals):

• **QL 1:** Khoram beasts are mainly nocturnal.

• **QL 2:** Their bites are dangerous, as they can transmit diseases.

• **QL 3+:** Khoram beasts act braver and more aggressive in larger numbers.

**Hunt:** -3

#### Special Rules

**Pack:** When concentrating attacks on one opponent, Khoram beasts gain a bonus of +1 attack per Khoram beast after the first (maximum +4 AT).

\***Disease:** Khoram beasts can transmit diseases. Roll 1D20 for each full 10 DP (after PRO) dealt by a Khoram beast: 1-8 (no disease), 9-14 (wound fever), 15-17 (lutas), 18-20 (rabies; see *Aventuria Almanac*, page 129). Heroes cannot contract more than one disease from a single animal. Infected heroes suffer the state *Diseased* (see *Core Rules*, page 36).

**Pain +1 with:** 18 LP, 12 LP, 6 LP, and 3 LP or less





### Survival in the Wilderness

Finding sufficient food requires *Animal Lore (Wild Animals)* or *Plant Lore (Crops)* checks. For each QL, the hero finds one ration of food. Food is more difficult to find at higher elevations: *Animal Lore (Wild Animals)* checks suffer a penalty of 1, and *Plant Lore (Crops)* checks suffer a penalty of 2.

The heroes face challenges every day. They must climb along rock ledges, cross narrow bridges, and find a suitable place to camp every evening. Call for a cumulative check with the three skills *Survival (Make Fire, Build Campsite, or Find Campsite)*, *Climbing (Mountains)*, and *Body Control (Acrobatics, Balancing, Running, or Jumping)*. Each skill can only be used once, and each hero must gather 4 QL. Heroes who fail suffer 1D3-1 DP (no PRO). Heroes may donate each QL above 4 to travel companions, to help them survive these challenges.

If you feel this is too much die rolling, use fewer checks (for example, call for checks only every three days, or even just once per week).

Heroes that did not bring warm clothes will suffer, as the wind is cold in the highlands. By the time the heroes leave the ancestral land of the Ban Sharîda, they are at an elevation where temperatures only drop a little below 50 degrees Fahrenheit at the night (Cold Level 1). When they reach the highlands, however, 50 degrees F. is the daytime high, while at night, the temperature falls below freezing (Cold Level 2). For rules covering Heat and Cold, see *Core Rules*, page 346.

### Among the Ferkinas

Throughout the rest of the adventure, the heroes encounter various Ferkina tribes. This section presents more information about these wild mountain barbarians.

#### Ferkinas

Mountain-dwelling Tulamydes still live the hard life of their ancestors, adhering to ancient traditions that seem barbaric both to outsiders and to the barbarians' relatives in the valleys. The term *Ferkina* means *true humans* in the barbarians' own tongue. In contrast, they call their city-dwelling cousins from the valleys *bloodless*.

**Domain and Way of Life:** The Ferkina Shai'Aian tribe make their home in the high plains and crags of the Wall of Rashtul, while the Merech mainly live in the Khoram Range. Other tribes and individual families live in neighboring mountain ranges. Ferkinas are viewed as the most primitive representatives of Tulamydian culture. They live mainly by hunting, but also by breeding

sheep, goats, and wild ponies, and they are much-feared caravan raiders. Each tribe usually maintains a tent camp from which herds, hunters, and scouts embark on longer journeys. Collectively, the Ferkina tribes are led by a *haran* (pl. *haruni*). A single tribe is governed by a *shâhr* (pl.: *shârim*). Sometimes a *shâhr* becomes a *shârim-shâhr*, the ruler of several tribes.

**World-View and Beliefs:** The Ferkinas worship cold-hearted gods like the raging bull Rashtula and the mare in heat, Rasha. Ferkinas pray for their aid via self-flagellation and acts of violence and frenzy. Depending on the tribe and region, some Ferkinas worship a host of nature spirits, and also powerful beings such as giants and dragons. They despise their valley-dwelling human cousins as *bloodless*, unworthy, and weak. The nuranshârim, the tribes' shamans, act as mediators with the gods and facilitate communication between the worlds of spirits and humans.

**Customs and Traditions:** Ferkinas carve ritualistic scars into their faces but try to keep them hidden from strangers, whom they feel are unworthy to see them. Unrestrained combative games, like the battle of two mounted teams for the tied-up body of a captive (called *buskurdh*), are customary, as is the degradation of women, which are viewed as cattle-like property and often become targets of theft and confrontations. Ferkina magic is influenced by their animistic worldview. Some follow druidic traditions, while others are *anach-nûrs*, people who open themselves to possession by animal spirits and gain their power.

**Garb and Armament:** Tulamydian barbarians wear sturdy shoes, riding pants made from leather, and wide blankets of fur or felt, which they wrap around their upper bodies. In the presence of strangers, they cover their ornamental facial scars, usually with blood-red bandannas and cloth masks. They obtain metal weapons mainly by stealing them, as they know how to work only wood, bone, and stone. Ferkinas usually prefer to carry stone axes, stone-tipped spears, and short bows with stone-tipped arrows. They rarely own armor or metal weapons.

**Typical Names:** Ferkina names consist of a first name, followed by the name of the father. They place the word *ibn* for men (son of...) and *sabu* (daughter of...; for unmarried women) between their first and last names. Married women add the addition *zwash(i)* and the name of their husband/owner to their names. Using the examples below, this results in names such as Gulbad ibn Hafz, Ashu sabu Haydar, Ashu zwash-i-Gulbad, and Mehrshan zwash-Umar.

♣ **male:** Abtuul, Ardavan, Bashur, Devlekh, Dschalf, Faruch, Feridun, Hamar, Khordad, Madawan, Umar, Yabman

♣ **female:** Azrubat, Chatun, Chorshilan, Duncha, Far zandeh, Hulya, Jeleyin, Khalila, Lahileh, Nazran, Pe ribanu, Tamra



While traveling through the Khoram, the heroes must deal with at least three tribes of Ferkinas, all of which belong to the tribal alliance of the *Bartûni ai-merech*, or *Merech*, for short. The alliance claims the Khoram Mountains as its ancestral land. They are the archetypal barbarian raiders in the Balash valley, with their primitive ferocity and their contempt for the comforts of civilization and the so-called *bloodless* who live in the valley. Several tribes of the *Merech*, especially the *Ban Sharîda*, succumbed to the lure of settlement and the pleasures of trade. This perceived softness frequently leads to conflicts between the tribes that sometimes escalate into bloody feuds. They are not easy to deal with, as the heroes learn soon enough.

### Abu Terfas

In the following sections, the heroes may hear whispers about Abu Terfas, a powerful mage and creator of chimeras. He was infamous for having made a pact with a demon long ago. Abu Terfas ruled a small dominion here until around 20 years ago, when he was defeated by the Bearers of the Seven Signs. The ruins of his palace are still visible in a valley in the Khoram Range.



## Howling Winds and Steep Slopes

In this section, the heroes must choose a route to climb from the Mhanadi Valley to the highest peaks. The regions they encounter include the **foothills (I, below)**, the **Yew Slopes (II, on page 75)**, the **Ancestral Land of the Ban Sharîda (III, on page 78)**, and finally the **Highlands (IV, on page 80)**, where the heroes find Ishlunar's cave. Each entry provides descriptions of the landscape, important locations, local dangers, suggested encounters, and available clues. Each region is clearly marked on the map with a Roman numeral that matches its corresponding entry in this section.

### The Foothills (I)

The foothills of the Khoram start in an alluvial floodplain. In winter, the region's water comes from mountain brooks and rivers. In summer, the rising waters of the Mhanadi spread deposits of nutrient-rich soil across a wide area, creating one of the most productive wild meadows in Aventuria. Cotton grass, wild rice, wild roses (Tulamidyā: *azila*), purple thistles, silver ferns, and little hollies are just some of the plants that thrive here throughout the year. The land could support hundreds of thousands of people, but farmers avoid the area out of fear of Ferkina raids. Only the *Ulad Barshîm* dare to live here with their herds, which multiply rapidly due to the rich resources.

### The Ferkina Language

The Ferkinas speak a simplified version of Tulamidyā that contains many archaic terms from Ancient Tulamidyā. Ferkina can be learned up to Level III but has no associated script.

### Ferkina (Ordinary/ Experienced/Competent)

COU 13/14/14 SGC 11/11/11  
INT 13/13/13 CHA 10/10/10  
DEX 12/12/12 AGI 13/13/13  
CON 13/14/14 STR 13/13/15  
LP 31/33/35 AE - KP - MOV 7/7/8  
DO 6/6/7 SPI 1/1/2 TOU 2/2/2  
INI 13/14/14 +1D6



**Unarmed:** AT 10/12/14 PA 5/5/8 DP 1D6+0/+0/+1  
RE short

**Spear:** AT 10/12/14 PA 5/5/8 DP 1D6+4/+4/+4  
RE long

**Stone Axe:** AT 10/12/15 PA 4/6/8 DP 1D6+3/+3/+4  
RE medium

**Short Bow:** RC 10/11/12 LZ 1 DP 1D6+4 RA 10/50/80  
**PRO/ENC** 2/1; *competent:* 2/0 (cloth and fur armor)  
(includes armor modifiers)

**Special Abilities:** Area Knowledge (Ferkina Village),  
Feint I, Forceful Blow I / *experienced:* Charge,  
Onslaught, Terrain Knowledge (Mountains)  
/ *competent:* Forceful Blow II, Inured to  
Encumbrance I, Mounted Combat, Takedown

**Skills:** Body Control 6/8/9, Climbing 6/8/10, Empathy  
3/4/5, Fast-Talk 2/2/4, Feat of Strength 7/8/8,  
Intimidation 8/8/8, Perception 5/7/8, Self-Control  
5/6/10, Stealth 7/8/8, Tracking 6/8/11, Willpower 5/6/7

**Combat Behavior:** Ferkinas prefer to attack with  
superior numbers. In personal combat, they prefer  
fighting the strongest opponent available, which  
increases the respect they enjoy. They use Forceful  
Blows only when fighting a tough or strong enemy,  
such as an obvious warrior or an armored opponent.  
They do not attack women, which they view as  
spoils of war, not as opponents. Any women that  
defend themselves are quickly and brutally slain,  
as Ferkinas view combative behavior in a woman  
as a type of rebellion.

**Escape:** per individual, but no later than the death  
of 75% of their companions, or when they suffer  
*Pain III*

**Pain +1 at:** 23 LP, 16 LP, 8 LP, and 5 LP or less/25 LP,  
17 LP, 8 LP, and 5 LP or less/26 LP, 18 LP, 9 LP, and  
5 LP or less



## Locations

This section describes towns and ruins along the Mhanadi as well as west of Mherwed, at the edge of the Khoram Range.

- ◆ **Ivrinno:** see page 89
- ◆ **Samra:** around 250 inhabitants; Sultanate of Rashdul; Temple of Peraine; site of a bridge that crosses the Mhanadi. East of the village is the ruin of Zhamorra, a lizardfolk metropolis that was destroyed centuries ago during a conflict with dark mage moguls
- ◆ **Borbra:** around 650 inhabitants; Sultanate of Rashdul; temples of Tsa/Praios/Peraine; walled-in residential neighborhood; harbors; sometimes flooded; many mosquitoes; stone oak, sacred to Tsa, in the village square
- ◆ **Arborea:** Ruin across the river from Borbra, destroyed by the chimeras of the evil mage Abu Terfas in 1019 FB; Rahja temple (with paddock holding three wild mares); camp of the Ulad Barshîm (about 100 inhabitants; housed in tents and ruined homes); wild grapes grow on the surrounding hills
- ◆ **Mhanessipur:** about 500 inhabitants; Caliphate (Emirate of Mhanadistan); temples of Rastullah and Peraine; some shepherds of the Ulad Barshîm in the surroundings; seat of the emir, who claims all the land west of the Mhanadi as far as the mouth of the Erkin

## The Ulad Barshîm

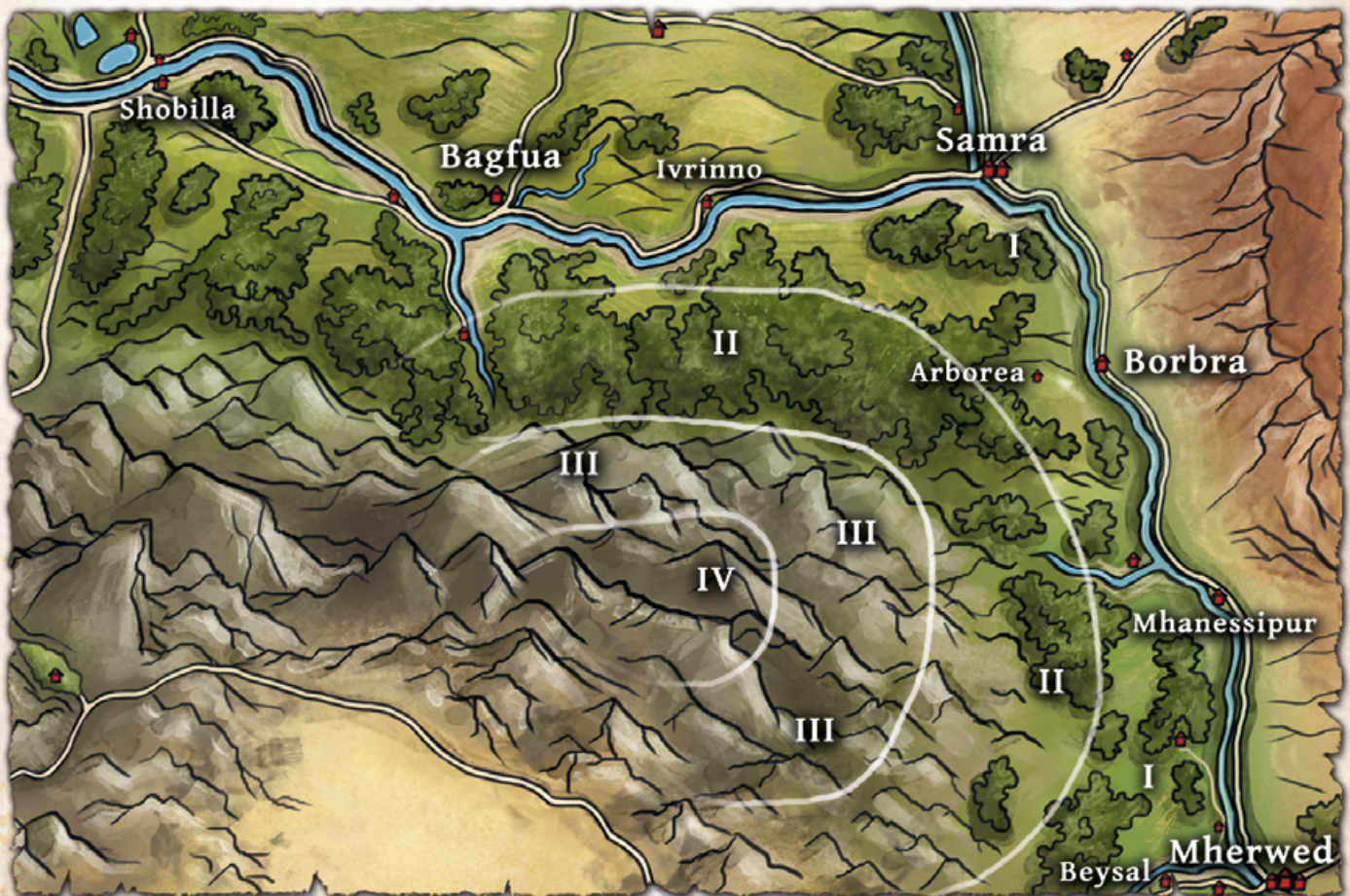
**Number:** about 800

**Way of Life:** The Ulad Barshîm are more like a small Tulamyde tribe with Ferkina ancestors than real Ferkinas. Since the day they first settled in the fertile foothills of the Khoram Range, they have mixed with Novadis, Balashides, and Gorians, and paid tribute in kind to the stewards of Harabal in Gorla or the emir of Mhanessipur, usually in the form of cattle and sheep from their herds. They view themselves as a Tulamydian tribe of shepherds, not as Ferkinas. The Ulad Barshîm openly fear their cousins in the highlands, as they gave up the old ways of the mountains long ago.

**World-View and Beliefs:** They worship the old tribal gods of Rashtula and Rasha, but call them Rastullah or Rahja, depending on which kingdom is in charge.

**Garb and Armament:** They are equipped with metal weapons and other goods from civilization. Their clothes resemble those of the Novadis. They no longer dye their veils red, and now rarely scar their faces.

**Dealing with Heroes:** cordial; they are civilized shepherds who do not want trouble. However, they do ask for money or a favor in exchange for information.





in the Wall of Rashtul, but whose power realistically extends only as far as the area around Mhanessipur.

• **Beysal:** 150 inhabitants, Caliphate (Emirate of Balash); temple of Rastullah; ford across the Mhalik.

### The Attack on the Caravan

The heroes hear plenty of scary stories about the Ferkinas on the road. Now that they are setting foot in Ferkina country for the first time, they should put aside any lingering prejudices.

While traveling through the foothills of the Khoram Range and seeking a path up into the mountains, they encounter a little caravan of three camels and eight mules all laden with goods and resting in a ditch. The animals are accompanied by three men in caftans who gambled on a business opportunity in these rarely traveled lands.

With a successful *Perception (Spot)* check, the heroes notice approximately ten men on ponies appear on the rise above the ditch. Their faces are covered with cloth of varying colors. The caravan doesn't seem to notice the riders.

From their descriptions, the heroes identify the riders on the hill as Ferkinas, and it looks like they are planning an attack. Unless the heroes intervene, the riders start galloping towards the caravan. In truth, these Ferkinas are members of the Ulad Barshîm who wish only to trade with the caravan. Their faces are covered, not to hide their scars from the bloodless, but rather to keep from inhaling sand and dust.

Hopefully the heroes resolve the misunderstanding before anyone gets hurt. This encounter teaches them the important lesson that all Ferkinas are not alike. The encounter allows the heroes to gain first-hand information about the culture. Also, the caravan presents another opportunity for heroes to purchase necessary gear, although the merchants' prices are 50% (or even more) above the normal cost.

### The Yew Slopes (II)

Ancient forests of dark yew trees grow on the northern Khoram slopes and lend the area an unnerving look. Wisps of fog rise from the dense stands of trees even during the day, making the surroundings feel more sinister. At least the slopes are arable (compared to the southern slopes of the mountains).

The deep yew roots stabilize the soil, and the undergrowth is home to red-tufts, deer, mountain antelopes, and wild donkeys. This bounty provides sustenance to jackals and Khoram beasts, and makes it a welcome hunting ground for the Ban Sharîda. They fiercely defend their domain and animals against the other tribes. Their sheep graze contentedly under the trees, as do their herds of especially robust Rashdulan corkscrew-horn cattle, which seem to thrive on the mildly poisonous berries and needles of the yew trees.

### The Golden Lion

The heroes aren't the only ones crossing the land of the Ferkinas these days. A Novadi field commander named *Asad al'Dhehebi ben Azhura* (see page 76), an emir of the Caliphate, is here with 18 faithful men (2 x 9; 9 being the holy number of Rastullah) on an expedition to rescue his favorite wife (he has four). A few weeks ago, a group of Ferkinas abducted his beloved wife *Hanaqis* (24; 5'5"; skin like milky tea; black hair; proud as a noble horse; in love with her husband). The emir's force made camp on the Yew Slopes and dispatched scouts to find the Ferkinas.

A *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* check with a penalty of 2 allows the heroes to find the Novadis' tracks or even their camp, which is situated in a valley with sufficient forage for their horses.





Alternatively, the Novadi warriors might notice the heroes first and make contact. Their garb (harem pants, mirror-polished armor, turban, cape, Khunchomer saber) should tell the heroes that the strangers probably aren't Ferkinas. The Novadis are curious as to what brings the heroes to the mountains and they invite the heroes to their camp. For a description of the Novadis and their culture, see the *Core Rules*, starting on page 113.

#### Novadi Warrior

COU 14 SGC 12 INT 13 CHA 10

DEX 11 AGI 13 CON 14 STR 15

LP 35 AE - KP - INI 12+1D6

DO 6 SPI 2 TOU 2 MOV 6

PRO/ENC 4/1 (chain armor) (includes armor modifiers)

Waqqif: AT 13 PA 5 DP 1D6+2 RE short

Khunchomer and Leather Shield: AT 12 PA 8 DP 1D6+4 RE medium

**Special Abilities:** Charge, Feint I, Forceful Blow I+II, Inured to Encumbrance I, Mounted Combat, Onslaught

**Skills:** Body Control 9, Empathy 3, Fast-Talk 2, Feat of Strength 8, Intimidation 8, Perception 8, Riding 11, Self-Control 8, Stealth 8, Willpower 7

**Combat Behavior:** Novadis intimidate opponents with Charge or Onslaught to gain a quick advantage.

**Escape:** Loss of 75 % LP

**Pain +1 at:** 26 LP, 18 LP, 9 LP, and 5 LP or less

#### The Novadi Camp

The warriors lead the heroes to their camp and present them at the emir's tent, the largest of the eight. Embroidered upon it in gold thread are the words "the great tent of Rastullah." Asad al'Dhehebi greets them personally, leads them inside, and offers them a seat on a cushion. Servants bring fresh tea and sweet dates. As the 99 Laws forbid eating from the same plate as a nonbeliever, Asad owns a special set of dishes for occasions like this. After all, hospitality is sacred to him.

#### Asad al'Dhehebi ben Azharu,

#### Third Emir of the Calif

**Brief Description:** mid-40s; masterful warrior and field commander; dark brown hair; full, trimmed beard; proud and pious desert warrior; greets nonbelievers with respect but also with the aloofness commanded by Rastullah.

**Role:** possible ally; source of information

**Background:** The Golden Lion, as Asad is known, is a pious and cultured Novadi. He does not proselytize, but his spirit yearns to defend the faith. While he remains respectful and friendly towards nonbelievers, he has the confidence of a man who knows he has chosen the right path. He undertook this journey at the behest of the caliph, but he is now waging a private war to rescue his third wife, Hanaqis, from the Ferkinas. To restore his honor, he must rescue his wife and punish the guilty.

**Role Playing Tips:** Asad is the classic image of the proud son of the desert. He has the dignity and pride of a lion and is just as dangerous when provoked. Act friendly and accommodating, and view your mission as a test of your faith. Speak only to male heroes and react with surprise if a heroine addresses you (you are sure that female heroes must be the wives or sisters of one of the males present).

**Important Stats:** Fate Points 3, Social Status 4, Natural Orator, Rugged Fighter / Personality Flaw (Arrogance), Principles I (99 Laws); *Commerce* 12 (14/12/15), *Empathy* 13 (14/12/15), *Etiquette* 8 (14/12/15), *Fast-Talk* 8 (16/12/15), *Intimidation* 12 (16/12/15), *Perception* 6 (14/12/12),





*Self-Control* 10 (16/16/12), *Warfare* 11 (16/12/15), *Willpower* 11 (16/12/15); SPI 1.

*"I will rescue my noble wife and leave the dirty brigands' bones to the vultures, as the One is my witness!"*

*"A dragon? By Rastullah's splendid locks! A bold enterprise, certainly, but Rastullah favors the brave, it is said. And who am I to stand in your way?"*

### **The Assignment**

Asad listens with interest to the heroes' story, and then tells his own. He asks the heroes to keep their eyes peeled and question any Ferkinas they meet about the strangers. He hopes that the Ferkinas will speak more freely with the heroes, since they probably won't speak to he who is obviously looking for her. If the heroes find a clue as to his wife's location, or even manage to free her, he promises to reveal what he knows. After all, his scouts have surveyed a great deal of the mountains and could provide clues that would make it easier to find the dragon's cave.

### **What Asad Knows**

Asad and his men have been here for a few weeks and have thoroughly scouted the area. He has overheard many rumors and knows about the dragon domains, which he advises the heroes avoid. Asad knows that a cave dragon lives near *Djer Shahuleth*, a mountain with three peaks in the southeastern corner of the Khoram Range. He can describe the approximate location of the mountain to the heroes well enough to make it easier to find the dragon's hoard later (in game terms, this grants a bonus to checks; see *Finding the Mountain*, on page 82).

He does not give this information to the heroes without getting something in return, so he suggests a trade and asks them to help find his wife Hanaqis. If the heroes refuse, he does not reveal what he knows unless the heroes use magic or divine intervention, in which case Asad becomes a powerful enemy. If you wish to omit this aspect of the story, the heroes can find the mountain without the emir's help.

The emir does not know who exactly abducted Hanaqis. His favorite wife usually accompanies him on his travels, and he is livid that his men did not spot the Ferkina ambush before she went off to freshen up at a well. From Asad's perspective, the guards are lucky that they were killed by the barbarians, for the lion's rage would have been much worse.

### **The Heroes as Guests**

Unless the heroes make an enemy of Asad, he invites them to be his guests. They may pitch their tents in his camp, or find a place to sleep in one of the warriors' tents. He shares his food and drink with them, and encourages them to listen to stories from the desert around the campfire at night. The heroes may enjoy Novadi hospitality as long as they wish, and while they do so, their well-being and security are the emir's responsibility. It might be many days before the heroes have another opportunity to sleep without worry.

### **Dragon Shadow**

At some point during the heroes' journey, the following occurs.

#### **Read Aloud or Paraphrase**

*You cross over a ridge and come upon a valley full of green grass and a thick carpet of mountain flowers. Large boulders surround the wide basin, and dark green conifers grow along its edges. In the distance, you see goats and several Rashdulan corkscrew-horned cows grazing in the shadows of the trees. Then you notice a pair of shepherds sitting under the trees: two women dressed in simple clothes made of fur and leather.*

*You wonder whether they could be Ferkinas and debate the best way to announce yourselves when a shadow passes overhead.*

*You look skyward, and your blood freezes when you realize what just blotted out the sun. Leathery wings carry a powerful, scaled body as large as a sailing ship!*

[Give the heroes a moment to react]

*With a terrifying cry the creature dives towards the ground, scattering the animals. Gliding just above the grass, the dragon quickly catches a cow and kills it with one blow of its powerful claws. Then it sinks its teeth into the beast, neatly grabbing it and flying off again in a heartbeat. You keep an eye on the monster as it devours the cow and swings around for what looks like another pass. The two women race to drive their surviving animals under the cover of the trees.*

The heroes should know by now that cave dragons cannot fly, and therefore this is not Ishlunar. The creature on the hunt in this valley is the emperor dragon Saba al'Shabra, daughter of Shafir the Splendid. While Saba is a different species of dragon, this scene sets the mood for the encounter with Ishlunar.



The two Ferkina women try to herd their panicked livestock into the cover of a ditch near the trees. If the heroes wish to avoid contact with the mountain barbarians, they can continue on their way, unnoticed by the women.

If the heroes try to assist with the roundup, the women first react with hostility until they realize that the strangers want to help. Rounding up the panicked animals requires a cumulative check with *Body Control (Running)* AND *Animal Lore (Domesticated Animals)*. Participating characters round up one sheep or cow for each QL (12 sheep and six cows remain). Despite appearances to the contrary, Saba does not want to take any more animals. She eventually flies off.

If the heroes manage to help, they earn the thanks of the two women of the Ban Sharîda. Once they catch their breath, they invite the heroes to their camp (see *The Ancestral Land of the Ban Sharîda*, below).

### The Ancestral Land of the Ban Sharîda (III)

Even though they claim the Yew Slopes as their hunting grounds, the Ban Sharîda live in the higher elevations of the Khoram Range. This rough, rocky region has fewer plants than on the Yew Slopes—mainly steppe grass and conifers. On clear days, the banks of the Mhanadi are easily visible in the valley below, but while the sun burns mercilessly on the river and plains, the air at this altitude is thin and cool, and nights are unpleasantly cold with temperatures below 50 degrees Fahrenheit (Cold Level I; see *Core Rules*, page 346).

If the heroes remain alert while they travel, a successful *Perception (Spot)* check reveals signs of inhabitation (cold fire pits, dung from domesticated animals, human footprints, horses' hoof prints). Following these tracks requires a cumulative *Tracking (Humanoid or Animal Tracks)* check (30 minutes, any number of attempts). Success leads the heroes either to a group of Ferkina warriors or to the village of the Ban Sharîda.

If the heroes fail to spot any signs of the Ferkinas or do not properly hide their tracks (competitive check using *Tracking (Hide Tracks)* versus the Ferkinas' *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)*; (SR 8 (14/13/13)), the following happens.

#### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*Suddenly, they are there—at least ten men, charging at you on sturdy ponies. They wear thin shirts on their scarred upper bodies, and patched leather trousers cover their legs. Most telling of all, they conceal their faces behind pieces of blood-red cloth. Howling and screaming with bloodlust, they raise their spears and bows as they bear down on you, and the ground shakes beneath your feet!*

#### Attack of the Mountain Barbarians

The Ferkinas lie in wait for the heroes. With a successful competitive check on *Perception (Spot)* versus the Ferkinas' *Stealth (Hide)* with a bonus of 1 (SR 8 (14/13/13)), the heroes spot the ambush. The Ferkinas use mock assaults to mark their domain and test strangers' courage (this has proven an excellent means of discouraging the *bloodless* from trespassing in the mountains). The ambush involves a mounted charge, but as it is only a mock attack, the Ferkinas intend to stop their horses immediately in front of the heroes. Few can face such a situation and remain calm. If the heroes have already learned that Ferkinas like to test peoples' courage, they stand a better chance of passing the test. Of course, they can't be sure that this is just a test and not a real attack....

Heroes who try to stand their ground must succeed in a competitive check of *Willpower (Resist Intimidation)* versus the Ferkinas' *Intimidation (Threats)* (the Ferkinas get a bonus of 3 for their appearance). Heroes who fail suffer one level of the condition *Fear* per difference in QL. The Ferkinas' reaction to the heroes depends on how they behave during the attack, as follows.

- ◆ If all heroes flee in panic, the Ferkinas mock them as *jarrbhan* (cowards) and do not take them seriously
- ◆ If about half of the heroes flee, the Ferkinas treat them as *turum* (guests)—not especially respected, but also not worthy of insult
- ◆ If almost all heroes stand their ground, the Ferkinas greet them warmly as *tafsah* (friends) and negotiate willingly
- ◆ If all heroes face the riders without flinching, and appear equal or superior to the Ferkinas in courage and strength, the tribe names them *lirgassi* (cousins), greets them in kinship, and showers them with respect



- If the heroes counterattack the Ferkinas and injure somebody, the test stops being fun and games and a real fight begins. However, once they get things straightened out, the Ferkinas invite the heroes to join them at their camp.

### The Ban Sharîda

**Number:** about 500

**Way of Life:** The Ban Sharîda are a Ferkina tribe who mostly follow the old traditions, even though their nuranshâr (leader) has nothing against the comforts that come with trade. Thus the Ban Sharîda are among the milder and more peaceful tribes—relative to other Ferkinas, that is. They began trading with their neighbors in the valley a few years ago, and gained much respect for mages after they learned that spellcasters are not as weak as they often look.

### The Village of the Bir Sharîd

This community of *Merech* built their village of clay huts around a well on a plateau surrounded on three sides by steep slopes. Goats and sheep generally have the run of the streets (paths worn between the buildings), and the smoke from many cooking fires fills the air.

The Ban Sharîda's leader is the nuranshâr *Jikhab iban Tsharik* (53; 5'9"; Ferkina garb with colorful embroidery reminiscent of feathers; greedy; unpleasant, reedy voice; overconfident; wants to become a shâhr; owns the golden reins of Abu Terfas' legendary winged horse chimera; *Commerce* 5 (12/13/14), *Willpower* 9 (15/13/14), SPI 1).

How the heroes are welcomed in the village depends on how they responded to the mock attack. If they acted bravely, they gain a bonus of 1 (*tafsah*) or even 2 (*lirgassi*) to the following checks while interacting with the Ban Sharîda. If they performed miserably (*jarrbhan*) in the eyes of the warriors, they

• The GM decides how the Ferkinas judge the heroes' behavior. The Ferkinas may even decide that the heroes are brave if some of them fail their checks, depending on their actions. A hero who stands alone and unflinching in the face of the charge deserves much greater respect, especially for having to put up with cowardly companions every day.



### Experienced Ferkina

COU 14 SGC 11 INT 13 CHA 10

DEX 12 AGI 13 CON 14 STR 13

LP 33 AE - KP - INI 14+1D6

DO 6 SPI 1 TOU 2 MOV 7

**Unarmed:** AT 12 PA 5 DP 1D6

RE short

**Spear:** AT 12 PA 5 DP 1D6+4 RE long

**Stone Axe:** AT 12 PA 5 DP 1D6+3 RE medium

**Short Bow:** RC 11 RT 1 DP 1D6+4 RA 10/50/80

**PRO/ENC** 2/1 (cloth and fur armor) (includes armor modifiers)

**Special Abilities:** Area Knowledge (Ferkina Village), Charge, Feint I, Forceful Blow I, Onslaught, Terrain Knowledge (Mountains)

**Skills:** *Body Control* 8, *Climbing* 8, *Empathy* 4, *Fast-Talk* 2, *Feat of Strength* 8, *Perception* 7, *Riding* 9, *Self-Control* 6, *Stealth* 8, *Tracking* 8, *Willpower* 6

**Combat Behavior:** The Ferkinas desire only to test the heroes' courage, not hurt anyone. If provoked, however, they defend themselves and display their courage with daring maneuvers.

**Escape:** with *Pain* level III

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

receive a penalty of 1 to the following checks. Spellcasters and Blessed Ones receive an additional bonus of 1 if they perform obvious magic or miracles at any time during their visit.

### Information and Trade

This visit gives the heroes one last chance to trade for necessary items and maybe even obtain a beautiful present for Ishlunar. Kerime's simple jewels are of little interest to the Ferkinas. They are more interested in goods from the valley: metal weapons, luxury items such as jewelry and make-up, and all kinds of frippery. They are happiest with anything foreign and new that they feel makes an impressive trophy.

In exchange for such items, the heroes can receive the following information:

- The Ban Sharîda do not know the exact location of Ishlunar's hoard, or even if she is still alive. They avoid her hunting grounds for obvious reasons, but can at least tell the heroes how to get there. This information grants a bonus to the heroes' search-related checks in the section *Finding the Mountain* on page 82.



- The Ban Sharîda strongly suggest that the heroes leave their mounts behind. The Ban Hadârri and the Ban Tirghûfa patrol the few highland paths suitable for horses.
- The heroes should avoid the Ban Hadârri and the Ban Tirghûfa, two smaller tribes of Ferkinas who live in the highlands, for they are, as the Ban Sharîda say, *real barbarians!*
- The heroes should avoid getting involved in conflicts between the Ban Hadârri and the Ban Tirghûfa, as both tribes have been fighting a blood feud for generations
- To cross the domains of the Ban Hadârri and the Ban Tirghûfa in safety, the heroes have two options: try to remain hidden, or try to make a deal with one tribe, which automatically makes them an enemy of the other
- Rumor has it that the Ban Tirghûfa recently abducted a woman who fits Hanaqis' description, although nobody knows if she is still alive

## The Highlands (IV)

Wind, water, and weather have scarred the sandstone mountains and carved deep gorges from their sides. Lone rock needles, worshiped by locals as the dwelling places of combative spirits, jut out of the landscape in defiance of the wind.

The wind sings and howls eerily through the stalks of tough grass that grows on the plateaus.

At this point, the heroes reach the most hostile part of the mountains. They can look forward to long days avoiding the tribes of the Ban Hadârri and the Ban Tirghûfa and dealing with the cold. Even during the day, the temperature rarely climbs above 50 degrees Fahrenheit (Cold Level I), and the nights are worse (Cold Level II).

### Traveling through Tribal Territory

The heroes have various options for crossing the territory of the two tribes, as follows.

- **Sneak Past:** The mountains cover a large area and are difficult to patrol. Those who hide their tracks might escape the Ferkinas' watchful gaze. Choose one hero to disguising the party's tracks, which requires one competitive *Tracking (Hide Tracks)* versus the Ferkinas' *Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* per day. The heroes then accrue time in the highlands until they find Ishlunar's cave (see *Finding the Mountain*, page 82).
- **Cooperate with the Novadis:** Having learned that the Ban Tirghûfa abducted a woman who fits Hanaqis' description, the heroes now have something to trade to Asad for the location the dragon's cave. The Novadis then ride for the tribal territory of the Ban Tirghûfa to free Hanaqis. If the heroes join the rescue mission,

the Ban Sharîda show the Novadis a shortcut (see *The Camp of the Ban Tirghûfa*, page 81). However, the desert warriors refuse to abandon their mounts and must therefore stick to paths accessible to horses, but they do not care for stealth anyway.

- **Use the Novadis as a distraction:** The heroes take advantage of the distraction created by the Novadis to sneak through the Ban Tirghûfa's tribal territory (in which case the heroes' checks receive a bonus of 2, while the Ban Tirghûfa's competitive checks to detect them suffer a penalty of 2).
- **Parley with one of the Ferkina tribes:** The heroes can try to negotiate a treaty with one of the two squabbling factions. They may accomplish this through simple provocation (visible campfires, insults shouted down into the valleys, and so on) or by following the barbarians' tracks (*Tracking (Humanoid Tracks)* check) and openly approaching them.

In both cases, they view the heroes as intruders and enemies, and a confrontation is inevitable. To gain the tribes' respect and avoid being seen as weak, the heroes must achieve a quick victory by conducting a brutal attack or making a magical demonstration of power.

Even if they succeed, an alliance proves costly. Metal is rare in the mountains, and the Ferkinas covet metal weapons and goods. After making a suitable trade, the Ferkinas present the heroes with clothes in the tribe's color and show them secret paths through the mountains (future *Tracking (Hide Tracks)* checks here receive a bonus of 2, while all competitive *Perception (Spot)* checks made by the opposing Ferkina tribe suffer a penalty of 2).

The Ferkinas are familiar with Ishlunar's territory and can tell the heroes the route to Djer Shahuleth. This information awards the same search bonuses granted for the knowledge gained from Asad.

### The Village of Ban Hadârri

The camp of the Ban Hadârri is primitive compared to that of the Ban Sharîda. The village occupies several more-or-less flat terraces and is well-protected by steep ridges. Two clay towers rise above the homes, which cluster around a small pond with a bubbling well in the center. The village mainly consists of tents of various size and shape, indicating the status of the owning family.

Decorations made of horn and feather mark one of the towers as the home of the nuranshâr *Jikhab* (48; 5'7"; black, matted hair; unkempt, even for a Ferkina; often talks to the spirits and thus is always intoxicated (condition *Stupor* and/or *Confusion* I-IV).



The other tower belongs to the haran *Devlekh iban Tulsani* (28; 6'4"; muscular; powerful warrior; wears only a fur skirt and red cloth covering his lower face; hostile to non-Ferkinas; *Commerce* 7 (12/13/12); *Willpower* 6 (15/13/12); SPI 1), who wants to maintain his peoples' traditional life in the mountains. Convincing the haran to take their side requires a great amount of effort (and courage).

#### **The Ban Hadârri.**

**Number:** about 100

**Way of Life:** The Ban Hadârri are among the most uncivilized Ferkinas in the Khoram Mountains. To gather glory and riches, they often attack the followers of the Twelvegods and the Novadis who live in the valley. Young *Devleh iban Tulsani* is their haran. He was born a Ban *Sharîda*, but they were too civilized for his taste. His strong traditionalism has made a powerful enemy: the *nuranshâr Jikhab*.

#### **The Camp of the Ban Tirghûfa**

Unlike the villages of the Ban *Sharîda* and the Ban Hadârri, the main camp of the Ban Tirghûfa consists only of tents erected around a spring that flows from the rock and creates a small brook. Half-feral goats and sheep wander everywhere, and several scouts watch the camp from atop a raised position. The horses of the Ban Tirghûfa graze alongside the sheep in the meadow.

The tent of the *nuranshâr Bashur iban Nashrath* (22; 5'10"; black hair; pale skin with few scars; inexperienced and weak; allowed to rule only because of his ability to talk to the spirits; *Willpower* 10 (14/15/15); SPI 2) is easy to spot, as it is decorated with vulture wings all around and two ram skulls hang beside the entrance.

The haran, *Tsharîk iban Hâmar* (36; 6'; black hair; gravelly voice; brutal and impulsive (Short Temper); afraid of being challenged and losing his position; addicted to fermented mare's milk, always suffers from *Stupor I*; *Commerce* 8 (12/13/13); *Willpower* 7 (15/13/13); SPI 1) lives in the biggest tent.

#### **The Ban Tirghûfa.**

**Number:** about 100

**Way of Life:** The Ban Tirghûfa are the most primitive Ferkinas of the Khoram Mountains, and every bit as ferocious as the Ban Hadârri. They have no permanent dwellings, and instead travel through the highlands in the traditional way, following the paths shown to them by the herds. *Bashur iban Nashrath*, their *nuranshâr*, is young and inexperienced.





If the heroes find this camp on their own and approach unseen, they might witness a rare sight—a Ferkina sacrificial ritual (see *The Wild Beauty*, below). Alternatively, the heroes might approach the tribe openly to discuss an alliance.

#### The Heroes as Partners of the Ban Tirghûfa

The heroes can try to forge an alliance with the Ban Tirghûfa, since the tribe knows about the dragon's cave. In this case, the heroes witness the scene *The Wild Beauty* after earning Haran Tsharîk's trust. Instead of freeing her themselves, the heroes can negotiate the release of Emir Asad's favorite wife, *Hanaqis*. Doing so requires a competitive *Commerce (Haggling)* check.

#### The Wild Beauty

##### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*A crowd of 40 Ferkinas cheers loudly as a man leads a white mare by its reins into an improvised paddock. Something spooks the horse and it lashes out with its hooves, but the man skillfully dodges the blow.*

*A bone-chilling scream alerts you to the woman lying tied up on the ground in the paddock, desperately trying to free herself from her ropes. She wears a Novadi caftan that may once have been sand-colored but is now stained with dirt and blood and torn in many places.*

*The terrified woman stares at the horse, and you remember the horror stories you heard in the valley about wild Ferkinas who like to see their enemies trampled to death by horses.*

Of course, the woman is *Hanaqis* (24; 5'5"; skin the color of milky tea; black hair; proud like a noble horse; deeply in love with her husband; *Seduction* 10 (14/14/14); SPI 2), the favorite wife of Emir Asad. Haran Tsharîk wanted to make her his wife, but she resisted his advances so vehemently that he decided to sacrifice her to the goddess Rasha in this ritual.

The horse is distracted and scared. Unless stopped, the Ferkina leads the horse by the reins, and whips it when it balks, until it steps on the woman. If the heroes stop the Ferkina, the horse circles the paddock nervously and runs

away if someone opens the gate. For the horse's stats, see the *Core Rules*, page 361.

#### Things to Do

If the heroes decide to act, give the players time to plan, and work with their suggestions. Don't make freeing the woman too difficult. Suggestions for plans include:

- Rescuing *Hanaqis* while Asad and his Novadi riders distract the Ferkinas with a mounted attack
- Creating a distraction (if Asad is not present), perhaps by setting fire to the Ferkinas' tents, launching a Ferkina-style feint attack, or spooking the horses
- Negotiating with the Ferkinas (the most difficult option). The haran does not budge, as he does not want to lose face. One potential ally is the young *nuranshâr*, who is willing to confront his leader to prove himself.

If the heroes choose to fight rather than negotiate, Haran Tsharîk becomes their enemy. He might even seek revenge in Chapter III.

#### Ishlunar's Hoard

Once the heroes successfully cross the ancestral land of the Ban Hadârri, and the Ban Tirghûfa, they can use the clues they received from Asad or the Ferkinas, and their tracking skill, to find Ishlunar's cave.

#### Finding the Mountain

To find Djer Shahuleth, the heroes must make a cumulative check with the following skills: *Orienteering (Position of the Sun)* or *Geography (Lands of the Tulamydes)*. For each day of travel, each hero can make two checks with different skills. All heroes may participate in the check.

Apply the following modifiers for the heroes' equipment and knowledge, as applicable.

- The heroes did not obtain information from Asad, the Ban Hadârri or the Ban Tirghûfa about the appearance or location of Djer Shahuleth: *Orienteering* suffers a penalty of 2, *Geography* a penalty of 3
- The heroes did not ask the Ban Sharîda about dragon sightings or a mountain with three peaks: *Orienteering* suffers a penalty of 3, *Geography* a penalty of 2
- A hero possesses the special ability *Terrain Knowledge (Mountains)*: *Orienteering* receives a bonus of 1 (for that hero only)
- The heroes obtain an excellent map of the mountains: (see page 69)
- The heroes have a compass: *Orienteering* gains a bonus of 5 (for the hero using the compass)





## The Dragon's Hoard

### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*The cave entrance lies hidden at the end of a deep chasm filled with the strange smell of something burning. Sharp-edged rocks jut like a stage curtain into the black mouth of the cave, blocking your sight. Nevertheless, you notice that many of these rocks are broken and worn, hinting that something large often passes through this entrance.*

*Your sense of unease grows as you slowly push forward into the cave, and you pause to let your eyes grow accustomed to the darkness. Surprisingly, the interior is not as grim as it first appeared. To your left, you see small flames dancing along the surface of an underground lake, seemingly impervious to the water.*

### The Entrance to the Dragon's Cave

Finding the mountain known as Djer Shahuleth is easier than finding the dragon's cave, which lies at the end of a deep chasm. A successful cumulative *Tracking* (Animal

*Tracks*) check (30 minutes, any number of attempts) lets the heroes find signs that point in the right direction (dragon dung, burned earth, footprints).

An *Alchemy* (Mundane Alchemy) check reveals that the flames on the lake are fed by Hylailan Fire, a special oil that, once lit, cannot be extinguished by water. The lake fills most of the room, and black soot discolors the yellow sandstone in many places.

On the far wall, the heroes see another passage flanked by two large boulders, on top of which burn two more fires. A narrow creek runs along a crack in the floor of this passage, flowing towards the lake. The boulders seem to have been torn from the wall by brute force. A glow from more distant fires flickers within the passage. The walls seem natural, though they are smooth in places, as if they once melted.

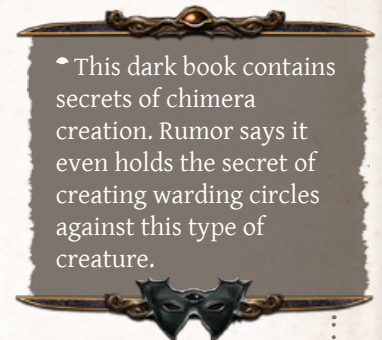
The smell of burning oil fills the air. As the heroes soon discover, Hylailan Fire burns in several, brazier-like, stone stelae placed throughout the cave complex, bathing everything in flickering light. This is a strong clue that the place is inhabited.

**The Library** (in front of the Alchemy Laboratory) Like the rooms of a house, each chamber in the cave seems to have its own function. To the left, the heroes see some kind of library. Books and scrolls

of various sizes sit on stone plinths or protrusions in the rock. Most are written in Tulamydia or Kuslik Signs, pointing towards human origins, but some are written in unknown scripts. On one rock ledge, the heroes find a well-read but complete edition of the *Encyclopaedia Magica*, and even a copy of *Chimeras and Hybrids*. • ○ .....

### The Alchemy Laboratory

The heart of the hoard isn't the library, but the cave beyond, which boasts a complete alchemy laboratory with a large furnace, numerous kettles, and glass retorts for distillation. Some pieces are much larger than usual. A large table sits in the center of the cave. An abundance of flasks, mixing bowls, mortars, scales, jars, bottles, and vials of all kinds fill every niche, surface, and protrusion from the walls. A pile of quartz sand dotted with drops of fused glass sits near the furnace. A small storage cave next to the laboratory contains alchemical ingredients, including



• This dark book contains secrets of chimera creation. Rumor says it even holds the secret of creating warding circles against this type of creature.





alcohol, vitriol, nitrol, mandrake, ox blood, serpent skins, lizard heads, and various powders and liquids, some of which add their own smell to the odors of the cave.

A successful *Alchemy (Mundane Alchemy)* check confirms that Ishlunar created her own glassware, as indicated by the strange shapes and sizes of the glass instruments and the telltale pile of quartz sand. It appears that the cave dragon was an enthusiastic alchemist.

The heroes might be surprised to find the place filled with furniture, as they probably expected a stark cave filled with mountains of gold and the bones of intruders. However, cave dragons are quite capable of manipulating equipment and tools, as they possess opposable thumbs and near-human dexterity in four of their limbs.

Give the heroes time to look around, and then introduce them to the mistress of the house.

### Presenting Dragons In-game

Dragons are creatures of exceptional mental and physical strength, and even though a number of dragons live in the Khoram Range, they are relatively rare in Aventuria. Many are tyrants, ruling over entire regions and enslaving or killing as they please without consequence, for few things besides other dragons pose a threat to them. As loners, they are often the only dragon in their territory, and they are accustomed to issuing commands and taking what they want. Humans are short-lived and usually have no grasp of the workings of a dragon's mind. Dragons sometimes find two-legged creatures useful or entertaining, but they often view people as nothing more

than particularly intelligent insects and have no qualms crushing or eating one that proves annoying. Dragons find the human concept of *ethics* strange, anyway.

No matter how much intelligence or magical skill they possess, these majestic creatures are still wild beasts subject to animalistic instincts. Their battles for territory and mating can be as deadly as any predator's.

If you suspect your players think they are dealing with an extremely powerful human, squash this idea by letting the dragon's unpredictable, predatory character traits shine through.



## Encountering the Dragon

### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

You soon enter another chamber, one that looks more like you imagined a dragon's cave would look. A huge pile of coins, jewels, weapons, and expensive items covers a terrace that stretches far back into the chamber. The hoard glows in the light of the ubiquitous fires. You begin to step closer when you notice something moving out of the corner of your eye.

Beyond the light of the fires, you can just make out the silhouette of a huge creature. Its worm-like shape completely fills the 16' high cave and it moves on six legs, like an insect. You struggle to see past the bright flames, when suddenly the frightening head of the creature shoots forward between the stelae, revealing gray scales and flashing, foot-long, knife-like teeth. Serpent eyes as big as your palm sparkle in the firelight, and a wave of heat washes over you when the dragon opens its mouth to speak, but no sounds issue forth. Instead, images and feelings appear and echo inside your mind: "Weaklings [unimportant; frail]! How dare you invade my home [brave; suicidal; image of a frightened mouse cowering before a serpent]? Are you here to steal from me [rage; fear; image of the serpent devouring the mouse]?"

The words in brackets are feelings and images projected into the heroes' minds by the dragon as it communicates.

This scenario assumes that the heroes' first encounter with the dragon proceeds as described, in which case roll Ishlunar's *Intimidation (Threats)* 11 (18/13/15) versus the heroes' *Willpower (Resist Intimidation)*. Any hero that achieves fewer QL than Ishlunar suffers 1 level of the condition *Fear* for every 2 QL difference.

How things play out from here depends on the heroes' behavior. If they act respectfully, the dragon is willing to listen to them. She does not tolerate insolence or threats. She can be surprising, stern, and even cruel, but despite her sharp mind, remember that Ishlunar is a monster. Allow your players to make checks for their actions, but always roll for Ishlunar.







### Ishlunar

COU 18 SGC 16 INT 13 CHA 15

DEX 9 AGI 10 CON 30 STR 27

LP 400 AE 50 KP - INI 14+1D6

DE 5 SPI 5 TOU 11 MOV 9

**Bite:** AT 13 DP 2D6+5 RE short

**Claws:** AT 12 DP 2D6+6 RE medium

**Stomp:** AT 8 DP 3D6+8 RE short

**Tail:** AT 12 DP 1D6+4 RE long

**Trample:** AT 10 DP 2D6 RE long

**Fire Breath\*:** RC 14 RT 1 DP 2D6+18 RA 5/10/25

PRO/ENC 6/0

**Actions:** 2 (at most 1 x Bite, 1 x Stomp, 1 x Trample)

**Advantages/Disadvantages:** Darksight II / Negative Trait (Greed)

**Special Abilities:** Feint I (Bite, Paw, Tail), Forceful Blow I-III (Bite, Paw, Tail), Hammer Blow (Bite, Paw, Tail), Powerful Blows AAL XXX (Bite, Paw, Tail), Shield-Splitter (Bite, Paw, Tail), Tail Sweep (Tail), Stomp ABE (Stomp), Trample (Trample) (see page 22)

**Skills:** *Alchemy 16, Body Commerce 2, Control 7, Climbing 7, Empathy 10, Fast-Talk 8, Feat of Strength 12, Intimidation 11, Magical Lore 12, Perception 9, Plant Lore 16, Self-Control 11, Stealth 5, Willpower 13*

**Spells:** *Armatrutz 12, Corpofesso 10, Gardianum 14, Gaze into the Mind 13, Horriphobus 10, Motoricus 16, Odem 13 and other spells with the properties Influence, Clairvoyance, Object, and Telekinesis from Tradition (Dragon).*

**Number:** 1

**Size Category:** huge

**Type:** Dragon, non-humanoid

**Loot:** 2000 rations of meat (inedible), dragon scales (1,000 silverthalers), trophy (dragon blood, 50 silverthalers; dragon teeth, 100 silverthalers; carbuncle, 1,000

silverthalers), dragon treasure (see page 88).

**Combat Behavior:** Ishlunar initiates combat with her fire breath, and then enters close combat.

**Escape:** Loss of 75% LP

**Magical Lore (Magical Creatures) or Animal Lore (Monsters)**

• **QL 1:** Cave dragons prefer to consume virgins; victim gender is unimportant.

• **QL 2:** Cave dragons do not always consume virgins, but virgins are among their favorite food. Luckily, cave dragons understand speech and are sometimes willing to negotiate if the price is right.

• **QL 3+:** They can cast spells but are not masters of magic. They can find powerful spellcasters very impressive.

**Special Rules:**

\*) **Fire Breath:** A cave dragon can use its fire breath ten times per day. Each fire breath attack affects at most three targets, which can be no more than 9 feet apart. Flammable targets catch fire on a 1-2 on 1D6. Affected heroes suffer the state *burning*. Fire breath attacks can only be parried with a shield or dodged.

**Immunity to Fire:** Cave dragons are immune to heat and flame. They would perish if cast into a lake of lava, but an *Ignifaxius* causes no damage, for example.

**Susceptible to Ice and Water:** Cave dragons take double damage from ice- and water-based attacks.

**Weak Spot:** Cave dragons have less PRO on some parts of their bodies, such as the base of their neck (PRO 2), the neck (PRO 3), and their underbelly (PRO 4).

### Ishlunar's Combat Special Abilities

#### Powerful Blow (passive)

After a successful attack, targets of size category medium or smaller must make a *Feat of Strength* check or suffer the state *prone*. The check suffers a penalty equal to half of the creature's Strength score above 20 (4, in Ishlunar's case). Dodging is the only way to avoid a Powerful Blow. Targets must still make a *Feat of Strength* check when parrying, even if the parry succeeds.

#### Tail Sweep (Special Maneuver)

With Tail Sweep, the attacking creature can knock down multiple targets at least one size category smaller than

itself. The attack suffers a penalty of 2 per target, and targets may only dodge, not parry. Targets that fail to dodge suffer the state *prone*. Sweep attacks are only possible against targets to the attacker's rear or side.

**Penalty:** -2 per target

#### Stomp (Special Maneuver)

To make a Stomp attack, the creature must be at least one size category larger than its target, and targets must have the state *prone*. When making a Stomp attack, the attacker suffers an additional penalty of 2 to DE for that CR.

**Penalty:** 0



## ‡ Ishlunar, Young Cave Dragon

**Brief Description:** around 100; masterful alchemist and cunning cave dragon; 12' tall at the shoulder; 26' long (including tail); gray scales; golden serpent eyes; curious, young dragon; proud and without human ethics; willing to ally with humans if both sides benefit.

**Motivation:** Curiosity; she is at first annoyed by the heroes' presence and plays with them like a cat with a mouse. While conversing, the heroes (hopefully) awaken her interest and convince her to make a deal (see *A Matter of Negotiation*, below).

**Agenda:** As an exceptionally young cave dragon living near many other dragons, Ishlunar wants a means to defend her territory against stronger rivals until she can grow to her full size. What she lacks in power, she tries to compensate for with cunning.

**Role:** She is the most powerful obstacle standing between the heroes and their task—an obstacle that they probably cannot slay, so they must come to an arrangement.

**Background:** Ishlunar is probably one of the youngest cave dragons ever to claim a territory of this size and defend it against other dragons. After the death of the chimera master Abu Terfas, Ishlunar obtained many of the mage's riches, including the entire contents of his laboratory. She is now an excellent alchemist, a pursuit aided by her almost human level of dexterity. Alchemy has become Ishlunar's hobby and passion.

**Role Playing Tips:** Speak and growl in a low, gravelly voice. In addition to spoken words, present images and feelings to the players as the dragon projects them into the heroes' minds. Speak eloquently, but do not use too many foreign words; Ishlunar's language is translated directly to the heroes' native tongues in their mind. Ishlunar is proud and accustomed to getting her way. She has no need for concepts like Good and Evil. Ishlunar can develop a sudden, burning interest in quite banal subjects, like a cat trying to spot the source of a sudden movement and unable to avert its gaze. During the conversation, your players should feel that Ishlunar is on the verge of devouring them at any moment. Like all cave dragons, she admires human spellcasters for their abilities and finds their tricks impressive. She would never admit to this fact, and would consider any demonstration of magical power a *baksheesh* (Tulamydian term for a gift, favor, or act of charity deserving of repayment).

**Fate:** Ishlunar may play a role in a future adventure, probably in her role as a cave dragon and powerful NPC.

*"You only want this carpet [colorful; pretty; patterned]? What is so special about it [confusing; lined; soft]?"*

*"A little man brought it here [brave; stupid; tasty; image of a Ferkina wearing the cloth as a cloak]."*

## A Matter of Negotiation

The heroes must get the *mudra rajjiq*, which they may have already spotted in the dragon's hoard, but they should win Ishlunar's trust first. Doing so can take two forms:

- Let your players act out the situation and describe their character's actions. Their demeanor counts for much and affects the success of the negotiation. Do they try to speak to Ishlunar individually, or do they constantly interrupt each other? Do they treat the dragon with respect, fear, or insolence?
- Let the players decide what they want to achieve and use skill checks and competitive checks in small steps for the negotiation.

If the heroes decide to work together to convince Ishlunar, the players may make a cumulative check using *Persuasion (Discussion)*, *Fast-Talk (Hard Sell, Begging, Manipulation, or Flattery)*, *Etiquette (Manners or Small-Talk)*, and/or *Intimidation (Threats)*. Base the interval and number of allowed attempts on the situation.

Ishlunar is not averse to a swap, as she smells a good deal, but she does not name her price until much negotiation has occurred. If the heroes offer her the jewels they brought, she remains unconvinced, as she thinks the stones are too common. Bribery might help: Magic fascinates her, and a magical performance can render her more receptive to the heroes' suggestions. A little snack (a goat or sheep) might also improve her mood.

The heroes are free to decide which tactic to employ. Reward good ideas with skill check bonuses. At some point, the dragon reveals what she wants, as follows.

- Many seasons ago (years, to be precise, but Ishlunar lacks the proper understanding of the human accounting of time), a wise alchemist named *Mahir ibn Achtev* promised her a chest full of rare alchemicae in exchange for a formula
- The alchemist never returned with the chest, either because he changed his mind or because he didn't survive the journey home
- Ishlunar thinks the chest might still be where the alchemist left it—namely, in a caravanserai in Ivrinno. She does not know the location of Ivrinno and doesn't know what *caravanserai* means
- If the heroes obtain the chest for her, she gives them the colorful cloth they seek
- She does not know what the chest looks like, but she believes it was marked with a red salamander



### Alternatives (Negotiation is Not Our Strong Suit)

If the heroes (or players) don't feel like negotiating, there are other ways to proceed—even though the chances of success aren't very high—as follows.

- ◆ **Violence** is often the solution of choice in RPGs, but in this case, a direct attack against the dragon probably leads to the heroes' deaths
- ◆ A trap or **ambush**, perhaps assisted by liturgical chants or magic, has a greater chance of success, but the plan should be really good.
- ◆ A talented spellcaster might manage to take control of Ishlunar (she has SPI 5, which means the heroes need some lucky die rolls and may have to spend some FtP)
- ◆ A **thieving attempt** could succeed if the dragon remains unaware of the heroes' presence and does not expect visitors. The heroes might think that spells such as *Invisibili* or *Transversalis*, liturgical chants like *Without a Sound*, or the ceremony *Fog Body* could help, but a successful *Animal Lore (Monsters)* and/or *Magical Lore (Magical Creatures)* check reminds them that Ishlunar has an excellent sense of smell and might simply use magical sight.

A dragon is a powerful opponent and one of the greatest challenges your heroes will ever face. Warn the players of this fact. Be fair, but always allow Ishlunar to make a skill check to counter the heroes' actions. Overconfidence is a lethal weakness when dealing with this type of creature, so give the heroes a break only in exceptional situations. Then, if the heroes manage to trick the dragon with skill or luck, they know they have performed a truly heroic deed.

### The Dragon's Treasure

Either before or during the conversation with Ishlunar, the heroes may visually examine the dragon's hoard. The pile of treasure has grown over the last few years, especially after Ishlunar took advantage of the actions of the Bearers of the Seven Signs to plunder Abu Terfas' palace before her sluggish rivals could learn what had happened. In addition to enviable wealth, her hoard contains the As'Haima, a thick, colorful, artfully woven blanket.

5,000 ducats' worth of loose coins, jewelry, weapons, and other valuables lie at the edges of the hoard, but the scenario assumes that the heroes do not steal from Ishlunar and plunder her hoard.

### Leg-ga-leg (Special Ability)

Leg-ga-leg is a term for a secret form of Maraskan script. It originally took the form of wooden pegs of various lengths hammered into a board. The position and length of the pegs indicated the corresponding letters, allowing persons versed in Leg-ga-leg to read the message. Today, other suitable marks, such as studs in a belt, notches in a wall, carvings on a tablet, or abstract woven ornaments all suffice to convey messages. This secret form of writing remains unknown outside of Maraskan.

**Rule:** The special ability Leg-ga-leg grants literacy in this Maraskan system of secret writing.

**Requirements:** *Streetwise* 8, no disadvantage *Restricted Sense* (Tactile Sense)

**AP Value:** 2 adventure points





### The As'Haima of the Madahajida

**Form:** A thick, colorful blanket artfully woven primarily in colors of red, black, green, and yellow. Many bizarre patterns and signets adorn the blanket, and it is also decorated with sewn-on symbols of almost round shape. These are the letters of the Maraskan secret writing Leg-ga-leg.

**History:** See *Background* (page 60).

**Powers:** none; the only way to reveal the secrets of the As'Haima (in this case, the location of the Skrechu's nest in the Amdeggyn Massif on Maraskan), is to know how to fold it properly.

**Rules:** none; solving the riddle requires the special ability Leg-ga-leg and the time to either consult with people familiar with the writing or study it in various libraries.



## Chapter III: The Chest of the Red Salamander

This is the last chapter of the adventure. At the behest of the dragon, the heroes travel to Ivrinno in search of a long-forgotten chest. They must transport this chest back up into the mountains, but before they can deliver it to Ishlunar, they must defend themselves and the chest from a mob of Ferkinas intent on slaying them all.

### Ivrinno

Unless the GM wants to stage a special encounter, the journey to Ivrinno passes without incident and the story continues when the heroes reach the settlement on the Mhanadi, which is about 70 miles away as the crow flies. The journey takes about two weeks, during which time Ferkinas, Khoram beasts, and Khôm vultures all make for interesting random encounters (see page 71).

When the heroes leave the Yew Slopes and finally arrive at the Mhanadi River, they come to Ivrinno on the opposite shore. The town's great caravanserai is a narrow building surrounded by the hustle and bustle of merchants and their teams of animals. The ferry is not difficult to locate, and the heroes cross the river and reach the caravanserai with no trouble.

Caravanserais are the desert equivalent of taverns from Northern Aventuria. They serve much the same role and are often the only shelter in or near the desert for many miles around. Due to their isolation, they are built like small forts and are usually crowded with guests, mounts, and pack animals.

### The Village of Ivrinno

**Inhabitants:** about 400

**Ruler/Politic:** nominally the Emirate of Mhanadistan, which is part of the Caliphate; in reality, the rich village sheikh, *Hilal ben Yussuf al'Karibi* (68; white caftan and keffya; scheming and unpleasant; lives in luxury thanks to his caravan trade; enjoys the closeness of his three very young wives; *Willpower* 8 (15/15/13); SPI 2)

**Temple:** Temple of Rastullah, temple of Phex (as Feqz)

**Special:** This village, an important stopover on the caravan route from Rashtul's Wall (Almada) to Samra and Balash, sprang up around the caravanserai on the shore of the Mhanadi. Residents enjoy exclusive trade with the Ban Sharîda for the weapon poison known as tulmadron (see *Core Rules*, page 342).

**Mood:** hospitable and open; the only unpleasant feeling stems from the scheming village sheikh, who dislikes almost everyone.

### The Caravanserai of Abu al'Diefa

The heroes have gone without the comforts of civilization for a long time and probably want to rent rooms as soon as they reach the caravanserai. Merchants sell many types of products and fresh produce in the inner courtyard, including rare and consequently expensive goods.



The cunning *Ali ben Karmal al'Karibi* (53; favorite nephew of the sheikh; wears a red fez; tries to turn everything into a trading opportunity, and haggles for the last muwlat; *Commerce* 10 (12/12/13); SPI 1) leads the caravanserai (Q3/P3/B80). He is known locally as *Abu al'Diefa* (Father of Hospitality), a title that cost him much baksheesh.

The caravanserai in Ivrinno consists of a large, square building with two floors, a flat roof, and a large interior courtyard entered through a single, guarded gate. The building's walls are 12 to 15 feet high and covered in clay shards to help protect merchants' goods and animals, which lure many thieves. The flat roof has a parapet that protects spear throwers and archers defending the building from Ferkinas or the occasional influential Novadi who tries to induce a change of power in the village.

Ambushes are not rare, so caravanserai employees carry clubs. At least one guard each patrols on the roof and in the courtyard at all times. The only windows to the outside are arrow slits. When the large gate is closed at night, the caravanserai is a small fortress.

On one side of the building is a walled-in side yard with a blacksmith, a saddler, and stables and barns with space for 40 animals. Traders erect stalls in the main courtyard during the day, and caravans that happen to be in town also try to sell their goods here. The stalls come down after sunset to make room for mounts and other animals that cannot fit in the stables.

Guests sleep on the second floor in one of many double rooms, single rooms, or six-bed rooms. The taproom, kitchen, and sleeping rooms for the staff are on the ground floor. The ground floor also has storage space for supplies and guests' luggage and goods, as well as two common rooms separated by gender (the one for men offers many more beds).



### Changing Money!

The caravanserai accepts only coins of the Caliphate. Heroes without the proper coins must visit the on-site moneychanger and proprietor, *Mahir* (*Commerce* 8 (12/12/14); SPI 1), who does not adhere to the regular exchange rate (1 muwlat = 5 kreutzers; 1 zequine = 2 silverthalers; 1 marawedi = 2 ducats). Instead, *Mahir* increases the usual price for services by up to 20%. To get a good deal, the heroes must haggle skillfully.

### Finding the Chest

If the heroes simply ask for the alchemist's chest, their host, *Ali*, summons his brother *Hamil* (48; short, black beard; cunning; good gambler who tries to trick the heroes; *Commerce* 12 (12/13/15); SPI 1), who is responsible for the storage. After studying the inventory, *Hamil* shows the chest to the heroes. Covered with dust, it sits in a corner of the storeroom, under several other items.

The heroes can't simply take it, of course, as the chest incurred quite a storage fee in the time it sat here, namely, 2 muwlats rent per day, for a total of 15 marawedi (30 ducats). *Hamil* notices that the heroes desire the chest and tries to make a good profit.

- The heroes can **redeem the chest**, maybe with the jewels they received from *Kerima al'Kadim*, but jewels

### Prices and Services

- Single room 10 zequines
- Double room 15 zequines
- Six-bed room 25 zequines
- Common room 1 zequine
- Bathtub (heated water from the Mhanadi) 2 zequines
- Food (dates, flat bread, goat cheese, rice, hot spices, mutton) 14 muwlat

For more prices and services, see the *Core Rules*, starting on page 381.



### The Chest

The chest sat in the caravanserai's storeroom for eight years. Its owner, Mahir ibn Achtev, never returned from the mountains. His fate is unknown. The chest is 5 by 5 feet and weighs about 40 pounds. The chest's dwarven lock has a complicated mechanism that can only be defeated with a *Pick Locks* (*Bit Locks*) check with a penalty of 3 (2 CR, 7 attempts; after that, the check fails).

The image of a large salamander is branded on the lid and painted red.

#### Alchemy Check

QL 1: The Red Salamander is an alchemist's organization.

QL 2: It's a type of guild, but rather loosely organized. The Red Salamander was founded in Brabak.

QL 3+: The Red Salamander also has branches in Andergast, Norburg, Festum, and Fasar.

If the heroes manage to open the chest, they find containers of, among other things:

- Pyrophorus (a basic ingredient for fireworks; flammable)
- Resinated wine
- Cinnabarite (a red mineral used to create dyes and quicksilver)
- Rose oil
- Crystal glass
- Nitrol (also known as brown oil; a smoking acid)
- Brabakan vitriol (sulfuric acid)
- A Transformation Elixir of QL 5 (sufficient quantity for a dragon)

Transporting alchemicae is not without risk (see *Combat and the Chest*, page 92).

have no fixed exchange rate, and the heroes must haggle if they do not want to sacrifice them (their true worth is about 50 ducats). The heroes may influence the negotiation using the normal rules for haggling (see *Core Rules*, page 207).

- A late-night theft is possible, but the only route out of the caravanserai is through the great gate, which is barred with a heavy beam at night. To avoid waking the armed staff (as well as the mercenaries employed by various guests), the heroes must incapacitate three guards as quickly and as quietly as possible. Then there is the small matter of escaping with a cumbersome, 40-pound chest.
- Magic or divine powers might be useful. *Bannbaladin* can grant a bonus while haggling. If the spell succeeds with Level 9, Hamil lets the heroes simply take the

chest, which has occupied precious storage space for years. Ali and Hamil both have SPI 1.

### Transporting the Chest

Many of these ingredients are unstable, and only a highly skilled alchemist could transport them safely. The heroes must travel back up into the mountains, this time hindered by a large, clunky chest. The daily cumulative check presented in the section *Survival in the Wilderness* (page 72) suffers a penalty of 1, unless the heroes are properly equipped.

If the heroes desire, they could have the blacksmith weld eyelets to the chest and buy some long poles, allowing them to carry the chest like a palanquin (listed price: 1 zequine. The first price mentioned is much higher, so haggling is necessary). Alternatively, the heroes can buy a mule to carry the chest (cost: 13 marawedi). In this case, the cumulative check suffers no penalty.

### Return to the Dragon Cave

The return trip to the dragon's cave takes about two weeks. Summarize this journey with a few words, or insert a scene that you did not use from Chapter II, as desired. This trip is ripe for one of the random encounters described there, especially if the heroes are leading a delicious smelling mule.

Along the way, the heroes get attacked by the Ban Tirghûfa, whose leader probably has no love left for them. If the heroes did not get involved in the fight between the emir and the Ferkinas, substitute another tribe of your choice for the Ban Tirghûfa. In this case, the Ferkinas want loot or else view the heroes as intruders in their tribal territory.

### The Ferkina Ambush

If the heroes freed Hanaqis, the wife of Emir Asad al'Dhehebi, the haran of the Ban Tirghûfa is now their dire enemy. When his scouts report that the heroes have returned to the tribe's territory, Tsharîk iban Hâmar rides out to kill them in an ambush on a steep and treacherous gravel slope. He promised their weapons and belongings to the warriors who accompany him.

Make a competitive *Stealth* (*Hide*) 8 (14/13/13) check (for the Ferkinas) versus the heroes' *Perception* (*Detect Ambush*). On a failure, the heroes notice the ambush in time and do not suffer the state *surprised* (see *Core Rules*, pages 36 and 237). The Ferkinas' *Stealth* check receives a bonus of 1 due to the chaotic terrain, which offers many places to hide. The number of Ferkinas participating in the ambush equals the number of heroes.





### The Ferkinas

COU 14 SGC 11 INT 13 CHA 10

DEX 12 AGI 13 CON 14 STR 13

LP 33 AE - KP - INI 14+1D6

DO 6 SPI 1 TOU 2 MOV 7

**Unarmed:** AT 12 PA 5 DP 1D6

RE short

**Spear:** AT 12 PA 5 DP 1D6+4 RE long

**Stone Axe:** AT 12 PA 6 DP 1D6+3 RE medium

**Short Bow:** RC 11 RT 1 DP 1D6+4 RA 10/50/80

**PRO/ENC** 2/1 (cloth and fur armor) (includes armor modifiers)

**Special Abilities:** Area Knowledge (Ferkinia Village), Charge, Feint I, Forceful Blow I, Onslaught, Terrain Knowledge (Mountains)

**Skills:** Body Control 8, Climbing 8, Empathy 4, Fast-Talk 2, Feat of Strength 8, Intimidation 8, Perception 7, Riding 9, Self-Control 6, Stealth 8, Tracking 8, Willpower 6

**Combat Behavior:** Ferkinas fight with Feints and Forceful Blows

**Escape:** with Pain level III

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

### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*The path through the Khoram Mountains was already difficult enough when you were seeking the dragon's cave. The additional weight of the chest does not make it easier. For an hour now, you have been walking uphill, hugging a steep gravel slope to your left. You pass rough, sandstone rock formations created by wind and frost over countless years. Here and there, thin bushes cling to gaps in the rock. A single Khôm vulture circles in the sky.*

[Perception check, see above]

*Suddenly arrows whistle through the air, and the hoarse battle cries of Ferkinas surround you!*

### Combat and the Chest

The chest of the Red Salamander contains alchemical tools and various ingredients and potions. Some of the former are made of glass and thus fragile, while the latter are highly reactive and potentially dangerous. To simulate this during the battle with the Ferkinas, use the following special rules for the chest.

- If an attack misses its target, roll 1D20 to see if it accidentally hits the chest: on a result of 19-20, the chest takes *one hit* (see below)
- If the chest falls to the ground during the battle, it takes *two hits*
- If the Ferkinas notice that the chest is important to the heroes, they might attempt to damage it—this takes one action if the chest is on the ground (the chest itself might be intact, but the contents aren't...). If the chest is strapped to a mule, a simple AT is all that is necessary. Either way, a nearby hero can try to parry such an attack, but with a penalty of 1.

### If the Chest Takes a Hit

If the chest takes a hit during combat, determine the result on the following chart. The number of alchemicals and tools broken equals 1D6 plus the number of hits the chest has suffered so far. Depending on what is broken, Ishlunar might demand replacements from the heroes before surrendering the artifact.

### Tsharîk iban Hâmar, Haran of the Ban Tirghûfa

COU 15 SGC 10 INT 13 CHA 10

DEX 12 AGI 13 CON 14 STR 16

LP 35 AE - KP - INI 14+1D6

DO 7 SPI 2 TOU 2 MOV 8

**Barbarian Axe:** AT 17 PA 6 DP 2D6+7 RE medium

**PRO/ENC** 2/0 (cloth and fur armor) (includes armor modifiers)

**Special Abilities:** Area Knowledge (Ferkinia Village), Charge, Feint I, Forceful Blow I+II, Inured to Encumbrance I, Onslaught, Terrain Knowledge (Mountains)

**Skills:** Body Control 8, Climbing 11, Empathy 5, Fast-Talk 4, Feat of Strength 10, Intimidation 9, Perception 8, Riding 12, Self-Control 10, Stealth 8, Tracking 8, Willpower 7

**Combat Behavior:** The chieftain prefers Charges and Forceful Blows

**Escape:** with Pain level III

**Pain +1 at:** 26 LP, 18 LP, 9 LP, and 5 LP or less



Hit	Effect
2	The chest makes a clinking sound, as if from broken glass.
4	A strange smell rises from the chest.
6	Everyone within 30' suffers 1 level of <i>Confusion</i> due to the smell.
7	Hissing and bubbling sounds issue from the chest, and a green fog spills from underneath the lid.
8	The fog becomes so dense that all people in a radius of 9' suffer a Level I visibility modifier (see <i>Core Rules</i> , page 348).
9	A <i>Perception (Spot)</i> check lets you notice a sudden increase in temperature within 6' of the chest.
10	A muffled explosion is heard in the chest.
11	The chest begins burning from the inside out.
12	The chest explodes, inflicting 2D6+2 DP on everyone in the vicinity.

### Scenes During the Combat

Use the following events as inspiration to make the battle more exciting.

- The Ferkinas try to jump on a rock and gain an advantageous position (see *Core Rules*, page 238).
- If the heroes are carrying the chest like a palanquin, they must spend one action to set it down carefully.
- If the chest is on the ground, both the heroes and the Ferkinas can spend one action and make a *Body Control (Combat Maneuver)* check to jump on the chest and gain an advantageous position.
- If the heroes brought a mule to carry the chest, it panics when the Ferkinas attack and might run off. To have a chance to calm the beast and prevent it from running off, someone must hold it by a rope or reins. While doing so, the hero's combat actions suffer an additional penalty of 1, the hero has only one hand free for wielding a weapon, and the hero must use an action in the first CR to make an *Animal Lore (Domesticated Animals)* check with a penalty of 1 to calm the animal. If successful, the mule remains calm for QL rounds. After that, the hero must make another check. If the *Animal Lore* check fails, the mule tries to pull free with a competitive *Feat of Strength (Dragging & Pulling)* 10 (15/15/15) check. If the mule bolts, the heroes may search for it after the battle with a *Tracking (Animal Tracks)* check. In this case, the heroes must hope that they find the mule before it falls prey to hungry Khoram beasts....

If the heroes win the combat, they may continue safely on their way to Ishlunar's cave.

### Read Aloud or Paraphrase

*Ishlunar lifts the chest easily and your minds fill with a sudden rush of intense curiosity, as if you did not already know what it contains. The dragon's pupils narrow to slits as she focuses on the chest.*

*"I thank you," the dragon growls, and images flash in your mind. You see glimpses of the chest, test tubes, and even Ishlunar herself, bending over a large tome. "You held up your part of the bargain [chest; test tubes; bubbling substances], so I will, too [a pestle crushing something into powder; blue liquid gradually turning clear]. Take your quilt, small ones [Red Salamander; black smoke billowing from a bowl; dragon fire bringing the contents of a pot to a boil] and fare well."*

### Alchemicae Against a Woven Riddle

Ishlunar is extremely curious and wants nothing more than to retreat to her alchemy lab with the chest. She is happy if the heroes just take the cloth and leave. The dragon is already designing alchemical experiments in her head. Being thus distracted, she has difficulty concentrating on the heroes. If they linger and continue asking her questions, she suffers a penalty of 3 to all checks (such as *Willpower* 13 (18/13/15) and *Self-Control* 11 (18/18/30)).

If the heroes do not get too greedy, they might be able to wheedle some additional payment in the form of treasure from Ishlunar's hoard (when in doubt, have them make a competitive check on *Commerce (Haggling)* 2 (16/13/15) with a penalty of 3). If the heroes brought a mule and offer it to the dragon as well, their *Commerce (Haggling)* checks suffer a penalty of only 2. Eventually, with the colorful cloth in hand, the heroes begin their return trip to Khunchom. • ◯ •

• The homeward journey is relatively uneventful. If desired, have the heroes encounter characters they met on the way here, if only to learn their fates. After all, the heroes have been on the road for weeks and may want to know what happened to these people since they last met.



## The Reward

Accolytes lead the heroes to the arch-abbess as soon as they arrive at the Arch-Hoard. Kerime al'Kadim thanks them for their work and is anxious to hear about the dragon Ishlunar. Everyone withdraws to the monastery's great hall, and the heroes describe the expedition in detail while servants bring food and drink and Kerime asks questions and takes notes.

Of course, the heroes receive the promised reward. Kerime also hands each hero an onyx cameo bearing the coat of arms of the Draconite Order (a serpent thrice coiled around a scroll). The cameos mark the heroes as allies of the Order, and therefore entitled to support from chapter houses and temples of Hesinde all across the continent.

Each hero receives **10 AP** to use as they please, plus **8 AP** specifically to improve Nature skills.

They each receive **1 bonus AP** if they can explain Hanaqis' disappearance, plus **1 bonus AP** if they mediated between the Novadis and the Ban Sharīda. Lastly, they each receive **3 bonus AP** if they had a hand in rescuing Hanaqis.

## What Happens to the As'Haima?

Kerime still does not publicly refer to it as a Maraskan As'Haima. She hands it to her chroniclers, who set to work trying to solve its mystery. Eventually, they manage to unlock the riddle, locate the lair of the Skrechu on Maraskan, and mount an expedition to deliver a final blow, but that is a matter for another adventure...





# Appendix

## Tulamydian Names

Tulamydian names consist of the person's given name and the name of their father or mother, connected by *ibn* (son of) or *saba* (daughter of). In place of using *saba*, it is also common to attach *-sun(n)i* / *-sunya* to the name of the father/mother. For more name suggestions, see pages 98, 105, and 114 in the *Core Rules*.

- *female*: Azina, Belima, Leila, Mahira, Meriban, Nedime, Riftah, Sefra, Shenny, Shila, Yamira, Yezemin.
- *male*: Abdul, Abu, Ali, Fahud, Faramud, Hamed, Kasim, Mustafa, Said, Selim, Selo, Tulef.

It is also common in Arania to blend Tulamidyan and Garetian names, leading to uniquely Aranian female names such as Aylalind, Fayrike, Hildebeth, Neraidane, and Rashpatane, and male names such as Abdulon, Abubrech, Harunian, Retoban, and Tuleffried. Some people attach a family name to their name. For example, "Ali ibn Alef as'Sarjabaran" translates as "Ali, son of Alef, from the as'Sarjabaran family."

## Pronunciation Guide: Tulamidya

Most terms and people/place names in these adventures are typical for the language of Tulamidya, and we suggest you pronounce them as the Tulamydes would, to lend an exotic flair to your adventures.

- In the Tulamidyan language, *h* and *ch* are pronounced gutturally, at the back of the throat. English does not have this sound, which is usually written as *kh*. An example is *ch* in the Scottish word *loch*, as pronounced by a native speaker of Scots-Gaelic.
- The letter *j* is pronounced like *j* in *journal*
- The letter *s* is pronounced sharply, as in *serpent*; this is true wherever *s* appears in the word. *S* is never pronounced with an *sh* sound (a Tulamyde would have trouble saying *sure*).
- The letter *z* is pronounced like the *s* in *birds*, but locals pronounce it more like *ts*, as in *bits*, due to Zorgan's frequent contact with the Middenrealm.
- The letter *y* is pronounced like *y* in *yes*.
- The letter *w* is pronounced more like a long *u* (for example, "Wadi" is pronounced like *yoo-ah-dee*, and "Marawedi" is pronounced *Mara-yoo-ay-dee*).

## Short Tulamidyan Glossary

### Greeting/Goodbye

**Ahlan!**: Hi, Hello (Informal)

**Azur al'azilach**: Good morning (literally: "Rosy sky")

**Maha as-Salâma!**: Farewell, or Good Journey! (literally: "Great be the peace!") (Informal)

**Marhaba!**: Welcome!

**Salâm!**: Greetings! (literally: "Peace!")

### Titles/Form of Address

**Abd**: Servant, Blessed One (servant of a god) (feminine: Abda)

**Bel/Beli**: Lord/Lady (from Old Tulamidya; common in Arania)

**Effendi**: Polite form of address (something like "Your Excellence")

**Sahib**: Respectful form of address (something like "Master")

**Sayid**: Lord/Lady (common in Arania; see also Bel/Beli)

**Shîr/-im**: Fighter

**Ya...** : Form of Address (literally "O...", as in "O Most Exalted One")

### Everyday Terms and Phrases

**Abu**: father

**Agha/hi**: captain

**Amja**: uncle

**Ana Alrik**: my name is Alrik

**Ashtarra**: magic, star power

**Baksheesh**: gift or favor worthy of repayment

**Bashar/i**: sergeant

**Ben/Beni**: son/sons

**Châra!**: a strong profanity (literally: "Dung!")

**Kismet**: Fate

**Men-fadlek**: sorry, excuse me

**Shokran**: thank you

**Tafadal**: you're welcome

**Umm**: mother

**Yalla**: shout of encouragement (equivalent to *Go!*, *Come on!*, or *Let's go!*)

**Ya Fuchud, ya Dschambul, ya ben wa benbeni w'abu'l**

**Kachelaq!**: You Selem pig, you warthog, you son, grandson, and father of all vermin!





# Aventuria Almanac

The Dark Eye



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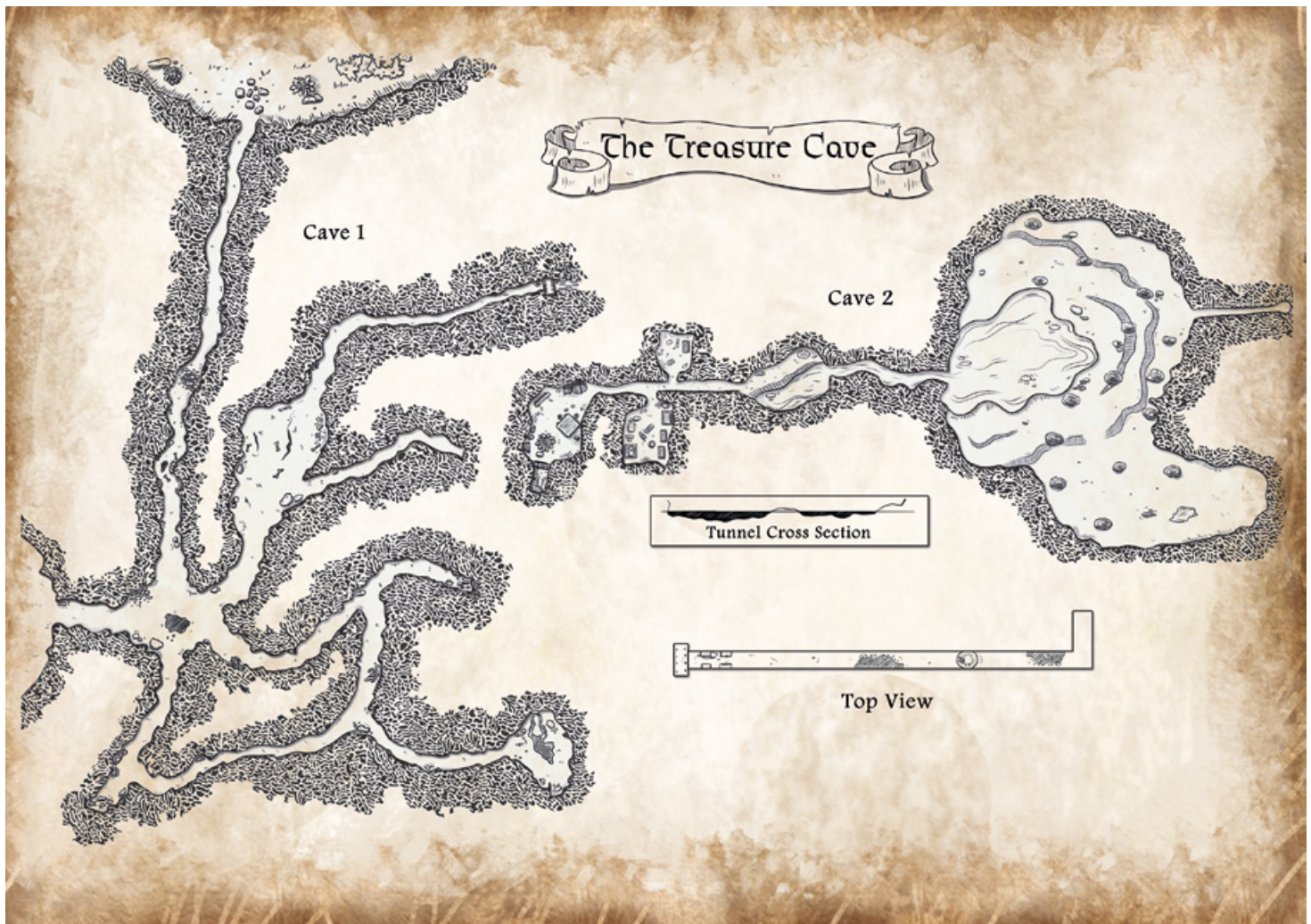
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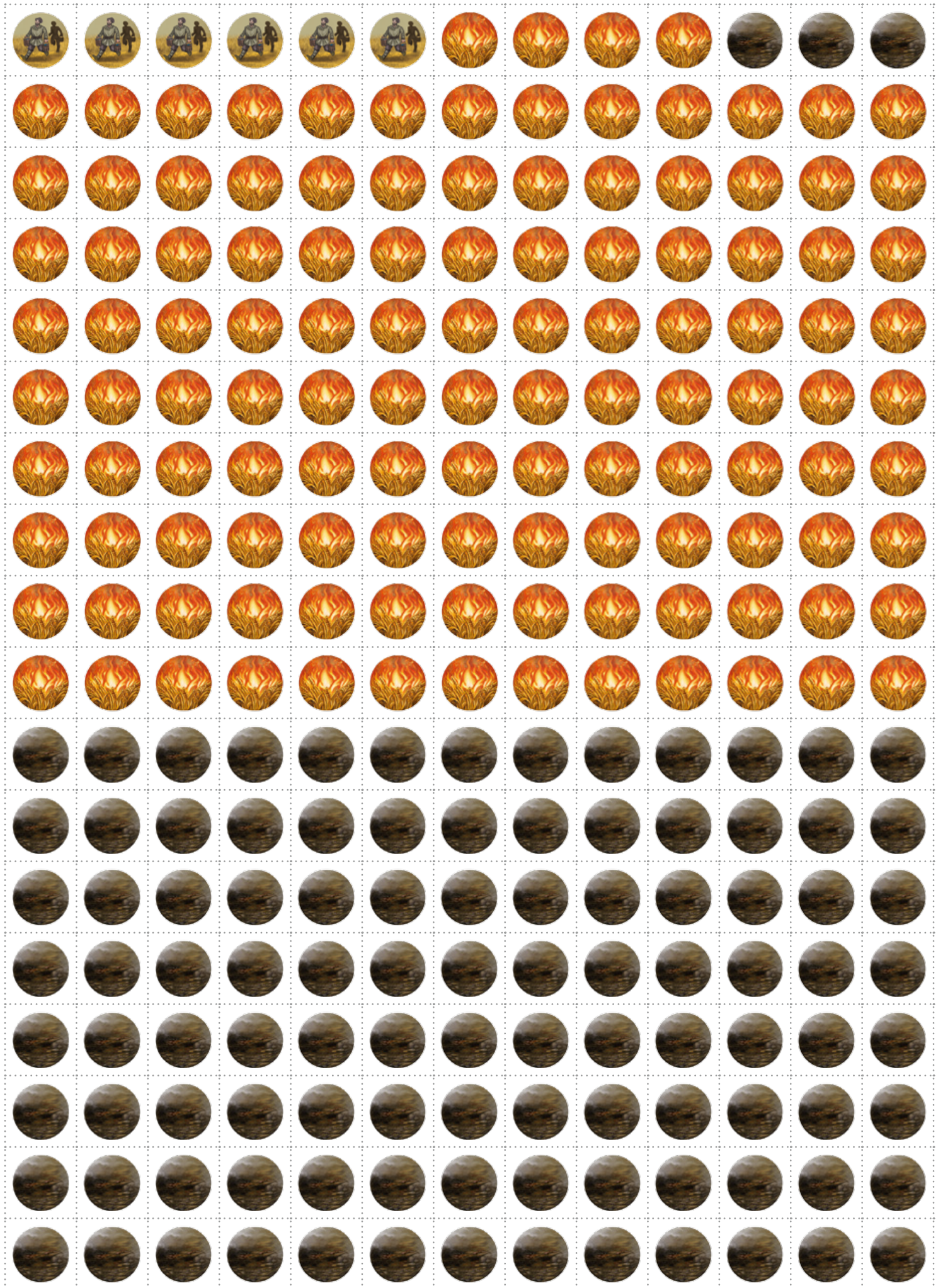














## Tales of Dragons and Thieves

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This exciting anthology presents three ready-to-play adventures all about fire-breathing dragons and cunning brigands.

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The Church of Hesinde sends the heroes to recover something last seen in the craggy peaks of the Khoram Range, in the possession of a dragon. Whether the dragon still lives is a matter for debate, and the heroes must contend with rough terrain, frigid weather, and wild mountain barbarians before they can find *Ishlunar's Treasures*.

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**Genre:** Treasure hunts, romance plots, and wilderness survival

**Prerequisites:** Curiosity and a willingness to help

**Location:** the Northmarches, Arania, the Balash Mountains, and the Khoram Mountains

**Date:** modern

**Complexity (Players/GM):** low/low to medium

**Suggested Hero Experience Level:**  
*Inexperienced to Experienced*

#### Challenge Level

Social Skills	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
Combat	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆
Nature Skills	◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

**Living History** ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

You need the *TDE Core Rules* and the *Aventuria Almanac* to play. This book includes all other necessary information, such as stats, maps, and handouts.



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