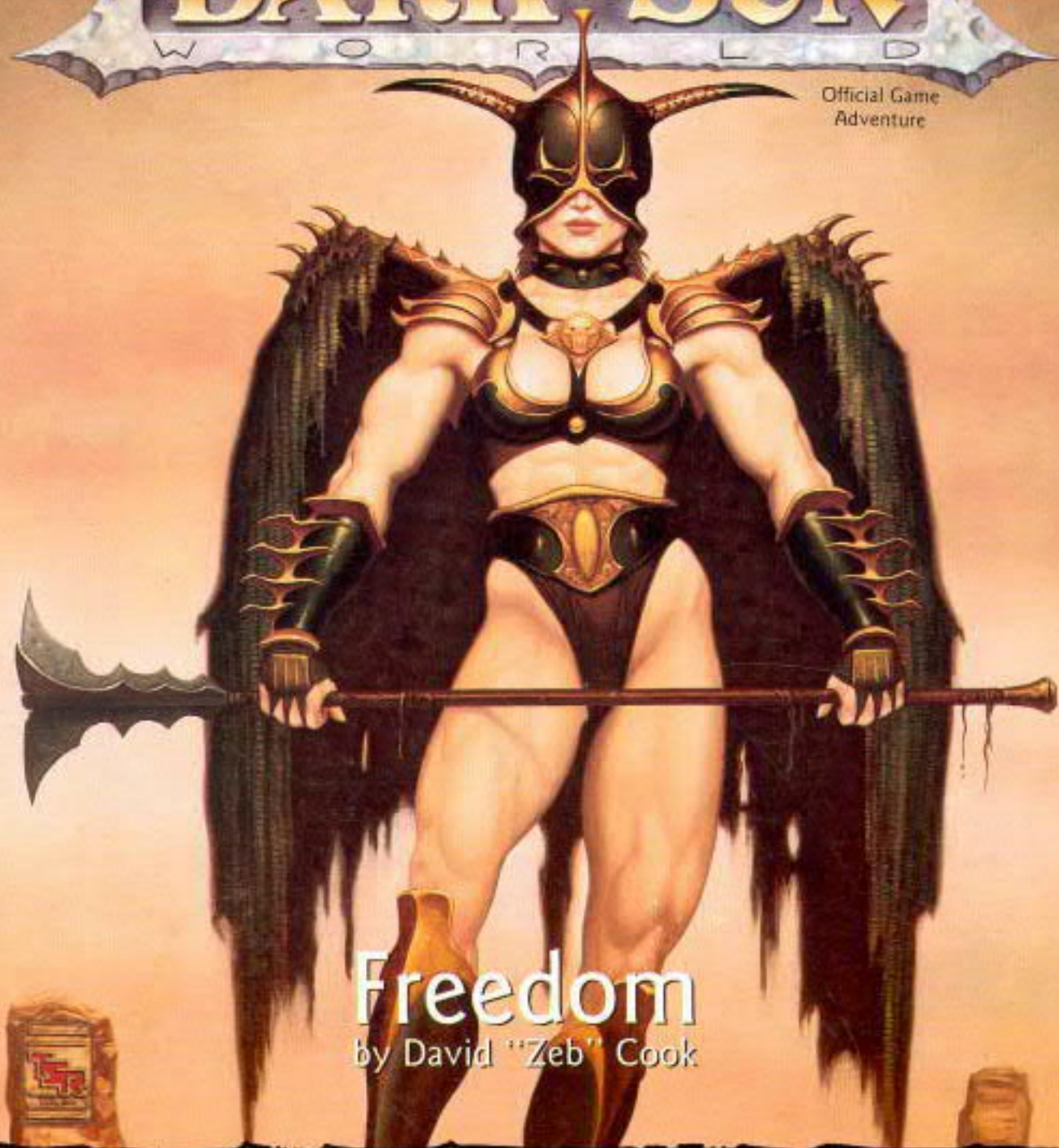


Advanced Dungeons & Dragons  
2nd Edition

DARK SUN™

W O R L D

Official Game  
Adventure



Freedom

by David "Zeb" Cook



# DARK SUN

Quest for  
freedom  
in the  
decadent  
city state  
of Tyr

Dungeon Master's Book



## Freedom

A DARK SUN™ Campaign Adventure

## DM's Book

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## Starting the Adventure

*Freedom* introduces you and a party of 4-6 beginning-level player characters to the savage world of Athas and the decadent city of Tyr. Due to the rigors of Athas your PCs should generally begin at 3rd level (consult Chapter 3 of the boxed set *Rule Book*). During the following adventure, beginning-level characters can gain useful allies (and dangerous enemies) and learn some street-smarts in the sprawling city state of Tyr. PCs may also die by the sun, the lash, or the cruel machinations of templars: Athas is, after all, Athas.



**Materials Needed to Play.** In addition to this module, you need the following items to effectively DM *Freedom*: the **AD&D® 2nd Edition Player's Handbook** and *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the **DARK SUN™** campaign boxed set, and *The Complete Psionics Handbook*.

In addition, you may want to read the novel *The Verdant Passage* before beginning play. This novel, set in the city state of Tyr, describes the major events and powerful NPCs that backdrop *Freedom*. Reading *The Verdant Passage* will better prepare you to describe the scenes and people of Athas.

**Flipbook System.** This flipbook contains all of the information you as a DM need to know during *Freedom*. The *Players' Book* contains illustrations, maps, and text that help the players visualize where they are and what (or who) is happening to them. When the players need to flip to a specific page of their book, the page number is indicated right in the encounter in this book.

Note that some pages of the *Player's Book* —such as p. 18, Villa of Verrasi and p. 37 “Work Smarter Slaves” —are not mentioned in this book. The map of Verrasi's villa is included in case the PCs decide to take revenge on this enemy of theirs. “Work Smarter Slaves” will help you throughout the adventure—an illustration showing what it is like to be a slave!

**Preparation for Play.** Look over the pregenerated characters on pp. 20-29 of the *Players' Book*; players may use these characters or make up their own. Have any player who uses a pregenerated character carefully remove the appropriate page from the *Players' Book*.

Check that each player understands all the information on his character sheet particularly psionic powers and any special abilities of class and race. Fully answer any questions players have concerning their characters.

Do not let characters buy any new equipment at this time.

To get started, read aloud *Players' Book* p. 1—How to Use this Book. Ask the players then to look at pp. 2-6, “Quick Guide to Tyr,” in the *Players' Book*.

**Next.** Read the Introduction to Part One.



## Part One: Introduction

The first section of *Freedom* contains five possible encounters: 1A—Elf Brawl; 1B—Serious Offense; 1C—Preservers!; 1D—Press Gang; and 1E—Shanghaied. The PCs will experience one or more of these encounters before progressing to Part Two.

The purpose of the Part One encounters is to capture the player characters: the later stages of *Freedom* take place in the slave pens of Tyr, and thus the players must be captured in Part One. The five encounters in Part One each provide a different method to capture the PCs. Only after all the PCs are slaves working on Kalak's infamous ziggurat can the adventure continue.

Because the PCs must be captured, the Part One encounters are unfair. One or more PCs will be prisoners after each encounter. No player actions short of the miraculous will save the PCs from eventual capture, arrest, or enslavement. But who ever said Athas was fair?

Recognizing this unfairness, though, you may allow the PCs to take in some of the sights and sounds of Tyr before running one of the captures. (*Players' Book* pp. 3, 13, 18, 35, 47 contain excellent flavor illustrations.) Of course, to allow the PCs to wander, they would have to already be amalgamated into an adventuring party. The beauty of this approach is that the PCs might get captured on their own.

**General Role-Playing.** In addition to capturing the PCs, each encounter in Part One lets characters gain allies and enemies who will prove important in later events. Enemies come automatically; allies come when PCs offer aid or show kindness. As you play, record which encounters you use and what actions the characters' take. This information will determine future events of the adventure.

To begin play, choose one of the five encounters to use first. A short description of each follows.

**Elf Brawl.** While in the elven district, a pair of feisty elves draw the PCs into a fight and thereby rob them or lead to their arrest. This encounter works best if any PCs are thieves or half-elves. "Elf Brawl" works poorly for elf characters.

**Serious Offense.** The PCs accidentally insult a powerful noble who orders the group's arrest. The same noble will lead a powerful faction in later adventures—a faction the PCs must deal with. This encounter works well for any group, particularly PCs who imagine themselves powerful and important.

**Preservers!** A Preserver asks the PCs for shelter from the eyes of the templars. If they protect the Preserver, the characters will gain a powerful ally. This encounter suits a party that includes Preservers or Defilers. It may wreak havoc, however, if the PCs are likely to betray each other.

**Press Gang.** A group of soldiers sweep through an area of Tyr, arresting every vagrant and foreigner they find. The PCs conveniently fit this description. This encounter lets foolhardy characters have an out-and-out fight.

**Shanghaied.** A tavern owner, secretly in league with the templars, drugs the characters and delivers them into slavery. This encounter can capture players who are too tough (or lucky) to be taken otherwise.

**Next.** Choose an encounter (1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, or 1E) to start *Freedom*

## Part One: A—Elf Brawl

**Setup.** This encounter takes place in the elven quarter. Tell the players to turn to *Players' Book* p. 47—Elven Plaza Map.

**Start.** Read the following aloud:

The day has reached its hottest corner, when only the most desperate merchants keep their shops open. The streets lie deserted but for a few poor beggars who have no other place to stay.

Have each player indicate his location on the Elven Plaza Map. After all PCs are placed, begin the encounter.



**Encounter.** A pair of raffish looking elves enter the plaza at point A on the map and head toward point B. They are tall and slender, their skin a crinkly brown from the sun. Their somber but finely-cut clothes denote high status within their tribe.

At point C a half-elf huddles in the shade of a wine shop. His clothes are dirty and tattered. As the elves pass, he attempts to beg some bits from them. The pair stop and one hisses, "Shut up, race defiler! Inix toenail filth!" The beggar spits in reply and the elves attack with vicious kicks. They plan to beat the beggar to a pulp.

**Role-Playing.** Play the elves with contempt and arrogance. Describe how they continue to kick the half-elf, even though he lays curled up in a helpless ball. Each kick carries with it a sneering insult and a cruel laugh. Attacking beggars is what these two do for fun. They continue until the characters do something or the half-elf dies.

### *Dialogue*

"Cur of a human woman!"

"Elven ears on a human body—we ought to cut them off!"

"And that's for staining my clothes with blood, vermin."

**Reactions.** If the PCs intervene, the elves happily broaden the fight. They make only Punching and Wrestling attacks unless the characters draw weapons. Then, each elf pulls a dagger from his clothing.

**Statistics.** *Prithen and Nandlex (elves):* AL CE; AC 7 (leather armor); MV 12; HD 2; hp 7, 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 - 1 (bone daggers); MR Nil; SZ M; ML 12 (Steady); XP 420; Str 13; Dex 15; Con 12; Int 13; Wis 11; Cha 14.

**Outcome.** If the elves win, a templar patrol hauls off the PCs left there. If the PCs are winning, a mob of elves gathers, siding with Prithen and Nandlex. Before anything more can happen, a patrol of two templars and four half-giant fighters charges in. Any PCs caught by the templar patrol go to work on Kalak's Ziggurat.

**Next.** If all the PCs are slaves, continue with Part Two. Otherwise, choose from encounters 1B, 1C, 1D, or 1E.

## Part One: B—Serious Offense

**Setup.** This encounter can begin anytime the characters are in a public area. As well as arranging the characters' arrest, this encounter teaches them how power works in Tyr. Have the players turn to *Players' Book* p. 33—Street Scene.

**Start.** Read the following to the shortest-tempered PC:

The red sky above Tyr is smudged with the soot of cooking fires; the thick odor of exotic spices hangs in the still air. A dull broil radiates from the stonework walls, and people bustle hotly through the streets. As you round a corner, someone suddenly knocks you sprawling into a fruit-vendor's stall.

**Encounter.** The PC has been purposely pushed by the gladiator-slave of a young nobleman. Three gladiators are callously clearing a path for their master through the crowd. Make clear to the PC that he was shoved by the slave, then immediately have the fruit-vendor shout in outrage.



**Role-Playing.** The fruit-vendor is a mul slave. The wailing mul is panicked by the loss of his fruit. He claims exorbitant damages, hoping for a large payment to placate his master. Have the mul scream loudly about robbery and vandalism.

The young nobleman, Verrasi of Minthur, pays no attention to the PC's plight and takes grave offense at any suggestion that he is to blame. His slaves sneer at the PCs, insulting them and lying about who pushed whom. They extravagantly claim that the mul and PCs are thieves planning to rob Verrasi and that they merely protected their master. The mul answers with more indignant howls.

### *Dialogue*

"Look at this! The finest fruit in Tyr—all ruined and mush!"

"You are the son of an inix. No other thief could be so stupid."

"I, Senator Verrasi, do not abide threats from rabble. Templars, deal with them!" [Jingle of coins]

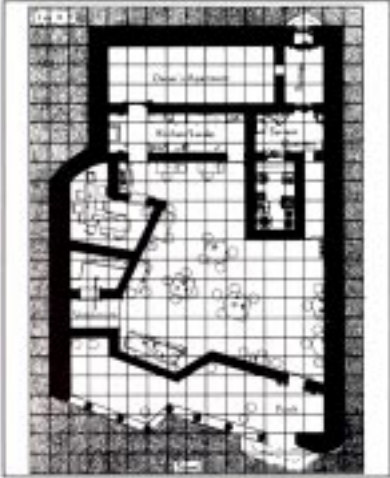
"Thief?! Thief am I?! My master will beat me with a thousand canes when he hears this!"

**Reactions.** No matter what happens, the commotion attracts a templar patrol that comes to restore "order." The noble bribes the templars to arrest the party. Be sure the PCs see the transaction and know the nobleman's name.

**Outcome.** The arrested characters are led to the ziggurat as slaves. Tell the players to read *Players' Book* p. 8—Verrasi of Minthur.

**Next.** If all the characters are arrested, go to Part Two. Otherwise choose from Encounters 1A, 1C, 1D, or 1E.

## Part One: C—Preservers!



**Setup.** This encounter occurs in a wine shop or inn. Tell the players to turn to *Players' Book* p. 44—Wine Shop.

**Start.** Have the players indicate which table their characters are occupying. One seat remains empty. Read the following:

The cool air in your lungs and the sweet wine on your lips ease the day's tensions. All about, a cheerful clink of mugs and rattle of conversation fill the air, and the rich aroma of roasting meat bodes well for the meal to come.

**Encounter.** Once the PCs become comfortable, the inn door bursts open and a woman frantically dashes into the room. She searches for someone table-to-table. When she reaches the PCs, a commotion comes at the door. The woman abruptly

takes the empty seat at the PC table. Three templars with eight mul fighters march into the hall and block all exits. The head templar harshly demands, "Where is the renegade Preserver?" No one says a word.

**Role-Playing.** Play the templars as cold-hearted and merciless. As they move among the tables, the muls twist patrons around for a better look at them. Their search starts at a table far from the PCs and works slowly toward them. The templars' irritation grows with each failure.

The customers sullenly refuse to speak. They loathe and fear the templars. Make it clear the PCs can expect no help if a fight begins. Several patrons glance significantly toward the woman.

The woman fights to seem calm. She studies the reactions of all the PCs. If any smile or show reassurance, she relaxes. If any show hostility, she readies a spell.

### *Dialogue*

"King Kalak will favor anyone able to help us."

"Look at Templar Mandax when he speaks!" [Mul twists man's head]

"It's been so long! How is your family?" [Woman to PC]

**Outcome.** No NPC betrays the woman. If the PCs likewise hold their tongues, the templars arrest everyone in the place. Though angry, no one dares resist. If any PC betrays the woman, that character is rewarded with an sp and a pledge of Kalak's favor, then released. The woman and other PCs are arrested as Veiled Alliance spies.

**Next.** The PCs go to work on the ziggurat; the woman, bound and gagged, is taken elsewhere. If all the PCs are captured, go to Part Two. Otherwise, continue with Encounter 1A, 1B, 1D, or 1E.





## Part One: D—Press Gang



**Setup.** This encounter can occur on any street. Have the players turn to *Players' Book* p. 14—Street Map. Page 33—Street Scene also contains some colorful details.

**Start.** Introduce this encounter anytime the characters are in the street.

**Encounter.** As the characters stroll along, a squad of the sorcerer king's guards seals off all streets and alleys as noted on the Street Map. Shutters and doors slam, shutting off businesses and homes. The soldiers begin to move down the street, accosting everyone in their path. They order the homeless and indigent to assemble along one wall. Only merchants and

nobles are allowed through the cordon.

**Role-playing.** Little opportunity exists for role-playing. The patrol is filling a quota and for once resists bribes. The half-giant commander will let one character free for every 1,000 cp he receives now.



**Statistics.** *Torban, half-giant commander:* AL LE; AC 5 (kank armor); MV 15; HD 6; hp 75; THAC0 11; #AT 3/2; Dmg 1d6 + 10 (copper club); ML 13; Str 20; Dex 13; Con 16; Int 13; Wis 13; Cha 15. Wild Talent: Flesh armor; PS Con -3; Cost 8/4 rd; PSP 44.

*Asst. Templars (2):* AL NE; AC 8 (leather corselet); MV 12; HD 3, 2; hp 16, 8; THAC0 22; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 - 1 (obsidian dagger); ML 14; Str 10; Dex 11; Con 12; Int 12;

Wis 13; Cha 9. Spells: *cure light wounds, silence 15'*

*Half Giant Soldiers (4):* AL N; AC 5 (kank armor); MV 15; HD 4; hp 60, 60 40, 30; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg (obsidian sword); ML 10; Str 17; Dex 14; Con 16; Int 11; Wis 9; Cha 9.



**Reactions.** The press gang solves any problems with force, not hesitating to injure or kill. If the PCs fight, one man already taken springs to their defense.

Eramas: AL NG; AC 8 (inix leather); MV 12; HD 3; hp 18; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+4 (bone wrist razor); ML 10; Str 18/13; Dex 13; Con 15; Int 14; Wis 7; Cha 8.

**Outcome.** If the PCs escape, they become wanted, with a 70% chance of being recognized and attacked in the future. If

subdued, they (and Eramas) go to work on the ziggurat.

Next. If all the PC are captives, go to Part Two. Otherwise continue with Encounter 1A, 1B, 1C, or 1E.

## Part One: E—Shanghaied!

**Setup.** This encounter takes place at night when the PCs dine at a quiet inn. Even so, PCs are unwise to let down their guard. Have the players turn to *Players' Book* p. 9—Inn of the Bleached Inix.

**Start.** The encounter begins while the characters take their meal. Read the following aloud:

As you enjoy your spicy bowls of stewed lizard and kank honey, a slave bearing a pot of stew crashes into a thri-kreen customer. Hot broth sprays everything, soaking your clothes in stinging heat. The soaked thri-kreen clacks in irritation.

**Encounter.** Seeing the accident, the innkeeper blusters over and berates his slave. He orders free drinks as recompense for the PCs and invites the party to name the slave's punishment.



**Role-Playing.** The innkeeper, Timrol, fawns nervously. The thri-kreen becomes less irritated and more amused as it watches the innkeeper. The slave cowers, watching the PCs fearfully.

### *Dialogue*

"Clumsy oaf! I curse the day I bought you! My greatest apologies for this slave's graceless behavior. Name his punishment—whatever amuses you!"

"Perhaps [click-click] I could *eat* you [click]." [Thri-kreen to slave.]

**Reaction.** The slave returns with a tray of fresh drinks. If the characters show mercy to the slave, he whispers to one as sets out the mugs, "Do not drink the wine. My master has poisoned it." The spiced wine is loaded with a sleeping drug. Five minutes after tasting the wine, each PC must make a saving throw vs. poison (-3). Those who fail fall into a deep slumber. Those who make the save are still groggy, suffering a +4 to initiative and a -4 to THAC0 roll, and becoming incapable of psionics and spell-casting. *If all players fall unconscious*, go to Outcome. *If some remain conscious*, the innkeeper and three dwarf slaves (use NPCs from *Background Book*) wrestle them into a back room and tie them up. Go to Outcome. *If the group does not drink and challenges the innkeeper*, he denies everything and threatens to call the templars. If the characters allow him to, the templars arrest the PCs. (They have an arrangement with the innkeeper.)

**Outcome.** The characters awake in jolting, rattling darkness, and are bound hand and foot. (They are in the back of a wagon.) The NPC thri-kreen is with them. After several minutes, the wagon stops and the tarp is pulled back. The PCs see Timrol taking money from a templar. The group is taken to the slave pens to work on the ziggurat.

**Next.** If all PCs are captives, go to Part Two. Otherwise continue with Encounter 1A, 1B, 1C, or 1D.



## Part Two: Introduction

### Into the Slave Pens

After all the players arrive at the slave pens (through whatever means) describe to them the processing of new arrivals. If the PCs are captured in several groups, wait until all are captured before describing the processing procedure.

Processing occurs with callous efficiency. Ever-present guards quell escape attempts while slaves, with no regard to gender or species, are stripped of all clothes and items. As clothing is heaped onto bonfires, the supervising templar pockets items that interest him and distributes those that do not. Next a team of guards shave beards and heads to eliminate lice, and each slave receives a loincloth (or shift), a blanket, and a small waterskin. Once within the pits proper, a taskmaster assembles the slaves and assigns each to a work crew commanded by an overseer. Work crews perform one menial task, such as hauling water, mixing mud, forming bricks, hauling bricks, setting bricks, cutting wood supports, and so forth. Assign the PCs to the same crew or to two crews that work closely together (hauling water and mixing mud, for example).

Daily life in the pens drags by with dreary brutality. Just before dawn, slaves line up to receive water rations: any slave who cannot get to the water station or who arrives late must survive that day without water. The overseers gather their crews, beating and whipping any who are slow to assemble. Meanwhile, clean-up crews scour the pens, removing the bodies of dead slaves and applying savage punishment to stragglers. Slaves too weak to work are killed.

The crews work until sundown, with only two short breaks during the day. Each overseer drives his slaves hard to meet near-impossible quotas. If he fails, the overseer loses his rank and returns to the pens, where he can expect little love from his former crew. The overseers are, thus, merciless in their duties. Any malingering is rewarded with the whip.

Little passes unseen by the eyes of the guards, though they are mainly concerned with staying out of the sun and halting escape. Occasionally guards enter the pens to stop large fights or prevent riots, operating in groups of eight to ten: guards never leave their necks or weapons unprotected when in the company of slaves.

Sometimes even able-bodied slaves must be killed: a man goes mad under the burning sun; a brute attacks an overseer or templar; a laborer soils the ziggurat with his sweat or blood. On other occasions, though, a slave may attract the notice of the Master of the Games and be sent to the gladiator pits. Improved treatment little compensates gladiators for their high mortality rate.

At night, slaves return to the pits and overseers go to special quarters. The daily meal—a worm-infested gruel—is served along with another ration of water. Those who do not reach the kitchen in time are not fed. After the meal, slaves sleep where they can. The strongest and their followers claim the few huts and shelters; all others sleep outside.

## Part Two: Introduction (Cont.)

### Practical Information

**Food and Water.** Even if characters receive their full allotment of food and water, they still suffer the loss of 1d4 Con points to dehydration per day. Characters can prevent this loss only by getting more water: hopefully they will be resourceful enough to do so without harm to others but, yes, PCs can gain water by depriving other slaves.

**Spells and Psionics.** Unless they swallowed their spellbooks before being processed (and regurgitated them afterward), Preservers and Defilers will only know spells memorized at the time of capture. (Their spellbooks, though stripped from them, escaped notice during processing.) Due to the exhausting schedule in the pits, clerics and druids have only a 30% chance each day to gain the rest and time needed to pray for spells. Characters regain no Psionic Strength Points (PSPs) during hard labor, 3 PSPs per hour of light exertion, and 12 PSPs per each of the 4 hours allowed for sleep.

**Tools and Weapons.** Weapons, obviously, are strictly outlawed to slaves. Ingenuity, bribery, and improvisation, however, can provide substitutes for weapons. Every character has material to make one weapon—a sap—by filling a piece of cloth with sand and stones. Stones, sticks, and rope can also be scavenged. With these materials, characters can make slings, garrotes, lassoes, bolas, wooden daggers, crude flails, and clubs. Stolen tools—mauls, wooden clubs, wooden pitchforks, and possibly even a small obsidian hand-axe—might be used in a pinch. Finally, a few slaves have sufficient contacts and influence to acquire “real” weapons. These slaves usually head powerful and wide-spread gangs within the pens.

### Modifiers for Improvised Weapons

| Weapon        | THAC0 Roll | Damage    |
|---------------|------------|-----------|
| Bola          | - 2        | 1d6       |
| Flail         | - 2        | 1d6       |
| Maul          | 0          | 1d6       |
| Sap           | - 1        | 1d4       |
| Dagger (wood) | - 3        | 1 d 4 - 2 |

Though improvised weapons abound in the pens, possessing any weapon is officially a crime. Slaves carefully hide their weapons to prevent theft by a slave and discovery by a diligent guard.

**Bribery.** Because of Kalak’s deadline, Tithian, High Templar of the King’s Works, has outlawed the lucrative practice of bribing one’s way to freedom. (Templars caught accepting bribes are stripped of office and imprisoned.) Even so, money and friends are critical commodities in the pens. Both can assure better treatment, an overseer title, weapons, food, water—even exemption from work. Freedom is perhaps the only thing that cannot be bought.

To be effective, the slave must have resources outside the pens: because slaves are

## Part Two: Introduction (Cont.)

stripped of property upon entering the pits, only money and friends outside can bribe a templar or guard. A noble may want to ensure good treatment for a valued craftsman or a caravan master may make arrangements to keep his former mekillot drivers from harm—both do so in hopes that their slaves will be returned when Kalak's task is done.

**Guards.** During the work day, 2d4 guards watch every operation (but not as a single group). Templars also oversee with a 30% frequency. At night, the number of guards increases to 2d8, but no templars remain. For any disturbance in the pens, 1d8 + 7 guards will appear.

**Statistics.** Unless otherwise noted, all slaves, overseers, guards, and templars encountered use the general NPC statistics found in the *Background Booklet*.

**Crimes.** Though the pits abound with petty prohibitions (e.g., against weapon ownership, laziness, and exhaustion), four serious offenses exist: murder of a templar, murder of a guard, murder of an overseer, and attempted escape. Killing a templar brings death by slow torture. Slaves who kill a guard are handed over to other guards for execution. A slave who kills an overseer is usually slain on the spot, though particularly strong killers may enter the arena (and those who slay inefficient overseers often replace them). Escape attempts bring deprivation of water and food, which hastens the loss of Con by an added 1d4 points per day.

**Escape.** For the purposes of *Freedom*, you do not want the PCs to escape unless a specific encounter calls for escape. The players, on the other hand, will certainly try to escape. All their attempts should fail. Still the players must believe they had a fair chance to succeed. The following tactics let you program "fair" failure for the PCs, both thwarting and rewarding their escape attempts.

**Informers.** Unless the characters take wise precautions, their plans can be betrayed to the guards by an informer who is seeking better treatment. Thus, escape attempts might lead straight into a trap. As a reward for careful play, the PCs might catch the informer before the trap is sprung.

**Psionics.** The PCs aren't the only ones with psionics: templars and notable guards might detect psionic use or read thoughts. An escape attempt can be scrubbed by letting the PCs know their plans have been psionically detected. Psionic-capable characters may be rewarded by detecting these eavesdroppers if they think of it.

**Bad Luck.** Even the best plans cannot control fate. A noise, a broken rope, an unexpected change in guards, and so forth can ruin a careful plan. The reward to this approach is that if characters make all their die rolls, they just might win freedom.

If the characters do manage an escape, use an encounter from Part One to reel them in again. When they are returned to the pens, the Chief Overseer will remember the escapees and drive them mercilessly.

## Part Two: Introduction (Cont.)

### DMing Part Two

Part Two contains two different types of events: scenes and encounters. Scenes are short incidents that function independently of the adventure's main action and that help to develop the alliances introduced in Part One (as well as some new animosities). Encounters are more complex incidents tied directly to the PCs' overall goals for the adventure.

Neither the scenes nor the encounters in Part Two occur in a set order. You select which events happen and when they occur. Each *encounter* in Part Two introduces a storyline that will involve specific NPCs and events throughout the rest of the adventure. You needn't follow any one storyline: PCs naturally follow storylines that reflect their abilities and personalities. A Preserver would be ill-suited for gladiatorial combat, but could thrive in the Veiled Alliance. Thus, characters in one party may well follow separate storylines of *Freedom*. That's fine. Typically the disparate goals of these PCs will be harmonious, but sometimes player characters may find themselves at odds with each other.

To help you choose which encounters to use from Part Two, the storyline for each appears below. Some storylines work better for specific classes or races; such information appears in parentheses after the encounter title.

**Friend In Need.** The friend in this case is a half-giant. Through the brute, the PC gains the attention first of a nobleman looking for muscle and eventually of Agis—leader of the rebellion. Thereafter the PC may become key to several diplomatically sensitive missions.

**Girl Trouble.** (Gladiators) The PC aids a gladiator named Lissan, who introduces him to the arena and Neeva, a well-known and powerful gladiator (and rebel). Eventually, the PC helps rescue Neeva,

**Treachery.** (Psionicist, Rogue) Through shady deeds, the PC achieves overseer status and thus draws the attention of Tithian—High Templar of the King's Works and Games, templar, and rebel (and eventually king). From this association, the PC becomes involved in struggles among the still-powerful templars of Tyr.

**Plots.** (Warrior) The PC aids plans for rebellion and thus becomes a minor leader in the revolution, coming under command of R'kus, leader of the slave faction. The PC helps keep the rebel army under control and deals with threats to the fledgling rebellion.

**Kindness of Strangers.** (Preserver) The PC aids the Veiled Alliance by delivering messages. This office leads him to Sadira, a mystical figure in the rebellion; she entrusts to the PCs important tasks to further the cause of justice and freedom.

## Part Two: Scenes: Allies

In addition to the encounters (Friend in Need, Girl Trouble, Treachery, Plots, and Kindness of Strangers), Part Two contains a number of shorter scenes. These scenes are brief incidents that function separately from the main action of the adventure, and can occur at numerous times and places. The scenes let PCs further develop the friendships set up in Part One (and gain new enemies). A specific scene may, thus, affect future encounters, but no one scene is critical to the progress of the adventure.

The first group of scenes that follows further develops alliances begun in Part One. The second group provides new antagonists for the PCs while teaching them the harshness of slave life.

### Scene: Allies

**Setup.** The following scenes occur over a period of one or more days (or nights) and should interlace with the encounters of Part Two. Each of these scenes introduces the PCs to a friendly NPC who may become an ally for the remainder of *Freedom*. Descriptions and statistics for these NPCs appear on pp. 13-16 of the *Background Book*. Before selecting a scene to run, consult your notes on the encounters you used in Part One. Determine which (if any) of the NPCs look favorably on the PCs, and which PC in particular has been kindest or most helpful to the NPC. The NPC will deal with that PC only. Don't use an encounter unless the PCs have genuinely earned the NPC's trust. Ask the players to turn to *Players' Book* p. 39—Slave Pens.



**Elf Brawl.** The friendly NPC is Orman of the Waste, the half-elf the PCs helped. In the pens, Orman warily introduces himself to the PC that helped him most and asked why he was helped: he neither asked for nor wanted the PC's aid. His eyes narrow suspiciously if the character seems to have acted altruistically. Shaking his head, Orman grumbles, "Now I owe you a favor," and stalks back to his own corner of the pit. He refuses to talk with the PC after this and makes clear that wants to be left alone. Orman will, however, aid the PC once to pay off his debt. Orman's statistics appear at the end of the *Background Book*.



**Serious Offense.** The friendly NPC in this scene is the mul fruit-vendor, Hamash. He approaches the PC who was most hostile to nobleman Verrasi. Though Hamash dislikes the PC, he dislikes Verrasi even more. "So, that son-of-an-mix Verrasi got you too," he snarls by way of introduction. "I'd like to wring the water from that saucy whelp!" Hamash continues his berating if the PC responds in kind. Make it clear to the PC that the two are only bound by their hatred of Verrasi. Hamash will not help the PC in the pens, but may prove useful in later adventures. Hamash's statistics appear at the end of the *Background Book*.

## Part Two: Scenes: Allies (Cont.)



**Preservers!** The friendly NPC is Mahlanda, the woman protected from the templars. She works the slave kitchens and brings extra food, water, and even an obsidian dagger to the PC who most aided her. (Note: If any PC betrayed her, she is not present for the adventure.) The supplies prevent dehydration for 1 to 3 people per day. If encouraged, Mahlanda drops hints about the Veiled Alliance, attempting to recruit the PC to sabotage the ziggurat. Mahlanda's statistics appear at the end of the *Background Book*.



**Press Gang.** The friendly NPC is Eramas, the gladiator (if not already dead). During the day, he spots the PC who fought most valiantly in the encounter. "Old friend!" he roars, throwing down his tools and striding to the PC's side, pushing slaves and overseers out of the way. A fight almost erupts before a wall of guards arrives and restores order. That night, Eramas seeks out the PC, bringing a bottle of palm wine he purloined. If in the area, Eramas will stand by the PC in any fight, no matter what the odds. Eramas's statistics appear at the end of the *Background Book*.



**Shanghaied.** The friendly NPC is Chch'kraran, the thri-kreen at the inn. It cautiously approaches the PC most scalded by the soup and says nothing for a long time. Finally it asks in blunt, buzzing tones, "Were you tck-akken att the inn?" After the PC answers, the creature bows with stiff formality and introduces itself. By its code of conduct, the thri-kreen and PC are bonded by misfortune. It will aid the PC as a pack-mate, but expects no less in return. The thri-kreen is never cordial—always formal—and its obligation in no way extends to other PCs. Chch'kraran's statistics appear at the end of the *Background Book*.



## Part Two: Scenes: Enemies

**Setup.** The next short scenes reinforce the deplorable conditions of slavery and provide the PCs some potential enemies. Played correctly, these scenes should intensify the PCs' longing for freedom. Begin by playing a typical day in the slave pens, highlighting the cruelty and drudgery of the work. Allow the players to explore the limits of their prison and plan for escape. Whenever the action lags, introduce one of the following scenes.



**Cruel Overseer.** During a particularly hot afternoon, one of the PCs errs. (As the PCs perform their various tasks, require ability checks of them; when one fails, describe the failure and introduce this scene.) The PC breaks a tool, almost spills a load of bricks, mixes too much water into the mud, or whatever. His crime draws the rage of the crew's overseer, a short and sweaty mul. The mul whips the PC unmercifully for 2d6 rounds or until the character lies unconscious. If the PC (or anyone) fights back, the guards do not respond for 2 rounds. If the PC fights back, he is hauled off and thrown into the Pit—a dried-out well used for punishment. If the PC is unconscious, his friends can drag him to the shade then go back to work. Thereafter, bad blood exists between the overseer and the PC.

**Mul Overseer:** AL NE; AC 8 (Dexterity); MV 6; HD 4; hp 23; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2 (whip); SZ M; ML 10; Str 17; Dex 14; Con 14; Int 10; Wis 10; Cha 11.



**Extra Work.** After a particularly hot and exhausting day, the crew finishes its work, fulfilling the production quota. A narrow-cheeked templar and two half-giant guards happen by and examine the work. After approving of the product, the templar turns to the overseer and says, "King Kalak demands more from his laborers. From today on, your work quota is doubled." The dinner gong sounds. "No meal, tonight—work until the quota is met." With that the templar leaves, his head cast back in self-satisfaction. If the PCs look around or ask other slaves, they discover that no other work crew must meet this new quota. Each PC suffers a 1d4 Con loss from the added exertion.



**Traitor.** This scene involves the PCs or NPC companions. It happens only after escape plans have been made. In the evening, when the conspiring group gathers around a small fire to ward off the cold Athasian night, a commotion arises. Slaves scatter from the path of a guard patrol led by Liurgand, a mul slave. The PCs recognize Liurgand—a slave who has listened in on all the escape plans. The patrol heads straight to the conspirators and surrounds them. After hailing them with the usual imprecations, the guards seize the conspirators angrily and drag them to the center of the compound, where a templar awaits. The slaves are

## Part Two: Scenes: Enemies (Cont.)

stripped and whipped for ten lashes (the whip hits automatically, producing 1d2 points of damage per blow). “Better make out a will before you plan your next escape!” trumpets the templar as the prisoners are hauled off. As a reward for his informing, the mul becomes overseer of the PCs’ crew.



**Theft.** During the day, a PCs goes to take a drink from his waterskin only to discover it missing. Later, other PCs’ waterskins disappear. Allow the victim a 20% chance per incident to discover the thief—an elf named Ramachil—in the process of stealing another water bottle. If the PCs attempt to stop the thief, a brawl will begin. The overseer breaks up the fight and forces all back to work. If Ramachil is confronted at night, 3d6 elf mates come to his defense. If a fight breaks out, use the standard elf statistics on the inside flap of the cover. Ramachil should be too tough for the PCs to defeat.



**Bully Boys.** Shortly after dinner, a PC (the weakest of the party) is accosted by a heavily tattooed mul. The man demands the PC’s food, water, and blanket. Five human thugs at his back add punch (literally) to this request. Clearly this gang of six bullied more than a few weaklings for their goods. If the PC refuses, the thugs beat him senseless (at 5-to-1 there is little point running the fight). If the other PCs defend the character, a full-scale brawl erupts. Others slaves gather to yell and make bets. Allow everyone to get and give a few good licks before the guards storm in and break up the fight. The thugs retreat for the night, threatening to “teach you guys a lesson.”

**Mul Gang Leader:** AL CE; AC 9; MV 12; HD 5; hp 29; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg Punch/wrestle + 7; ML 14; Str 19; Dex 15; Con 12; Int 11; Wis 9; Cha 10.

**Thugs:** AL NE; AC 10; MV 12; HD 2; hp 13 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg Punch/wrestle; ML 10.

## Part Two: A—Friend in Need

**Setup.** Right now, players should turn to *Players' Book* p. 15—Ziggurat of Tyr. If later they befriend Urrgos, ask them then to turn to p. 41—Urrgos.

**Start.** This encounter begins one morning as the PCs assemble into work crews. Read the following aloud:

An odd din rises over the caterwauling of the overseers and you raise your sun-scorched brow toward the disturbance. A crowd of slaves quickly clusters around the source of the sound, packed in elbow-to-elbow. As you crane your neck to watch, a stinging hail of grit assails the clustered slaves, who scramble for safety. At the center of the ring, a slouching half-giant whirls about, swiping massive hands at the nimble elves who are tormenting him.

**Encounter.** Six elves tease a clumsy half-giant, using speed and agility to slip his grasp. The elves shout cruel taunts while the half-giant swipes at them or slings huge fistfuls of sand in their direction.

**Role-Playing.** The elves' taunts are biting sarcasm. They lampoon the giant's ugliness, slowness, witlessness, and imitative personality. The giant cannot match their verbal insults. Frustrated, he lashes out with fists, throws sand, and bellows.

### *Dialogue*

"Hey Urrgos—you can pretend to be me!" [Chorus of "no, me—no me" from the other elves.]

"I get it! You're impersonating a kank, right?"

"He's a rock! No—rocks move faster than him."

"You go away! You just leave alone!"

"Urrgos not want be like you, little bug."

**Statistics.** *Urrgos, half-giant:* AL N?; AC 10; MV 15; HD 4; hp 44; THAC0 14; #AT 1; Dmg Punch/wrestle + 8; SZ L (11'); ML 10; Str 20; Dex 12; Con 15; Int 10; Wis 7; Cha 9.

*Elves:* AL CE; AC 8; MV 12; HD 3; hp 6 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (bone daggers); ML 10; Str 12; Dex 16; Con 11; Int 15; Wis 10; Cha 14.

**Outcome.** The spectacle wears on until the overseers arrive with whips to break it up. Unless prevented, the elves return to torment Urrgos over the coming days. Repeat similar encounters at morning, mealtime, and breacktime. With each, Urrgos grows more frustrated. Make it clear the half-giant lacks a good role-model to imitate. After three days, Urrgos erupts in a murderous rage, slaughtering anyone nearby until the guards finally cut him down.

A strong show of force by the PCs keeps the elves at bay. Any character with a Charisma of 16 or more automatically becomes Urrgos's role model. Otherwise the PC with the highest Charisma below 16 can become the role model with a successful Cha roll. Urrgos tries to model himself after the character and to become his best friend. The elves make any possible jab at Urrgos and his friend.

**Next.** From this encounter, play Part Three, Encounter A—Bodyguard, or continue with other storylines of Part Two.

## Part Two: B-Girl Trouble

**Setup.** Have the players turn to *Players' Book* p. 29—Duel in the Sand.

**Start.** This encounter starts at mealtime, after the PCs have received their meager bowls of food. Read the following aloud:

With your fingers you scrape up the last of your greasy, muddy-looking gruel. Suddenly, a spray of slop blankets you, punctuated by a searing epithet. Almost immediately, a pair of bodies crash through your small group.

**Encounter.** The two bodies belong to Lissan and Kanla, gladiators sent to the slave pens for punishment. As they crash through the PCs, Kanla's deadly intent should be obvious to the PCs. Lissan blocks with her quarterstaff as Kanla whirls a bola. After several feints and parries, Kanla knocks her opponent to the ground and springs astride her back. Wrapping several loops of the cord around Lissan's neck, she begins choking the life from her fellow gladiator. The guards do not intervene, placing bets on the outcome.

**Role-Playing.** From their shouts, the PCs know that Kanla and Lissan fight over a man named Tachandral. Kanla hates Lissan because she was chosen to be Tachandral's fighting partner. On several occasions Lissan attempts explanation, passing up opportunities to cause serious harm. Kanla, on the other hand, thirsts for Lissan's blood. She flies into an unthinking rage, screaming out insults and hatred.

### *Dialogue*

"I'm stronger, faster, and tougher than you! I should have been his partner."

"When you are dead, I will fight at Tachandral's side."

"The trainer chose me because our skills complement each other." [Gurgle]

### **Statistics.**



**Kanla:** AL NE; AC 8; MV 12; HD 6; hp 51; THAC0 14; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+3 (bola); ML 17; Str 18(22); Dex 18; Con 17; Int 11; Wis 9; Cha 10.

**Lissan:** AL N; AC 9; MV 12; HD 6; hp 57; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (quarterstaff); ML 18; Str 15; Dex 15; Con 16; Int 15; Wis 16; Cha 16.



**Outcome.** Kanla will kill Lissan unless prevented. If the PCs intervene, Kanla fights them with all her skill. After 2d8 combat rounds, 10 guards, angry that their bets have been ruined, wade into the battle. If a PC slays any guard, the remaining guards capture and execute him (if possible). Any other slaves involved in the fight are thrown into the Pits—tiny, dark shafts dug deep into the ground—and left there for days.

**Next.** From this encounter you can play Part Three, Encounter B—To the Arena, or switch to other storylines of Part Two. Characters in the pit cannot take part in further encounters until "To the Arena" is played.

## Part Two: C—Treachery

**Setup.** Choose a neutral-or evil-aligned PC for this encounter. Psionicists work best, but any class will work. Arrange a place to speak privately with that player.

**Start.** This encounter begins the day after the chosen PC has demonstrated his powers or abilities. Read the following aloud to all players:

Today, the overseers work you particularly hard. As you struggle beneath heavy loads, one shifts as if with vengeful purpose and crashes to the ground. Swearing, your overseer lays in with the lash.

The overseer whips one of the larger PC (not the chosen one) for 2d2 points of damage. While this happens, two half-giant guards seize the chosen PC. Separate that player from the others and read him the following:

Without a word of explanation, the half-giants march you to an overseer's hut and shove you inside. In a gloomy corner stands a black-robed templar, his face hidden in darkness. Without a word of introduction, he begins, "I could have you whipped, even killed, for your clumsiness ! Your death might teach the others a lesson! Perhaps you know a reason I should not kill you." The templar pauses, obviously awaiting a response.

**Encounter.** Though the templar will not volunteer the information, he wants the PC to become an informer. If the PC picks up the insinuation and agrees, the templar instructs him to report any escape plans or Veiled Alliance activity to the half-giant guards. In exchange, the templar discreetly increases the PC's water ration (no Con loss) and spares him future punishment. (Overseers and guards blame others, not the PC.) These benefits come with the warning that if the PC neglects his duties or double-crosses the templar, the templar will frame him as an informer. Once discovered, informers often die within the day. If the PC refuses to inform, the templar orders his punishment—to be bound to a frame, lashed (1d10 + 10 points damage), and exposed to the sun for a full day (1d6 Con loss). Explain these consequences to the player.

**Role-Playing.** The templar alternates between kindness and cruelty. He offers extra water and good treatment but in the same breath speaks of the PC's death. He avoids directly stating his wants or expectations, instead letting the PC make the offers and suggestions: he hopes thereby to increase the character's commitment.

*Dialogue*

"Remember the slave whipped to death yesterday? Amazing what one rude remark can do."

"The pens hold certain groups that want disciplining."

**Outcome.** The PC leaves the meeting either strapped to a frame or with treachery upon his heart.

**Next.** Continue play with another encounter or scene from Part Two. After Part Two encounters conclude, go to Part Three, Encounter C—Management Potential.

## Part Two: D—Plots

**Setup.** Choose a PC (not the one from Encounter 2C) for this encounter. Arrange a place to speak privately.

**Start.** This encounter occurs at night. Read the following to the PC:

The night winds promise near-freezing temperatures. Slaves huddle in batches or wrap tightly in thread-bare blankets. Beyond your cluster of slaves, you spot a shadowy shape that, instead of huddling for warmth, furtively picks its way among the sleeping forms. Do you follow it?

If the PC answers no, the encounter ends. Otherwise, continue.

**Encounter.** The shadowy NPC is Cruerex, an informer, who moves through the darkness to a guard post. To enter earshot of the discussion, the PC must make a 50% roll (thieves add MS percents). If the roll fails, the informer flees. Success means the PC hears:

"I told you, I don't know their plan. Just tell Theindar the slaves have some big plan—maybe with gladiators' help. If he wants me to finger the leaders, let me know."

The informer then indicates that he must go. To avoid the informant's notice, the PC must instantly move to cover (same percent chance). If discovered or if the PC confronts the NPC, the informer offers a deal: in exchange for silence, the PC receives easy work detail, better food, and adequate water. If the PC refuses or threatens the NPC, he runs for the guard. Tell the player the consequences of being fingered by the informer—before the next sunset, four guards will murder the PC.

If the PC goes undetected and does not confront the NPC, he can follow him to learn the NPC's identity. The next day, the PC spots the informer with a group of slaves. If the PC confronts the informer, the NPC offers the same deal, with the same consequences. If the PC approaches the slaves and tells them of the informer, the leader of their group, Granj, pretends ignorance. But next morning the informer is dead. Thereafter, Granj views the PC most favorably. If the PC neither confronts nor turns in the informer, two days later the guards seize and execute the plotters.

**Role-Playing.** The informer is cool and cold-blooded: if he cannot make a deal, he removes the problem. Granj acts wary and suspicious but can be convinced of the PC's sincerity. He verbally prods the PC to test his reactions.

### *Dialogue*

"Keep your mouth shut and things'll get lots better for you."

"If tomorrow you got the chance to escape—what would you do?" [Granj]

**Statistics.** *Informer (Cruerex):* AL NE; AC 10; MV 12; HD 3; hp 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2 (punch/wrestle); ML 10.

**Outcome.** If the PC eliminates the informer, the guards become suspicious and handle the PC roughly. Word of this treatment spreads and eventually Granj visits the PC and express his thanks.

**Next.** From this encounter, play Part Three, Encounter D—Champion of the Cause, or go to other storylines of Part Two.

## Part Two: E—Kindness of Strangers

**Setup.** Have the players turn to Players' Book p. 36—Night Fight.

**Start.** This encounter begins at night. Read the following aloud:

In the distance a dying man moans for water while, closer by, the thunderous snores of a half-giant rake the night. Suddenly, an explosion rocks the pits with blinding light and searing heat. Then all goes black, and screams of panic fill the air. Soon the darkness gives way to a second explosion and a third . . .

**Encounter.** Slaves flee the other side of the pit while explosions and screams continue. To investigate, the PCs must fight through the crowd, arriving after the commotion dies down. Guards ring the area and beyond them lie the dead and wounded. The bodies are a mix of guards, slaves, and (oddly) a few citizens. The craters and blast marks in the area hint at a powerful battle of magic or psionics.

Have each PC make a Wis -2 check. The first PC to succeed notices drops of blood appearing in the dust—drops that form a trail moving away from the scene. (The trail marks the passage of a Preserver named Faldar, escaping via invisibility.) He collapses and the drops become a small pool of blood. If the PCs do not smuggle Faldar back to their pen and bind his wounds, he will die.

As the PCs leave the area, a dwarf guard accosts them. To make matters worse, Faldar awakens with a loud groan. The PCs must either develop a quick cover story or quickly kill the guard. If a fight begins, guards will swarm the PCs and discover Faldar. Once at their pen, the NPC becomes visible. He wears the dress of a citizen of Tyr and is too badly wounded to move. The PCs will need to bind his wounds and conceal their guest from the morning search of the pens to avoid execution. Faldar has no spells to help them.

**Role-Playing.** The dwarf guard focuses on finding the attackers and cannot be bribed. If convinced the PCs are mere slaves, he lets them pass. Faldar, an agent of the Veiled Alliance, would like to enlist the PCs as agents in the pens. Faldar does not, however, reveal his current mission in the slave pits, any future missions the PCs might help with, or other Alliance members. Regardless of their response, he tells the PCs to meet him at the Red Kank if ever they escape.

### *Dialogue*

"Slaves, eh? Name your work detail and overseer—quick now!"

"It's better you don't know anything. Kalak will not hesitate to use mind probes."



**Outcome.** If the characters keep Faldar concealed for one day, he heals and rests enough to regain a few spells. That night, under cover of darkness, the agent uses a *change self* to pose as a guard and brazenly marches out of the compound. After he leaves, the PCs find a *potion of healing* tucked among their possessions.

**Next.** After this encounter, play Part Three, Encounter E—Dispatches, or continue with other storylines of Part Two.

## Part Three: Introduction

### Advancement

In Part Three of *Freedom*, the PC slaves can improve their lot. The encounters of Part Three pick up directly or indirectly where the Part Two encounters left off, and they involve the allies and enemies the characters developed there. As in Part Two you may have several storylines running simultaneously and not necessarily all of the PCs will be involved in each storyline.

Part Three encounters have two general goals: to bring the PCs to the verge of brutal death and snatch them away at the last moment (always a goal of DARK SUN™ adventures), and to position the PCs so that they can take part in later events. Though each encounter is pinned on an NPC who appeared in Part Two, the NPC allies and foes should have sideline roles to the PCs. Be especially careful with your inclusion of foes, for they have roles later on in *Freedom*, and therefore must not die in Part Three. Though the PCs can certainly call upon their allies to repay favors, caution them that the adventure is far from over. When situations become more deadly later, the PCs may regret calling in too many favors.

Each encounter of Part Three is sketched out below. The preceding encounter from Part Two appears in parentheses.

**Bodyguard. (2A—Friend in Need)** The half-giant Urrgos and his new “little buddy” manage, through their actions, to catch the attention of a minor nobleman observing the ziggurat’s construction. If the PCs are impressive enough, the noble sees to their needs.

**To the Arena. (2B—Girl Trouble)** Having befriended Lissan, she arranges for the character(s) to try out for the coming games, if they wish. Of course, the gladiatorial trainer has a tough little test in mind.

**Management Potential. (2C—Treachery)** The duplicitous player character from Part Two earns a promotion to overseer of the PC’s work team. Of course, there are quotas to be met.

**Champion of the Cause. (2D—Plots)** Granj decides to take the character(s) into his confidence and the group learns of major plans afoot. By proposing escape plans which the characters have doubtless developed by now, the PCs can become leaders of the escape movement.

**Dispatches. (2E—Kindness of Strangers)** The PCs, having displayed their true loyalties, become messengers for Faldar and the Veiled Alliance. They discover the Alliance’s network is greater than imagined as they sneak to a variety of different locations, in and out of the slave pens.



## Part Three: Introduction (Cont.)

### DMing Part Three

Unlike Part Two in which you as DM selected and arranged the encounters, Part Three allows the players to make their own choices: the PCs have gathered information and developed plans they will want to put into practice. Rather than selecting encounters and directing players, allow your group to choose with whom they want to deal.

Of course, after having refereed the encounters to this point, if you stop DMing and simply stare blankly at your players they will stop role-playing and stare blankly back. True, some headstrong players may have been trying to take over the adventure from the start, but others may be confused by the lack of a dungeon or other obvious location to explore. Watch for such confusion and be prepared to give guidance to the PCs, or possibly even rope them in (literally) to a certain course of action.

**Guiding Players.** How can you hand off the reigns to the characters? Be blunt. Ask a simple question: "Now that you know a few things, what are you going to do?" With a little luck, your players will indicate an action contained in the encounters in Part Three. For example, a PC may try to contact Granj and his group about escape plans. Another may look for Lissan in hopes of becoming a gladiator. These goals neatly dove-tail with the encounters in this section.

Of course, games seldom run so perfectly. The PCs may choose courses of action that don't directly tie to the encounters here. However, because the PCs' options are limited to escape plans, treachery, or interaction with known PCs, these tangents should lie along similar lines to the following encounters. On the other hand, PCs overwhelmed by options may become paralyzed, unable to reach a decision or make a plan. In this case you should nudge them toward one of the encounters. **Bodyguard** and **Management Potential** can occur anytime you wish, without extensive set-up: simply involve the appropriate PCs in the action.

To lead up to other encounters, have the PCs receive a series of messages that direct them toward the appropriate encounter. Make sure the players receive a number of appropriate messages before they can act on any one of them.

#### *Messages:*

A weasel-faced slave, a known go-between and fixer, stops by to say, "That tough gladiator, Lissan, has been looking for you."

In the midst of a throng, a familiar voice whispers in the PCs ear, "Thank you for saving me. Meet me by the zigkurat tonight."

A slave nervously approaches and says, "There's trouble brewing. Granj wants to meet—after dinner."

Finally, if none of these clues suffices, be even more blunt. Have the major NPC approach the characters with news. This should get the PCs' attention.

## Part Three: A—Bodyguard

**Setup.** Have the PCs turn to *Players' Book* p. 38—Bodyguard.

**Start.** This encounter occurs during one of the daily rest breaks. Read the following: Throughout the day, the overseers have been in a foul mood. You've heard whispered rumors that a Senate delegation headed by King Kalak himself will inspect the work site today. Some say the king comes to proclaim general manumission; others say he comes to quell a mass uprising.

A sudden hush falls over the workers around you. Gazing up toward the ziggurat, you see the dread King Kalak himself, accompanied by a band of nobles. The king raises his hand and speaks, "My nobles are angry that I have taken their slaves. Let the slaves be entertained." With that, the frail-looking Kalak seizes two senators and hurls them with preternatural strength into the pens. The startled nobles land like sacks of flour on the sandy ground very near you. For a moment, everyone is stunned—too stunned to move. Then a rasping voice, unmistakably gith in its hatred and malice, echoes up from the crowd. "Kill them both!" The mob surges forward.

**Encounter.** The half-giant Urrgos grabs his mentor NPC and bellows out, "That not right!" At the same time the two nobles, realizing their peril, scream for aid. About 15 slaves armed with work tools close in while Kalak chitters in amusement above. The PC(s) must act quickly. If they defend the nobles, Kalak watches intently but does not intervene. The mob focuses its attack upon the noblemen, battling the PCs as an afterthought.

**Role-Playing.** Urrgos insistently demands that his PC friend right the wrong Kalak has committed. Meanwhile, the two nobles (Ismar and Regle) shout out panicked offers of silver and gold for any who will protect them, forgetting that slaves have little use for money.

### *Dialogue*

"Kill them! Kill the fat erdlus!" (Erdlus are raised for meat.)

"A thousand ceramics—no, a thousand silvers to our protector!"

"See, senators, how dearly your slaves love you?" [Kalak]

**Statistics.** Use the Gith Slave, Human Slave, and Minor Noble statistics from the NPC table on the inside cover. The gith slave leads, followed by 15 human slaves armed with tools equal to clubs (1d6 each). The nobles carry steel daggers (1d4).

**Outcome.** If the PCs defeat the slaves, King Kalak halts the battle. Perversely amused, he commends the PCs on their bravery. Acting on a whim, he orders the two nobles executed and proclaims Urrgos and his friend elevated to the noble status to replace Ismar and Regle. The two are escorted out of the pens and released into the city with the dead nobles' clothing, daggers, and titles. (Urrgos looks quite laughable.) If the PCs fail to protect the nobles, the encounter ends.

**Next.** Continue play with another encounter from Part Three or go directly to Part Four.

## Part Three: B—To the Arena

**Setup.** Have the *Players' Book* ready. Later in the encounter, players will need to turn to p. 11—Equipment, and p. 12—Tembo. This encounter centers on the PCs who have befriended Lissan.

**Start.** The encounter starts in the morning as the PCs assemble. Read the following aloud:

Once again you trudge unwillingly toward the ziggurat, bane of your miserable existences. A distant though familiar voice breaks the silence, "There—that's them!" Turning, you see Lissan. She points you out to a husky stranger dressed in gladiator's armor. Three half-giants, all equally equipped, stand around him.

**Encounter.** Lissan has persuaded her trainer, Morvak, to test the fighter-class PCs for gladiatorial potential. After speaking with (and paying) the templars, Morvak takes the PCs. As he marches them out of the pens to the arena's training cells, the trainer seems grave. Humoring Lissan, one of his rising stars, has cost him money.

At the arena, Morvak wastes no time. He directs the PCs to a pile of equipment. Tell the players to turn to *Players' Book* p. 11—Equipment and choose from the weapons there. Allow no more than 3 minutes to equip. After that, Morvak places the PCs in a pen. Lissan pales on hearing of this. Once in the pen, a tembo attacks the PCs. Have the players turn to *Players' Book* p. 12—Tembo.

The tembo hides in the back of Cell 2, using its chameleon power (IC 6, 3/rd). When the PCs approach, it activates its displacement power (IC 6, 3/rd) and charges to attack. It attempts to life drain (IC 11, 5/rd) any target it hits.

**Role-Playing.** Though Morvak's cruelty matches the overseers', he values a live gladiator—particularly a potential champion. Play the trainer as curt and unfriendly to the PCs, never explaining himself or smiling. Even if the PCs are stunningly victorious, Morvak barely exhibits satisfaction.

### *Dialogue*

"If you don't want to fight, my gladiators can use live practice."

"You win, you live. You lose, you're dead. That's it."

**Statistics.** *Tembo:* AL CE; AC 4; MV 15; HD 4; hp 24; THAC0 17; #AT 5; Dmg 1d4 x 2/1d6 x 2/1d8, save vs. death or suffer level drain if bitten, dodge missile 40%; SZ M; ML 20; Psionics: *Sciences*— death field, life draining, shadow form; *Devotions*— chameleon power, displacement, ectoplasmic form, heightened senses, immovability; Def Modes: IF, MB; Score 10; PSPs 80.

**Outcome.** If the tembo becomes seriously injured, the handlers drive the beast back into its lair. Morvak does not want the valuable creature killed. The PCs, however, will not be likewise rescued if they become injured. If they live, Morvak considers them gladiator material and assigns them to train for the coming games. *Players' Book* p. 45—Arena Training shows typical training exercises.

**Next.** Continue play with another encounter from Part Three or go directly to Part Four.

## Part Three: C—Management Potential

**Setup.** This encounter involves the whole group, but centers on the PC informer from Encounter 2C. Arrange to speak with him privately.



**Start.** The informer PC is taken aside, much as before. Read him the following:

The templar grumbles from his dark corner. "You have not turned out as I hoped. That displeases me. I'm making you overseer of your work crew. It's no reward—King Kalak has doubled the quota. Fail to meet it and you'll be dead by dawn." With that he motions you out.

**Encounter.** This encounter is simple. The PC must now boss his companions, doubling their production. If he makes everyone work harder, the quota is met, but each other PC loses 1d6 additional points of Con. The PC overseer might find some other way to meet the quota, such as the following:

**Recruiting:** The overseer can commandeer slaves from other work crews. This works one day only, after which the other overseers complain and earn the templar's wrath against the PC.

**Stealing:** The PC can instruct his crew to steal the completed work of others. Each attempt at stealing has a 20% chance of success. Each theft brings the crew 11-20% closer to its goal (1d10 + 10).

**Magic:** Magical spells can aid in the work (*dig*, for example). Any character attempting a spell must make a Somatic Concealment check with a -2. If the roll fails, perhaps an overseer or NPC slave will betray the magic-using PC in hopes of better treatment.

Other methods of meeting the quota may be found: players are an ingenious lot. If the plan seems sound, let the PCs succeed. But first make them worry.

**Role-Playing.** Reward ingenuity and good role-playing on the part of PCs. This is one time when you can sit back and let them do the work.

**Outcome.** Continue the increased quota for several days until the PCs have run out of options. This encounter should greatly strain the party, but not destroy it. If the overseer PC consistently meets quotas he is regarded favorably by the templar. If he fails even once, the PC loses his position and all previous benefits.

**Next.** Continue play with another encounter from Part Three or go directly to Part Four.

## Part Three: D—Champion of the Cause

**Setup.** Tell the players to turn to *Players' Book* p. 40—Arguments.

**Start.** This encounter occurs at night, after the evening meal. Read the following aloud:



Through your contacts, you hear that Granj has called an emergency meeting. Arriving at the small fire, you easily see the concern in Granj's eyes. With unusual friendliness, he motions to you sit. Granj's concern appears also in the faces of the dozen gathered: men, women, a half-elf, a pair of muls, a dwarf. . . None look happy and several eye each other with hostile suspicion. As Granj starts the meeting, the dwarf stands in challenge.

**Encounter.** Ask the players to read *Players' Book* p. 41—Arguments. For best effect, have a different player read each argument, pretending to be that person. Once all arguments have been read, Granj asks the PCs if they have differing opinions. If so, any dissenting PC should make a speech to the assembled group. Insist that the player actually act out the speech. After this, Granj calls for a vote. Make each player vote secretly, without discussing his choice with the others.

How the NPCs vote depends on the positions and speeches of the PCs. There are 14 NPCs. Their votes fall according the various positions adopted.

*Immediate Escape* (Dwarf). 6 votes (Hivash and five others)

*Continued Patience* (Granj). 4 votes (Granj and three others)

*Die Gloriously* (Cavasaideen). 2 votes (Cavasaideen and his brother)

*Every Man for Himself* (Niave of the Waste). 2 votes (Niave and one other)

If a PC advocates any position similar to one above, they immediately gain half those votes. In addition, make a Cha check for the PC. If the check succeeds, add 2d4 votes to his cause, taken randomly from the other groups. If you feel the speech was particularly persuasive, you can automatically add 2 votes taken from other positions. Remember that each position always has at least one vote—that of the person who proposed it. Tally all votes, and the one with the most wins.

**Role-Playing.** Here again, the role-playing is in the hands of the PCs. Encourage and reward good role-playing.

**Outcome.** If a PC position wins, that character becomes leader of the rebels. He must work to win support among the slaves and implement his plan. If the dwarf wins, the NPCs make an escape attempt that night. Only 6 NPC slaves will take part. PCs must plan the escape, since none of the other slaves have the wit. If Granj wins, nothing changes. Should Cavasaideen win (ha!), he and his supporters leave the meeting, immediately attack the nearest guards, and die horribly. Should Niave's position carry, the infant slave rebellion dissipates and the group breaks up.

**Next.** Continue play with another encounter from Part Three or go directly to Part Four.

## Part Three: E—Dispatches

**Setup.** Have a place available where you can speak privately. Later in the encounter players will read *Players' Book* p. 17—A Message.

**Start.** This encounter begins during the daytime. Read the following to a player who aided Faldar.

While you work, you begin to feel strangely dizzy. You steady yourself, taking a deep breath. An odd voice speaks in your mind, "Do you remember me? I am Faldar, the one you rescued. If you can be trusted, meet me behind the overseers' shacks after dark." Before you can decide whether the voice is real, it fades.

**Encounter.** Cloaked in invisibility, Faldar watches any PCs who come to the meeting. The Preserver only appears if he knows all the PCs present. If any are strangers, the encounter ends. Faldar contacts the PC again the next day, instructing him to "leave the strangers behind." The Preserver wants the PCs as couriers, saying enemies in the city are watching for him. If the PCs accept, Faldar hands them a message to be delivered to the person and place named at the top of the missive. Tell the players to turn to *Players' Book* p. 17.



Faldar arranges the PCs' escape by putting the guards to sleep at one of the smaller gates. The PCs leave the pits without difficulty, but now must find the inn mentioned on the message. They can do so merely by asking someone. Passers-by notice the PCs' strange garb and a templar eyes them suspiciously, following for a short distance. At the inn, the group finds Etheros in a back room and delivers the missive. After thanking them, Etheros leaves the room, promising to return.

When he does, Etheros gives the PCs a choice—either take a reply to Faldar or remain free. Etheros will not force them to return, but he explains that Faldar is in great danger.

**Role-Playing.** Faldar is reticent: he likes the PCs but fears betrayal or ineptitude. Etheros is scarred and burnt from the sun, hardly the image of a wizard. Despite his rough appearance, he acts with kindness and concern about sending the PCs back into the slave pens.

### *Dialogue*

"If you do not deliver this, many may die." [Faldar]

"The Alliance would never force you back to that hell-hole, but we desperately need a messenger into the pens." [Etheros]

**Outcome.** If the PCs return, Etheros gives any spellcaster a scroll (*sleep* for wizards, *charm person or mammal* for clerics) and every character an *amulet of protection +1* as a reward. The guards at the gate remain unconscious until the PCs return that night. If the PCs refuse to go back, Etheros reluctantly lets them leave. The PCs must remain in hiding or be recaptured. It may be necessary to recapture the PCs to play other encounters.

**Next.** Either play another encounter from Part Three or continue to Part Four.

## Part Four: Introduction

Part Four functions differently from previous parts of *Freedom*. Part Four describes the epic scenes of the *Verdant Passage* as a backdrop for the PCs' own revolt and escape to freedom. Kalak, Tith'ian, Agis, Neeva, and Rikus are high-level characters beside whom the PCs would be overshadowed. The PCs, thus, are outside of the main conspiracy: their own section of the stands is deadly enough.

Because most of Part Four functions as backdrop, its encounters are strictly sequential and provide the PCs little decision-making: the PCs witness the epic events like everyone else. Even so, the PCs needn't sit and listen to you all night. PCs who have become gladiators can fight in the games, or you can arrange for each player to run NPC gladiators.

### **Restlessness**

The ziggurat has reached its final stages of construction. As the completion nears, the overseers redouble their efforts, leaving the PCs fewer opportunities to rest and plan. Clearly the King is anxious for completion. Rumors in the slave pens confirm this. The overseers work on a deadline handed down from the templars and, in turn, from King Kalak himself. Rumors say even Kalak's highest templars don't know why he builds the ziggurat.

Restlessness festers in the slave pits. Atop the ubiquitous desire to escape, anxiety has risen about what important event will—no— *must* follow the work's completion. The pit buzzes with speculation. Some slaves fervently plan reunion with their families while others feel an axe upon their necks. The gossip has shifted from daily lists of the dead to rumors of foolish hope or grim pessimism.

### **Running the Rumors**

Have the PCs pick up the new rumors gradually. Start one morning as the PCs eat their meager breakfast. Have an informant they know (but do not necessarily trust) sidle up and conspiratorially offer information in exchange for a few bites of food. Select one of the rumors from the following Rumor Table. Repeat this process throughout the next few days as gossip spreads. Add new rumors and repeat old ones, lending them credibility. Freely create and modify rumors.

The rumors contain several bits of key information you want your characters to receive. First, the players must understand that the ziggurat is almost done—completion lies mere days away. Second, the players must know that something important will happen when the ziggurat is completed, but not know if this bodes good or ill. Finally, the players must know that Kalak plans the greatest game spectacle ever conceived for the ziggurat's completion.

### **Rumor Table**

1d20 Rumor

- 1 "That fat templar Tomos said the High Templar wanted all able-bodied warriors for the big games."
- 2 "I got it from the kitchens our rations'll be doubled!"
- 3 "Tarasina the Brickmaker and some elf got killed on a break out."

## Part Four: Introduction (Cont.)

- 4 "The painters're almost finished; they're the last workmen on each level. Looks like Kalak's folly is almost done."
- 5 "I heard a templar say this was s'posed to be Kalak's tomb. Maybe after 1000 years, the old kank's gonna kick it."
- 6 "Five days. The whole thing'll be done in five measly days."
- 7 "Darnevayadeen—you know, the overseer of Idrore's group—has promised freedom for her slaves when the ziggurat is done."
- 8 "I seen slaves digging mass graves outside the city walls."
- 9 "The templars say everybody, even us, gotta go to Kalak's games."
- 10 "I heard that if your relatives can raise the money, the templars'll let us buy freedom after all this. Just like the greedy filth!"
- 11 "Big escape tonight. We're not gonna be the erdlus old Kalak kills for his victory feast."
- 12 "This friend of mine seen Lord Kalak mind-probe a slave after the templars'd nearly flayed him to death. Killed the poor sod, Kalak did. Then I seen templars' crews tearin' down some fresh set bricks—like they was looking for somethin'."
- 13 "If these games're like Kalak's other parties, all this buildup is malarky. What does a thousand-year old tyrant know about throwing a party?"
- 14 "The games are gonna be big, real big. Kalak's declared the ziggurat's completion a big festival. Everybody's gotta go to the big games. It'll be a big crowd. I tell you, this is big!"
- 15 "Grand games and freedom?! Last time Kalak sounded so generous, thousands died. I don't like it."
- 16 "Oh, it'll be great to be free. I've been a slave all my life, but when Kalak frees me, I'll get a wine shop and drink all my stock!"
- 17 "There's some what say Kalak's dealin' with the Dragon—gonna feed us all t' the monster t' keep Tyr safe."
- 18 "Kalak's even s'posed to be at the games. He's gonna bless the spears of the first competitors."
- 19 "Fandros, the supposed seer, claims evil omens are everywhere—like a darkness is settling over Tyr."
- 20 "Freedom! Free, finally free—soon we all will be free at last!"

While these rumors fly, you can conclude any of the previous adventures you wish. The rumors may be incorporated into these adventures: already named NPCs can provide the information, lending veracity to even the most outlandish statements.

### **The Truth**

The ziggurat does indeed near completion—a mere three or four days remain. (Expand or shrink this time frame to fit your campaign.) On the day the ziggurat is done, all slaves are herded back to the pits and guards are doubled. The rumors should become unstoppable.



## Part Four: A—Proclamation

**Setup.** Once the ziggurat is done and the slaves are herded back to the pits, tell the players to turn to *Player's Book* p. 13—Templars.

**Start.** That evening, before the meal is served, the chief templar (not High Templar Tithian) appears above the slave pits, accompanied by lesser templars. Half-giant guards circulate among the slaves, shouting for silence and clubbing those who disobey (use the generic half-giant statistics in the NPC table). Once the slaves cease their prattle, the templar speaks. Read the following to the PCs:

“The eye of King Kalak is upon all who have served in his mighty work, both the living and the fallen. Lord Kalak wishes to reward those who have served him so well.”

The templar pauses as an excited murmur spreads among the slaves. Whispers of “Freedom!” and “Reward!” fill the scorching air. The templar raises his hand for silence:

“By King Kalak’s decree, tonight you receive double rations and tomorrow you attend the great games. None shall be barred from these rewards—a place will be reserved even for the sick and dying. After the games, those who were free shall be released and those who were slaves returned to their masters. Kind and generous is King Kalak. Grant him obeisance and praise.”

**Encounter.** The slaves around the PCs hush, stunned for a moment. Then a half-formed roar passes among them, a roar that oddly mixes excited cheers and disappointed howls. The templar does not wait for the unnecessary adulation, leaving the site without further comment.

**Role-Playing.** Play the templar as aloof and somewhat bored by his message. He makes no real effort to convince the slaves of the worth of Kalak’s offering. The slaves’ response is very mixed: the freemen are excited, slaves angered, pessimists skeptical, and cowards elated.

### *Dialogue*

“He promised us freedom, not more torture!”

“We are saved! Oh, thanks be to Kalak!”

“Words come easy. I’ll believe him when I am returned to my master’s villa.”

**Reactions.** PCs may respond however they like: they may act like the slaves above, or trigger the master escape plan they have set up from the adventure’s beginning. The upshot of this is, you as DM must be ready for anything.

**Outcome.** The meal that night is lavish by previous standards, with hunks of bread and a stew containing (for the first time) identifiable meat. Wine mixed with water accompanies the meal as a special treat and many of the slaves quickly become intoxicated and sleepy, so long deprived of fermented fare.

**Next.** Be ready to play out any PC plans, then go to Encounter B.



## Part Four: B—Approaching Games

**Setup.** This page contains preparatory events to the games. These events really do not constitute an encounter *per se*, for they do not present the PCs with a decision-making situation. Instead, the events below provide you, the DM, with a means of getting everyone to the games so that the adventure can continue.

### **Encounters:**

*In the pits:* During the PCs' supposed last night of slavery, the slave pit is relatively quiet. Most of the prisoners have lost their frantic desire to escape, confident that their lot will improve with the next dawn. The watered wine has dulled their senses and brought soothing sleep to those few still troubled by the news. Even the former radicals who aren't drinking lick their wounds quietly. After all, they can more easily escape their old masters than King Kalak's overseers.

*In the arena:* For characters who have been transferred to the arena, the coming games are no secret. Morvak expects these gladiator PCs to watch and learn from the spectacle. Morvak will even let the PCs take part if they wish, but he recognizes that the PCs' inexperience puts them in grave danger. He plans, once the games are over, to use the PCs as a core to the new stable of warriors, and therefore would prefer if they survived. After all, he will have plenty of other casualties from the games.

*In the city:* The characters who have managed to escape the slave pits know a good deal about the impending games—King Kalak has declared the day a public festival in honor of his ziggurat. Citizens who want to remain on his good side fear to stay home on the day of the games. Indeed, during the games, the city will be crawling with templars who are taking down names of "dissidents." Let the PCs know through rumors that they will probably be safer hiding in among the crowd than they would be in conspicuous abstention in the city. Assure players that their PCs can attend the game and easily avoid capture with only a small dose of caution. The templars at the arena will be far too busy controlling the crowd to worry about escaped slaves, especially because they plan to release the slaves anyway. If the PC does go to the games, he must sit in the top tier, as suits his class.

If a PC remains recalcitrant about avoiding the games, you can do one of two things—let him hang out in the city while everybody else finishes the adventure or capture him again. You can plan this capture before or during the games, whichever you prefer. If captured, the PC is whipped and sent to the games with everyone else.

**Next.** Continue with Encounter C.

## Part Four: C—Games Begin

**Setup.** When the PCs enter the stadium, the turn to *Players' Book* p. 7—Arena.

**Start.** On the morning of the games, the slaves receive double rations of food and water. When the meal is done, the slaves are herded to the arena and seated in the uppermost tier. Guards separate them from the crowd. Here, under guard and broiling sun, the slaves wait for the games to begin. Read the following aloud.

Throughout the morning, people file into the tiers of the arena, mostly the poor grabbing the best of the cheap seats. Using their few ceramic pieces, these early arrivals showily wave vendors over and make conspicuous purchases. Drink vendors, accompanied by burly half-giants with jugs on their backs, stop to ladle out cups of cheap wine. Other enterprising merchants carry small braziers of coals over which they grill skewers of tough, suspicious-looking meat. Thankfully, these morsels are so heavily spiced as to be unrecognizable in flavor.

The slaves are neither offered nor allowed food or drink, though a guard or templar ally may pass them small scraps during the day.

Only as the games are about to begin do the nobility and upper classes deign to make an appearance. Naturally, these folks have boxes in the best sections of the arena—on the lower tier in the cooler shade. From the balcony to King Kalak's palace the sorcerer king will watch the games.

**Encounter.** The games begin at noon and continue all day until the Grand Melee. Feel free to describe any number of strange match-ups and battles. The matches gradually increase in variety and the gladiators improve in skill until the Grand Melee. By now the crowd, aroused by blood and drink, is at a fever pitch.

*DM's may run a special session for gladiator players, or let each player run an NPC gladiator. Tell PCs they must emerge triumphant from three battles or die. If the PCs willingly ascent don't let them withdraw if the matches go badly.*

*The matches increase in difficulty, and survivors advance to the next match. No healing occurs between matches unless the PCs possess healing ability. One PC faces a single opponent; several PCs fight as a team. Opponents equal PCs in number. The singles matches appear below. Use the NPC chart on the inside cover for the stats of each opponent.*

*Match #1— PC vs. human 1-2 levels below PC. Both use wooden clubs.*

*Match #2— PC vs. mul of equal level. Both use bone spears*

*Match #3— PC vs. 2 unarmored dwarves, 1 level below the PC. PC uses obsidian sword. Dwarf #1 has net; dwarf #2 has stone club.*

*A PC who victors in all three matches gains privileged status.*

*Play out these matches in a separate role-playing session unless all players are involved. Or if played in a group game, the uninvolved players can use other characters from their Tyrian tree, letting them wager on the outcome of each fight. The odds for the first match are 1 to 2 in the PC's favor. Thereafter, the odds increase according to the match difficulty and the injuries sustained by the PC. The wagering players can keep their winnings.*

Next. Go to Encounter D.

## Part Four: D—Gaj

**WARNING:** This and some later parts of *Freedom* recreate events described in *The Verdant Passage*. DMs who want to fully enjoy the climax of that novel should stop now and read *The Verdant Passage* first, which contains a complete account of these events. The italicized passages here are adapted from *The Verdant Passage*.

**Setup.** This section describes an assassination attempt carried out by the nobleman Agis of Asticles, the gladiators Rikus and Neeva, the half-elf Preserver Sadira, and the reluctant High Templar Tithian. Though the PCs can't influence the assassination, they can seize the moment to gain what they most desire—freedom! Tell the players to turn to *Player's Book* p. 46—Gladiators.

**Start.** The Grand Melee is the last event on the program:

*On each side of the arena stand six matched pairs. Some are full humans or half-elves, rough-looking men and women who have been sold into the pits to pay their debts or as punishment for a crime. There are also several representatives of more exotic races, including a set of hulking baazrags, two purple-scaled nikaals, and a pair of stooped gith. But the crowd's wild applause centers on one pair, the mul male Rikus and the human woman Neeva. Throughout the day, this pair has victored in every match, dispatching their opponents with flair and merciful swiftness. You hear odds-makers shout out wagers of 1-to-3 against the pair—still better chances than other gladiators have.*

*A loud creak echoes throughout the stadium, drawing the attention of gladiator and spectator alike to the center of the arena. A great bulge forms in the sand as an immense pair of doors begins to open. Excited murmurs of curiosity rustle through the crowd, for those huge doors cover a subterranean staging area where Tithian stores building-sized props. They seldom open unless some special amusement is being raised into the arena.*

*Today is no exception. As the doors reach their locked position, a familiar orange shell rises out of the pit. A pair of barbed, arm-length mandibles protrude from the underside of one end of the shell.*

**Encounter.** The creature is a gaj, captured especially for the games. It perches on the squared-off top of a glistening obsidian pyramid. As the crowd watches, a team of templars raise their hands and levitate the pyramid, bringing it to rest in front of the balcony where King Kalak watches. The master of the games, High Templar Tithian, booms out over the crowd. *"The rules of the game are simple: the last pair of gladiators able to stand on the summit of the pyramid will win the contest."* At the signal from Kalak, the battle begins.

**Outcome.** From the moment the pyramid appears, all eyes fix on the arena. The guards momentarily forget their positions, but still block exit to the lower tiers.

The gladiatorial battle is furious and bloody. The baazrags are the first to fall, slain by a half-giant and a teleporting elf. Meanwhile Rikus and Neeva make short work of the pair of gith.

**Next.** Go to Encounter E.

## Part Four: E—Assassination

**Setup.** Later, the PCs will turn to *Player's Book* p. 31—The Spear.

**Start.** Have each PC make a Wis check to feel a grinding clank reverberate through the stands. (The outer doors of the stadium are being sealed shut, per Kalak's orders.) PCs near the back of the stadium hear cries of protest from outside. A second Wis check lets PCs see a flash in an exit—clearly a spell or psionics. (Sadira has used a spell to stop a pursuer.) Then read the following aloud.

A roar erupts from the crowd. Only two teams remain—Rikus and Neeva, and a half-giant and elf. Wagers grow deafening as the latter pair reaches the pyramid's black summit. With his massive muscles, the half-giant heaves the struggling gaj at his opponents. Rikus and Neeva dispatch the beast, though Neeva, injured, staggers weakly away. The half-giant stands triumphant astride the pyramid; shouted odds shift from the favored pair.

**Encounter.** Tell the players to turn to *Players' Book* p. 31 as you read:

*A deafening explosion shakes the stadium. A great silver and gold flash shoots out of the lower tiers—a magical attack. The bright flare fills the air with a peculiar stench that smells of melting copper. The bolt hits an invisible barrier at the edge of Kalak's balcony, exploding there into a brilliant cascade of red and blue sparks. The magical wall of shimmering force fades away amidst a cacophony of loud sizzles and sharp pops.*

*Rikus steps forward. Kalak looks away from the mul, his eyes drawn suddenly to Agis of Asticles in the High Templar's Gallery. Rikus turns toward the sorcerer king and hurls the spear with all his might. As the enchanted weapon sails toward its target, an image born of Kalak's twisted mind, augmented by his mastery of the Way, appears over the entire stadium: a dragon, fierce and terrible, rises to the height of the great ziggurat.*

*The image of the dragon rears back, ready to strike.*

*In that instant the Heartwood Spear strikes Kalak, sorcerer king of Tyr, squarely in the chest and passes clear through his body. The king's screams fill the stadium, then the entire city. The unearthly cries do not fade as the half-giants grab their leader and drag him into his golden palace.*

*The stadium remains tense, but calm. Most commoners stay in their seats, too frightened or too stunned to move, filling the air with the steady drone of their astonished voices.*

**Reaction.** Forcefully demand immediate action from the players. Now is a moment of fate, an instance where their actions can change the course of history. Consider two factors in their response: the speed of reaction and the daring of choice. To escape Kalak's trap, the PCs must act immediately, instinctively, and decisively.

**Outcome.** The PCs must unite and galvanize the slaves around them. If the PCs are paralyzed, have a friendly NPC (perhaps Urrgos or Orman) say, "It's a trap! What should we do?" If necessary, have the NPC propose a direct action, but let the PCs make the bold move.

**Next.** Go to Part Five.

## Part Five: Introduction

### The Riot Begins

The moment the characters make their move, the paralyzing spell over their fellow slaves shatters. A decisive action is all they need. The wave of rebellion quickly ripples among the common citizens throughout the arena, also touching off the surviving gladiators (unless, of course, the PCs are among the gladiators and the rebellion spreads in the other direction). By the end of this section, the PCs should wind up leading at least a small band of rebels fighting for freedom. You want the PCs to feel they had a major role in the rebellion, and in future adventures you want them to be recognized as minor leaders of the people (somewhere below Tithian, Agis, and the other major players in the drama).

Just how people react to the attack on Kalak and the subsequent riot depends on their social position. Some whole-heartedly support the rebellion while others resist body and soul. The general behavior of each group is detailed below but, of course, individuals in the groups are, in fact, individual in their responses.

**Slaves and Gladiators.** The imprisoned workers on Kalak's ziggurat have little if anything to lose. Even those who hoped to be free again tomorrow realize that the sealed stadium does not bode well for their hopes. For weeks all the slaves have endured the hardships and cruelties of their masters. Revenge and freedom are long overdue. Any PCs who act in a group with some semblance of a plan can easily attract a band of desperate men and women to their side. These followers fight with little regard for life and limb as long as they see some hope of escape. However, the PCs should not simply fling these followers at guards like living shields, or they will attract no more, and may in fact be perceived by slaves as "the enemy."

In addition to those who rally to the PCs' side, other bands of slaves will form. Most have motives similar to the PCs, but a few will be bent on mindless destruction. These slaves lack leaders and react to events only by destroying.

**Commoners.** The bulk of the audience has a single, simple reaction—fear. They do not know what has happened or why, only that escaped slaves, templars, and half-giant guards are slaughtering people. Most commoners will rush for the exits (which are sealed) and choke all avenues of escape in a panicked mass. Strong, confident leaders can organize these people to attack the templars blocking exits, but panicked commoners have very low moral and will melt away before the first serious set-back.

**Nobles.** Though the nobles have no love of Kalak, they will not help the rioters. Indeed, many of the slaves and commoners passionately hate the nobility—and nobles, almost to the man, despise the rabble. The nobles also fear and hate the templars. As they have done throughout their lives, nobles look after themselves, attempting to use influence and money to escape the stadium. They only attack templars if forced because no one really knows if Kalak is dead or alive.

**Templars.** Kalak's servants are initially stunned and confused. The fall of the invincible Kalak has shattered their confidence in the ancient tyrant. Of course, they all

## Part Five: Introduction (Cont.)

have long hated Kalak, and this hatred, added to their native ambition, allows the black-robed priests to recover quickly. For templars, the situation is simple—restore order until King Kalak can recover (or one of them can seize power). Kill anyone who even smells of insurrection and keep the stadium sealed at all cost. As the riot progresses, these simple objectives fall to an instinctive one—self-preservation. Eventually the templars fight to stay alive, ignoring even their oaths to Kalak or their aspirations to rule. At that point, a particularly persuasive PC can mold a particularly fearful templar like moist clay.

**Slave Guards.** The slave guards, a cruel and oppressive group, have always been out-numbered by their charges. In the past, fear, savagery, and weaponry have equalized them. But when slaves rise *en masse*, fused together by fear, the situation is utterly changed. At first the slavers stand and fight, believing they can cow the slaves as always. Only after they are fatally committed does their doom become apparent. Once the main mass of guards has fallen, the remainder will flee in panic.

**Half-Giants.** Between the templars and the rioters stand King Kalak's bulwarks of flesh—the half-giant guards. These brutes act with blind loyalty to the sorcerer king. They even turn upon templars who become flagrant enough in their anti-Kalak ambitions for these thick-headed guards to notice. The half-giants refuse to open the gates, surrender, or change sides under any circumstances.

### Leading the Mob

If the PCs act in suitably heroic fashion, they will quickly attract fellow rioters. The first to join the PCs are 4d6 slaves, in addition to any NPCs already friendly to the PCs (e.g., Urrgos, Lissan, Granj, Orman of the Waste). As long as the PCs lead resolutely and avoid serious set-backs, they attract 2d10 more followers each turn. Set-backs include retreats, grievous losses, confused orders, and hesitation. These new followers are slaves and commoners. PCs can only draw templars, guards, or nobles to their sides through personal interaction and stellar role-playing.

The PCs' followers are no army, but rather an unwieldy mob. This panicked mentality leaves the PCs with only one truly effective command—attack! To direct this rabble, the PCs point at their target and charge. At least one PC must lead the attack, preferably the most charismatic and dynamic. (No one will follow the lead of a thri-kreen, though all regard it a valuable ally and a deadly enemy.) If the mob is forced or ordered to retreat, it routs in panic (losing at least 50% of its members). Furthermore, subtle attacks are impossible. Feints, fighting withdrawals, pincer attacks, or anything that smacks of strategy fails in the face of the mob mentality.

## Part Five: Introduction (Cont.)

### Riot Combat

Many of the encounters in Part Five may involve 10, 20, 30, or more individuals on a single side. Such combats become unmanageable using typical AD&D® game combat, but unless you DM a fairly sanguine group, you needn't enact the round-by-round flow of the battle. Several alternative ways exist to resolve such battles.

Players who own a number of miniatures and enjoy (or would like to try) miniatures gaming can use the BATTLESYSTEM™ Skirmish Rules, which allow detailed table-top miniatures battles on a man-to-man scale. Fighting miniatures battles does not speed play, but the visual appeal and challenge of miniatures combat makes the scene far more vivid. In addition to miniatures, players will need a large playing table and terrain to represent the stadium (strips of colored paper can indicate rows, tiers, aisles, and exits). As DM, you should prepare rosters for each player and may want assistance in handling the villains.

By contrast, some DMs would prefer to simplify the battles to a few die rolls for the sake of speed and dramatic tension. This approach simulates the swiftness and uncertainty of mob actions—more a swirl of events than a logical ordering of steps.

A mob has the two advantages of numbers and ferocity. To account for these effects, count the forces on both sides (not including the PCs) calculate the odds, and find the result on the following table.

### Mob

#### Odds\* Result

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>5-to-1</b> | The enraged rabble swarms its foes, easily pulling them down and tearing them apart with bare hands. The mob suffers 10% casualties.  |
| <b>4-to-1</b> | The enemies attempt to flee from the charging throng, only to be caught before they can escape. Trapped, they try to fight but are at last bludgeoned to death. The mob suffers 20% casualties.   |
| <b>3-to-1</b> | The enemies waver but stand firm. If the PCs fearlessly charge, the mob follows. The battle is difficult and more than once the mob wavers. The rabble victors if the PCs face off against the most powerful opponents. The mob suffers 30% losses.   |
| <b>2-to-1</b> | The mob hesitates and only attacks if the PCs lead. The battle goes against the throng and it starts to break unless rallied by a PC (a stirring word and successful Charisma check). The rabble loses unless PCs personally defeat all spellcasters and half-giants. Losses are heavy—40%-60% of the throng. |
| <b>1-to-1</b> | The mob will not attack unless incited by the PCs and will fail unless the PCs win in standard combat. Losses are grievous, ranging from 60% to 100%.   |

\*Count each half-giant and templar (because of spells) as two people. Thus 20 humans attacking 2 half-giants would have 5-to-1 odds. Round uneven numbers to the less favorable odds.



## Part Five: Introduction (Cont.)

Use this simplified combat resolution system to create role-playing encounters for the PCs as they exit. Thus, a mob of 17 might overwhelm the two templars in the passage, but the three half-giants that block the way farther on will provide more resistance.

### The Horror

**WARNING:** This section further details the plotline of *The Verdant Passage*. DMs who plan to read the novel should do so before reading this section.

Of course, to gain freedom, the PCs will need to do more than lead a riot, fight past guards, and force open the sealed gates. After all, this is Athas. Kalak's own little surprise will add a sense of urgency to the escape. The Tyrant of Tyr has long intended to slay everyone in the stadium, possibly in the entire city. Through a combination of powerful magic and psionics, Kalak plans to draw the life force from every person present and convert that life force to magical energy. This energy, in turn, will be used to elevate Kalak to a position of unimaginable power. The ziggurat is the central material component of Kalak's world-splitting spell. To this end, Kalak has spent the last century and countless slaves in preparation. At the heart of the strange ziggurat lies the sorcerer king's incubation chamber, which will focus and infuse the magical energy into him.

Thus, just as the riot breaks out, the process will begin, at first barely noticed by the fear-stricken audience.

*A cacophony of panic erupts in the stadium. In scattered places, aged men and women clutch their chests and drop gasping to the ground.*

*Amidst the confusion more than a few hands point toward the summit of the great ziggurat. A small geyser of burgundy flame shoots from the top of the structure. A moment later, a billowing cloud of yellow smoke replaces the pillar of fire.*

*Rikus and Neeva ask, "What's happening?"*

*"Kalak has started his incubation," Sadira answers, pointing toward the ob-sidian pyramid. "He's drawing the life out of the spectators."*

*Agis looks in the direction the sorceress is pointing. The air around the pyramid shimmers with raw energy, and waves of flaxen light scintillate over the structure's glassy surface. Deep within the thing's black heart glows a steady golden light that grows brighter even as the senator watches.*

Kalak's magic is deadly and the PCs cannot stop it, but neither should they be slain by it if they pursue their escape with courage and wit. Make sure they realize that otherwise healthy people are dropping dead all around them. That understanding should motivate them to act quickly, before they themselves are reduced to lifeless husks. Describe first how the innocent young and the very aged die in writhing agony as golden streams of life force are torn from their bodies. Each turn thereafter, increase the death rate as more and more weakened individuals fall. With every new turn, all the PCs temporarily lose one point from every ability score. If any ability reaches 0, the character falls unconscious and his life force begins to be sucked away.

## Part Five: A—Break-Out!

**Setup.** This encounter is for those in the stands. If any of the PCs are gladiators on the arena floor, they must find a way to climb the 12 foot wall out of the pit. Then, after fighting guards and templars in the stands, can join the other PCs in Part Six, Encounter A—Freedom! Have the other PCs turn to *Players' Book* p. 30—In the Tiers. Tell the PCs they cluster at Location 1. The Gs on the map show the positions of their guards. Each position represents two guards at one post.

If an escaped PC is in the stands, position him beyond the guards.

**Start.** This encounter assumes that the PCs want to overpower the distracted guards. At this point, few other choices exist to them. Read the following to the players.

Your guards seemed dazed by the events, so much so that they have paid no mind to you—indeed their backs are turned. You know the moment is at hand: already guards farther away wheel about with their weapons ready.

**Encounter.** Closest to the PCs stand a half-giant and a human guard in stunned silence, with stooped shoulders and eyes fixed on Kalak's box. Neither guard looks toward the PCs, though the half-giant shifts his huge hammer uneasily. If the PCs attack immediately, they gain automatic surprise. Without weapons the PC must rely on overbearing or punching/wrestling combat. If the PCs have surprise, they gain a +2 overbearing modifier vs. the human guard, and a -2 modifier for the half-giant, due to his size. In subsequent rounds, the PCs lose their positive modifier and have a -4 penalty against the half-giant.

In the first attack, no other slaves join the PCs, though most scream out support and suggestions. If the PCs pull down a guard, a mass of slaves descend on the struggling victim, freeing the group to deal with any other guards. If the group wants guards' weapons or armor, they must snatch the weapon before other slaves can.

**Role-Playing.** With luck, the guards' surprise prevents any reaction. Otherwise, both guards snarl, curse, and bellow for help.

**Statistics.** Use the Half-Giant Guard and Human Guard statistics from the NPC table on the inside cover.

**Reactions.** If the characters do not attempt escape, have other slaves initiate the attack, thereby allowing the PCs to breach the gap.

**Outcome.** With success, the PCs find themselves hailed by their fellow slaves as leaders of the revolt. They immediately gain 4d6 unarmed followers. (Use the Slave entries on the NPC table.) If the PCs continue bold action, the other slave guards nearby can be overwhelmed without the PCs' direct involvement. Otherwise, the nearest two guards posted to either side will swoop down to crush the escapees. Each post has one human and one half-giant guard as before. News of the PC's bold action will eventually reach the ears of Rikus and Neeva (the gladiators) when the riot is over—hopefully the PCs will be alive to benefit from it.

**Next.** Go to Encounter B.

## Part Five: B—Milling Throng

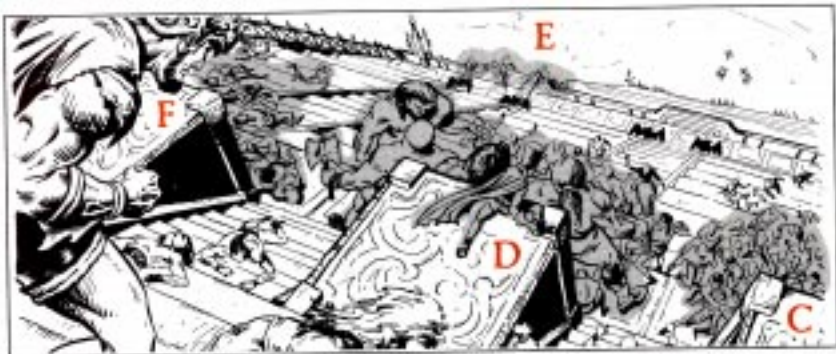
**Setup.** Tell the players to turn to *Players' Book* p. 32—Decisions.

**Start.** Once free, the PCs can attempt escape (hoping to find a breeched exit). Read the following aloud to your players.

Freed of the guards, you survey a scene of growing panic in the tiers below you. To the left a surging mass of humanity attempts to force its way down one of the narrow exits from the upper tiers. Near the center of your vision a phalanx of half-giants and templars are holding an ugly mob back from another exit. Down along the railing's edge, a group of citizens scramble over the side, hoping to lower themselves to the bottom tier. To the right the entry to an open passage is cluttered with lifeless bodies. No one seems to go that way. Even as you stand studying the situation, other slaves impatiently await your decision. You feel a sudden tingle, then weakness in your rib cage. An old, hobbling slave near you clutches his chest and collapses upon the polished stone.

**Encounter.** Each character loses one point from every ability score as Kalak's defiling magic begins. At the same time, they face the first test of their leadership: to choose a path for their escape. They have four possible routes to exit. Each choice leads to a different encounter. Press the characters to decide quickly, using the deadly power of Kalak's obsidian pyramid as incentive.

**Role-Playing.** At this point, punctuate the game session with inarticulate screams, cries of panic, begging, dull explosions, and general chaos. You are one person who must recreate the pandemonium of a full-scale riot. If you happen to have a sound-effects recording of crowd noises or a riot, play it.



**Next.** If the PCs choose the packed exit, go to Encounter C—Into the Throng; facing the templar leads to Encounter D—Breakwater; joining the group climbing over the balcony leads to Encounter E—Direct Route; while the deserted passage ends in Encounter F—Bloodbath. If the players don't reach a quick decision, they lose the initiative. Their followers desert and the PCs must try to get out through one of the exits on their own.

## Part Five: C—Into the Throng

**Setup.** When the PCs discover the dead-end, have them turn to *Players' Book* p. 10—Mob.

**Start.** When the group reaches the surging mass, read the following aloud:

As you near the dark stone portal, the press of frantic citizens grows nearly unbearable. Men, women, and mothers with children in their arms squeeze against each other, trying to press through the choked opening. Already bodies press behind you, forcing you forward. Not far from you a man slips, disappearing beneath the wedged shoulders of his compatriots. There is a gurgling scream as the small gap closes, and the man is gone. As the wave of bodies surges forward, you nearly trip over the inert and near-trampled form.

**Encounter.** The fallen man is the first of several problems the PCs face in this crowd. The man tugs weakly at one of the PC's legs, trying to climb back up. If a PC stoops to help him, the man rises. However, the assisting character must make a Str and Dex roll or be forced down and similarly trampled. Once a PC is down he must make a half Str roll to rise or be rescued by his companions. Otherwise the PC dies.

Worse yet, this passage leads to a dead-end—a set of stone doors closed tightly. This fact remains hidden until the group is well into the tunnel. Before the PCs can even get that far, they must force their way down the passage—callously shoving citizens aside, trampling the fallen, or even forcing people down. Their savage behavior is rewarded when the PCs discover that the route dead-ends. Retreat is not nearly as simple as entry. The PCs are now trapped by panicked citizens trying to force their way down the passage. In minutes, the corridor will become a charnel house of crushed, trampled, and suffocating bodies. Unless the PCs can devise some clever escape, they must literally fight their way out of the crowd.

**Role-Playing.** Though this encounter allows little one-to-one interaction with NPCs, allow the PCs opportunity to role-play their heroic leadership. For example, they can try to quell the panicked mob, saving those trapped inside, or organize those around to work as a unit. (A combined Str of 120 can breach the doors.) Do not use Cha checks to determine success; instead, judge according to how your players actually role-play the situation.

**Statistics.** Use the Typical Citizen entry from the NPC table for any persons the players must deal with.

**Outcome.** If the PCs plunge into the crowd, control of their followers becomes impossible and they lose track of all the slaves who were with them. On the other hand, if the PCs can quell some of the madness, they gain another 4d6 citizen followers.

**Next.** If the PCs back out and escape the situation, they must choose one of the other routes. Go to the appropriate encounter card. If the PCs somehow manage to marshal the citizens and pry open the doors, they escape to the lower tier: go to Part Six, Encounter A—Freedom! If the PCs are near death, skip to Part Six, Encounter B.

## Part Five: D—Breakwater

**Setup.** There is no player illustration for this encounter.

**Start.** Read the following aloud to the players.

Through the archway you see clearly that this passage leads to the lower levels, and closer to the exits. Unfortunately a templar and his two axe-wielding half-giant guards also noticed this escape. The cloven and mangled bodies strewn about them testify to the fate of those who attempt to pass. Fearful yet desperate citizens hover just beyond the axes' reach, leaving a semi-circle of certain death before them. Looking around, you realize that this passage will prove deadly unless you can rally the crowd to your side.



**Encounter.** This route provides the best chance for escape, though a templar and two axe-wielding half-giants present a heady deterrent. Still, the ramp that leads to the lower tiers and the noble boxes lies clearly visible beyond. If going this way, characters must make a successful Cha check before their followers join in. Then the PCs can launch an attack. This encounter works well for the simplified riot combat discussed at the beginning of Part 5.

**Role-Playing.** Little one-on-one role-playing takes place in this encounter. Before attacking, PCs may first attempt to incite the mob with inflammatory rhetoric: have the player stand and make a rousing speech to everyone at the table. If you deem the speech stirring enough (just about any good rabble-rousing and character-defaming venom will do), 2d10 citizens will join the charge for desperate escape. The templar will flee if the half-giants fall.

**Statistics.** Use the Minor Templar and Half-Giant Guard entries from the NPC list on the inside cover.

**Outcome.** While defeating the templar does not endear the PCs to Tithian (High Templar of Games and Public Works), he is neither angered or offended. Resolute leadership by the PCs impresses the other future leaders (Agis, Rikus, and Neeva in particular).

**Next.** Success provides clear passage to the lower tier. At this point you can go to Part Six, Encounter A—Freedom! Failure means that the PCs must find another escape. Go next to whatever encounter they choose. If the PCs are near death, skip to Part Six, Encounter B.



## Part Five: E—Direct Route

**Setup.** Have the players turn to p. 34, *Perilous Descent*, in the *Players' Book*.

**Start.** Read the following to the players.

Looking over the side of the tier, you see a crudely improvised rope that had once been someone's long, flowing clothes. The white, silken garment is stained with smears of red, suggesting that the owner did not surrender it willingly. The sprawled form of a brutalized woman nearby confirms your suspicion. The cloth hangs down about fifteen feet, leaving a gap of perhaps twenty to thirty feet more to the stone seats below. A terrified man slides to the end of the rope and then drops to the lower tier. He lands with a bone-crunching thud. The wretch, bleeding from the fall, barely manages to drag himself away, his legs useless.

**Encounter.** The PCs must find a way to get several characters down safely: spells and psionic powers will both be effective. Those who make a direct drop suffer 3d6 points of damage and a 40% chance of twisting their ankle (move at 50% normal; fight with a -2 modifier; heal in 1 to 3 days). The rope cannot be stretched. Once several PCs are down below, they can rig up a simple cloth net (by tearing down an awning) to catch others.

If the PCs all go over the side, their followers panic and make a mad rush as the last few PCs try to get away. To keep their band, the PCs must supervise the descent of their followers with some of their party above and some below. The longer the process takes, the more people come to the spot, each pushing to be the next down the rope. At the beginning of each round the PCs on the upper tier must make a Cha check to control the crowd (with a -1 modifier applied for each subsequent round). If the check is failed, the crowd goes berserk. On a quarter Cha check (and a well role-played speech) the PC can talk a few commoners out of their shirts and tie them onto the rope. The clothes of the slaves are too rotten to hold up.

If this escape proves too easy, some half-giants can come calling.

**Role-Playing.** Quelling panic is the important task for the PCs in this encounter. The slaves and citizens, offered the slimmest chance for escape, grow terrified or angered at the slightest hint they will die before descending. Play on this and make the PCs constantly soothe or suppress the frayed nerves of their charges. This encounter can also place PCs in uncomfortable moral positions. (Who will be saved? Who chooses?)

### *Dialogue*

"I'll give you 500 coins to go next!"

"Save my daughter and she'll be your slave!"

**Outcome.** The PCs' band increases by 1d3 per round spent helping others. Furthermore, word of their valor and compassion (as it were) reaches Agis and Sadira.

**Next.** Once the PCs reach the lower tiers, go to Part Six, Encounter A—Freedom! Otherwise, play the PCs' next encounter. If the PCs are near death, skip to Part Six, Encounter B.

## Part Five: F—Bloodbath

**Setup.** When the PCs encounter the creature, tell the players to turn to *Players' Book* p. 12—Tembo.

**Start.** Read the following to the players.

At the mouth of the passage lie numerous dead bodies, more than you saw from above the passage. Close examination shows that they were not killed by swords or axes but ripped apart by something more ferocious. Your followers refuse to advance, fear filling their eyes.

**Encounter.** To get the followers to advance, the PCs must take the lead. The rest will follow a hesitant distance behind. This well lit passage goes straight for a distance then turns to the right. At the corner lie two mauled bodies: by their dress both are gladiators. One has an obsidian sword, wrist razor, and leather breastplate; the other has a bone spear, dagger, and small shield.

Just around the corner is a tembo, the same one the PCs may have faced earlier in the adventure. It is currently feeding on its latest kill, a dwarf gladiator. If the characters approach with caution, they can get the weapons and armor without alerting the beast. Should they make noise, however, the creature will attack instantly. If the characters act quickly and quietly, they can automatically surprise the creature. The tembo fights until it has lost 2/3 of its hit points, then it flees. If it cannot retreat, it fights to the death.




**Statistics.** *Tembo*: AL CE; AC 4; MV 15; HD 4; hp 24; THAC0 17; #AT 5; Dmg 1d4 × 2/1d6 × 2/1d8, save vs. death or suffer level drain if bitten, dodge missile 40%; SZ M; ML 20; Psionics: *Sciences*— death field, life draining, shadow form; *Devotions*— chameleon power, displacement, ectoplasmic form, heightened senses, immovability; Def Modes: IF, MB; Score 10; PSPs 80.

**Outcome.** If the PCs defeat the tembo, news of their battle-prowess and valor reach the leaders of the revolt. After the riots cease in Tyr, the new leaders contact

the PCs, offering them soldiering positions.

**Next.** If the characters defeat the tembo, go to Part Six, Encounter A—Freedom! Otherwise, go to the encounter the PCs choose next. If the PCs are near death, break off the Tembo's attack and skip to Part Six, Encounter B.



## Part Six: A—Freedom!

**Setup.** Have the players turn to *Players' Book* p. 16—Passageway Map. Later, they will look at p. 42—Winch Map.

**Start.** Before the encounter, describe several confused mob scenes, fights, templar attacks, and the increasing panic caused by Kalak's horrid magic. Mention the strange smoke rising from the ziggurat and the reverberating sounds echoing from within. If the PCs have been significantly weakened, let them run into helpful NPCs and more followers. When you deem them ready, read the following aloud.

At last you reach one of the coliseum exits. Though the way is congested, the terrified citizens readily part before your small but determined looking army. Figuring the templars would disapprove of a mass escape, you prepare for trouble.

**Encounter.** Instead of guards, the PCs find a massive stone block closing the passage. Tell the players they must find a way to move the block soon or their followers will desert in despair. A quick inspection of the block shows that it slides into place from the side. The door shown on the player's map leads to the winch room. If the PCs investigate it, they should look at p. 42—Winch Map.

The winch room houses the mechanism to move the block. To close the gate, a team of half-giants pushed the block into place. Normally, to open the gate, the same team turned the winches that pulled in the cable and moved the block. However, the cables have now been cut. Worse yet, three half-giants and a templar have been hiding from the mob in the winch room. Though they do not attack the crowd, they prevent the PCs from opening the gate. To incite the mob to attack, the PCs must, as usual, lead the charge.

If the PCs triumph, they must still move the block. The cable must either be repaired or a massive effort applied to move the stone. Using the half-giants' belts, PCs can splice the cable, with a 45% chance of success. Otherwise some magical or psionic means of repair can be used. If all these fail, the PCs can organize the mob into a work crew. With at least 50 men crowding around the snapped cable, the group can slowly (1' per round) move the stone. The stone must be slid at least 3' before anyone can escape.

While the characters do this, increase the number of deaths caused by Kalak's magic. You want the PCs to race against time.

**Statistics.** Use the Major Templar and Half-Giant Guard entries from the NPC list inside the cover. The half-giants have only half their hit points, weakened by Kalak's magic.

**Outcome.** If the PCs manage to open the gate, they become minor heroes of the people. Let various NPCs heap praise upon them and make them feel important.

**Next.** Go to Encounter B—New Emperor. If the PCs are near death, skip ahead to Encounter B before they finish.



## Part Six: B—New Emperor

**Setup.** Shortly after the PCs finish the last encounter (or during it, if they won't win), begin this adventure.

**Start.** Read the following to the PCs.

A thunderous bellow that mixes pain and rage erupts from Kalak's great ziggurat and rebounds through every street and alley of Tyr. The passion in that single cry is so tremendous that everyone in the arena, even the beasts, pause, wondering what inhuman monster could have voiced such rage.

In the same instant, Kalak's black pyramid stops glowing. The glowing golden beams, which moments before were winding toward the obsidian block, cease. The deadly glow within the stone's heart fades. Slowly the yellow, greasy smoke coiling from the top of the ziggurat thins and finally drifts away. The sorcerer king's deadly magic has stopped.

**Encounter.** The end of the magic does not end the riot. After the pause caused by Kalak's death, the panicked mob lashes out once more. The templars, confused by events and finding themselves out of control, abandon their posts. Some even shed their robes and try to mingle with the crowd. More than a few meet an ugly death.

Before the PCs can escape the arena, a booming voice echoes out over the stadium. Magically enhanced, the words are understandable over the cries of the mob, even into the bowels of the stadium. The PCs have no trouble recognizing the voice since they have heard it already today. It is Tithian, High Templar of the Games:

"Templars—sheath your weapons! Citizens of Tyr, listen to me! The nightmare is ended. Kalak, Tyrant of Tyr, Kalak the Evil, he who planned to kill you all in his lust for power—Kalak is dead! The tyrant's cruelties and madness have ended. I, with the aid of brave Rikus and his companions, have slain the monster!" The crowd stops to listen in skeptical disbelief.

By this point, the PCs can have moved to a place where they see Tithian speaking.

The High Templar, bloody and dishevelled, stands at the front of Kalak's balcony. Behind him stands Rikus and farther back are Neeva, Agis, and Sadira. Rikus's chest is swathed in bandages and the others look little better than he. Tithian continues:

"Citizens of Tyr, as proof of my words, behold Kalak's crown!" With that Tithian holds aloft a blood-stained diadem, clearly the sorcerer king's crown. Leaning forward, the templar presents it to the crowd. An expectant hush falls on the masses.

"Behold your new king, savior of Tyr!" Tithian intones, his words magically rolling over the tiers. Then he lowers the crown onto his own head. From behind him, Agis shouts, "All hail King Tithian of Tyr!" A confused roar rises from the stands.

For a moment nothing more happens. Tithian stands firmly in his place, regarding the people. Finally Rikus and Neeva step forward immediately behind the new king. The gladiator seems to whisper to the High Templar, who responds

## Part Six: B—New Emperor (Cont.)

with the briefest nod. Stepping forward, the new king raises his hands for silence. “People of Tyr, hear my first command! From this day forward, let all who were in bondage, let all who were forced to serve another, become freedmen! No more will Tyr be the city of slaves! You are all free!”

The words have an energizing impact on the crowd. Though the nobles pale at Tithian’s words, the cries of protest are instantly drowned out by the jubilant roar from the stands. “Long live Tithian!” the crowd screams, as if with one voice. The new age of Tyr has begun.

**Reactions.** Though Tithian’s manumission of the slaves ends this adventure, the city of Tyr is anything but safe. In the days to come, the PCs can continue with many further adventures while the city sorts out the new order of things. The change in power is not smooth or easy and Tyr will be a tumultuous place for some time to come.

**Outcome.** If the PCs seek out the revolutionaries, their reputations (good or ill) precede them. Tithian and Agis will respond in kind, rewarding them with posts in the new order or, if their rumored acts are heinous, ordering them to the prison.

**Next.** *Freedom* was designed to provide you with the beginnings of a campaign setting. The PCs have met a number of NPCs, most of whom should still be around at the end of the adventure. Some have reason to like the PCs; others do not. With these NPCs you can create further adventures for your group in future playing sessions. The maps and illustrations provided here cover many of the common scenes of Tyr, and thus can be used in later adventures.

In the days to come, Tithian accomplishes the wrenching transfer of power caused by Kalak’s death. First he works to quell the riots through the city. The templars, stripped of their spells when Kalak died, become targets of the people’s revenge. However, King Tithian needs the templars: they are the only ones experienced in administering the city. Former slaves, too, have old scores to settle and their violence presents a problem for the new government. (Indeed, the PCs may want to gain revenge on whomever imprisoned them.) Nobles, suddenly faced with King Tithian’s First Edict (as it comes to be called) have turned their villas into armed citadels.

With all these problems, Tithian and his supporters need all the aid they can get. As minor heroes of the stadium riot, the PCs can naturally become officers of the new administration. Tithian, Agis, Rikus, Neeva, and Sadira all need bold agents to undertake dangerous and important tasks. PCs who act decisively can garner minor hero status in the new order. But not all is rosy in Tyr. Poverty, hunger, violence, corruption, and swift death still plague the city.

Athas is, after all, Athas.



The cover art depicts a scene from the Dark Sun setting. In the upper portion, a large, horned demon with a scaly, orange-brown body and a long, segmented tail is shown roaring. The demon's tail is raised high, and a small globe is visible on its tail. Below the demon, a warrior with a dark, spiky helmet and a blue mask with a purple gem is shown in a dynamic, forward-leaning pose. The warrior has a determined, almost aggressive expression. In the foreground, another warrior is shown from the chest up, wearing a golden and green outfit with a large, ornate golden helmet. The background features a cityscape with classical-style buildings and a large, glowing orange sun or moon in the sky. The overall color palette is dominated by warm tones like orange, yellow, and brown, with accents of blue, purple, and green.

# DARK • SUN

Quest for  
freedom in  
the decadent  
city state of  
Tyr

Player's Book



# Freedom

A Dark Sun Campaign Adventure

## Players' Book

by Zeb Cook

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## One: How to Use this Book

What you hold in your hands is one of two books for the **DARK SUN™** adventure *Freedom*. This *Player's Book* provides all the maps, illustrations, and descriptions the players will need to reference.

If you are a player, though, resist the urge to flip through this book: your character may have psionic talents, but reading the DM's mind in this fashion will only ruin the adventure for everyone. Even so, some players cannot resist a prohibition. For their benefit, the maps and illustrations in this book appear in random order, and some of the material will likely not be used by a specific DM. Finally, remember—as in true Athasian politics—DMs can simply kill off characters who seem to “know too much.”

If you are the DM, read the *DM's Book* with this book close at hand to familiarize yourself with the people and places your party may encounter. The *Player's Book* helps you referee by providing the players with the maps, illustrations, and descriptions they need. When you run an encounter, the *DM's Book* will indicate the page number of relevant material for the players to flip to. Remember, though, that the players should only have access to the *Player's Book* during a role-playing session: at the end of an evening, make sure to take the *Player's Book* with you.

At the back of this book, five pre-generated characters appear. Each character takes the front and back of one card. If a player chooses to use one of these characters, the card should be photocopied or carefully removed from the binder. If players have already generated their characters, the pre-generated characters can be used by the DM as potential NPCs, either during the course of this adventure or in future adventures.



## Two: Quick Guide to Tyr

For over a millennium, Tyr has stood.

During the past thousand years, the city has labored beneath the oppressive eye of Kalak, Tyrant of Tyr. Under the fearful shadow of his defiling magic, Tyr has festered from a small oasis settlement to a sprawling and corrupt metropolis. Renown for wealth, power, and a steady though meager production of iron, Tyr is perhaps the most decadent city state in a decadent land. Here, where human life counts less than a drop of water, a person can buy anything and suffer any fate. All but the poorest Tyrians own slaves, and nobles tend vast plantations by the lash. Indeed, slaves outnumber freemen two-to-one within the brutal city of Tyr.

As you approach the city, you pass through verdant plantation-lands where crops receive more water than the unnumbered slaves who tend them. These fortress plantations belong to the city's nobles and garner great wealth for them by providing nearly all of Tyr's food. Standing armies fiercely guard each plot of land.

Once within the gates of Tyr, the throng of odd caravans, tang of exotic foods, and heady rattle of strange dialects unsettles you: Every Athasian city state follows unique laws and customs. Those unfamiliar with the ways of Tyr may run afoul of its templars or, worse yet, Kalak himself.

King Kalak, Lord Kalak, Tyrant of Tyr—he goes by many names. Defiant Tyrians mock their lord (when shielded from his psionically-enhanced senses) with the title “Kalak the Diminutive,” for Kalak's ancient body is horribly wizened—gaunt, emaciate, and puny. This dry husk of flesh, though, channels unimaginable power: Kalak holds Tyr in an iron grip. His mind is said to roam the city, dealing death for the slightest offense.

As in most Athasian cities, the sorcerer king leaves day-to-day business to templars—his faithful. On the streets, the black cassocks and imperious manners of templars set them apart from other Tyrians. These men and women wield great power, checked only when their actions might offend Kalak, a superior templar, or a noble. Tyrians generally avoid templars, who, on the slightest whim, can imprison slaves and citizens alike. Of late, the templars of Tyr have been preoccupied, spending their careers upon Kalak's massive public works.

Indeed, for the past 20 years, the templars' lives have centered on a huge stack of stone—King Kalak's ziggurat. Dominating the center of the city, the square-stepped tower rises in sharp-edged splendor over the neighboring slums. Only now, after 20 years of construction, does the ziggurat near completion. For two decades, lash-stripped slaves have borne massive blocks into place and mortared them together with their own blood. Now the streets and markets of Tyr ring with rumors that King Kalak has commanded his templars to finish the tower—finish it before month's end. No rumors tell why dread Kalak is building the ziggurat and dark looks dissuade those who may ask.

### Three: The City of Tyr

1" = 330'

Elven Market  
Shadow Square

Warrens

Caravan Gate

Merchant District

Stable Quarters

Slave Pits

Backyards

Kaluk's Ziggurat

Stadium

Tradesmen's District

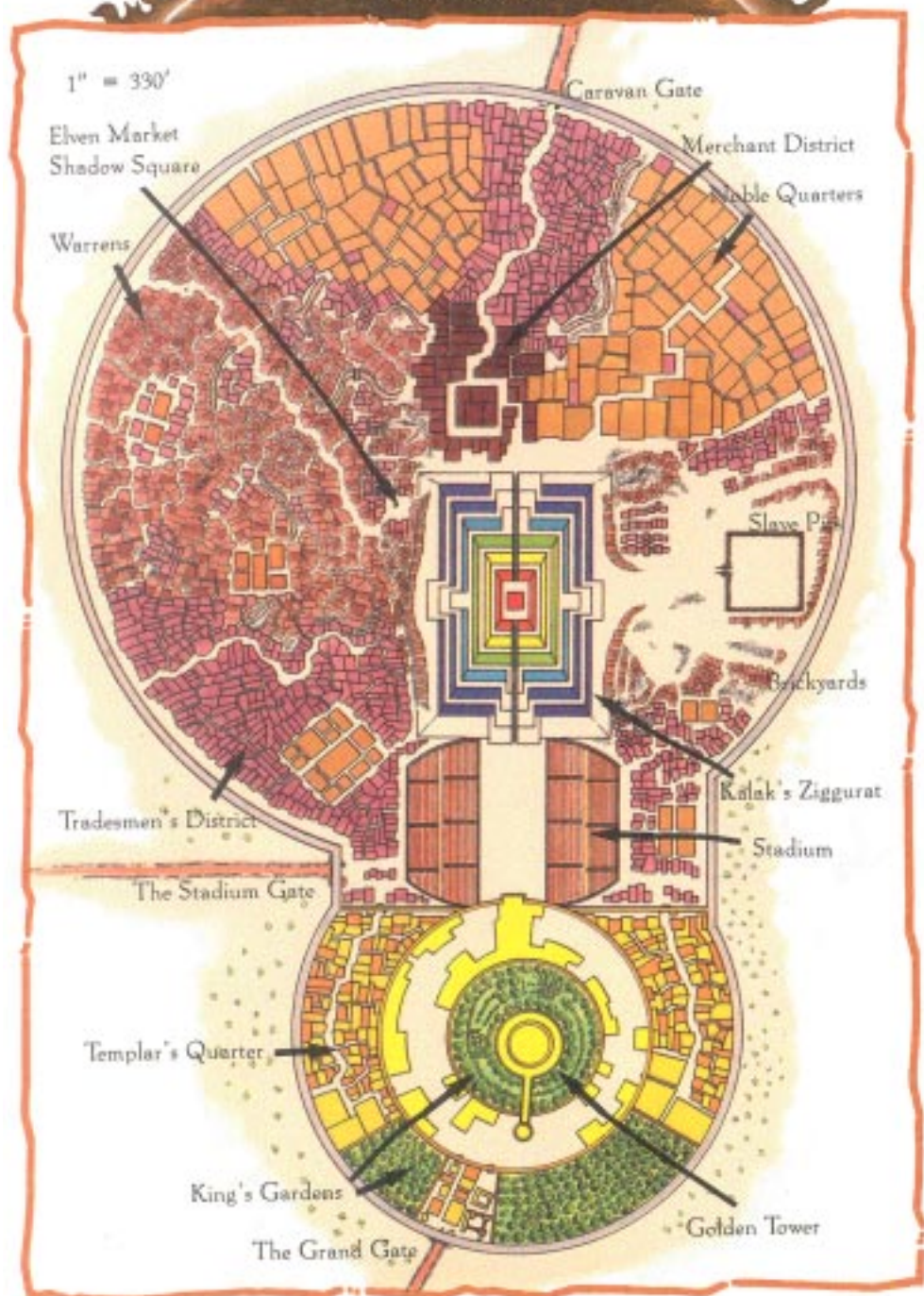
The Stadium Gate

Templar's Quarter


King's Gardens

The Grand Gate

Golden Tower







## Four: Quick Guide (Continued)

Beside the ziggurat stands a familiar sight—a gladiatorial arena. Here Kalak holds epics of blood-sport, and on rare occasions comes himself to hear the sanguine roars of the populace. A box seat at one end of the arena allows King Kalak to view the battles, well removed from the filthy rabble. Most of the time, though, Kalak remains hidden deep within his Golden Tower.

This tower lies off the arena's other side (opposite the Ziggurat), rising from the center of Kalak's palace. Lush gardens crowd the tower's base—a green paradise from which Kalak's defiler magic leeches its power. Beyond the garden lies a clutter of buildings and colonnades where only King Kalak and his six high templars may walk. Few others summoned here ever emerge again.

On the outer periphery of the sorcerer king's grounds rests the templar quarter. Templars dwell in happy seclusion from the populace, both to signify their privilege and to safeguard their lives. Greatly feared and little loved, if templars lived among the people, murder and riot would become commonplace. For their own protection, the templars draw together in pampered security. The best foods, goods, and services can be routinely had in the Templar's Quarter, but only a fool-hardy or dazzling thief would dare tread within the compound.

The details of the Golden Tower and the templar quarter, however, come to you only through rumor. Any steps you tread in those high halls may well be your last. Rather, the sights and sounds and smells of Tyr that work upon you come from the massive gates, bustling markets, bawdy streets, vermin-ridden slums, crowded merchant houses, and polished noble quarters.

You enter Tyr through the caravan quarter, where strange outlanders and plodding merchant caravans clog the streets. The main avenue, called Caravan Way, winds toward Kalak's ziggurat and supports caravansaries, outfitters, beast traders, inns, merchant houses, and wine shops. The assortment of goods and services here is good, though they come at a premium price. The caravan quarter bustles both night and day and is well patrolled; merchants pay the templars dearly for protection.

The caravan quarter butts up against the noble quarter. Here, nobles keep small, walled citadels, complete with slave quarters, gardens, guardhouses, and private apartments. Most of the nobles wisely contribute generous sums to the city coffers: those who do receive preferential protection from the half-giant patrols of the templars. Few nobles actually reside within the city walls, where their private armies are forbidden, preferring to pass their time on estates outside the walls.

A few townhouses lie scattered in other areas of Tyr. Some such villas were constructed by rising sons of old families while others have been relocated by Kalak, himself, to chastise particular noble houses. Whatever their origin, these islands of wealth provide prime targets to thieves and thugs.

## Five: Quick Guide (Continued)

Tradesmen reside in the next lower niche in Tyrian culture. Tradesmen's districts spread across various sections of the city, home to most of the Tyrian citizenry. Tradesmen occupy the uncomfortable cusp between slaves and freemen: though bound to a particular noble house and occupation, they possess minor rights to property and protection. A street in a tradesmen's district will house the practitioners of a single craft or the craftsmen of a particular noble. These districts are Tyr's monetary badlands—they hold little to steal and even less to buy or trade.


You can hardly spend a day in Tyr without passing sometime through the warrens—the slum quarter, which gives Tyr much of its infamy. This vast crumbling sprawl houses the impoverished, the desperate, the outcast, and the enslaved. Many residents of the warrens work as day laborers, setting out each morning to seek work on the plantations. More desperate occupants might even sell themselves at the slave market near the dust-choked wadi. Others turn to theft or murder for hire. Those incapable of work—even illegal work—beg door-to-door. One way or another, these oppressed people glean enough food and water to live another day. What little extra they might own comes from hard labor in sweatshop shanties at night. Life in the warrens is brutal and unforgiving.

The darkest section in the warrens is the elven quarter. Treated as near-criminal outcasts by the rest of Tyr, the elves have settled their own portion of the slums, closer to the base of the ziggurat than others would find comfortable. Here they live, little bothered by templars or nobles, who consider them inconsequential vermin. Run-aways, rebels, and murderers all find shelter in the narrow streets of the elven quarter. When the templars stage their rare incursions into the elven quarter, they go heavily armed, with a squad of half-giant guards at their heels.

The elven quarter gives the slum its true notoriety. Here, you can literally buy or sell anything—if you have the coin or charisma to do so. Elven merchants boast that they will someday sell even the bones of your grandmother on a back street of the elven market. Indeed, they may already have.

This trading acumen both sustains and justifies the elven quarter. The canny elves bring in exotic and sometimes priceless items from the ruins in the wilderness, items prized by Tyrian nobles. Even so, a deal struck in the elven quarter is anything but sure, for thieves, muggers, renegade wizards, and swindlers abound. A 50% mark-down little compensates a buyer who loses his life.

Now, armed with knowledge gleaned in an hour upon the Tyrian streets, you set out to explore the brutal city of Tyr. Of course, much of the knowledge came in rumor rather than fact.



Six:  
Quick Guide (Continued)

**Rumors:**

- “King Kalak is planning a great arena spectacle very soon. The most famous gladiators of Tyr will compete. The entire city will shut down for the festival!”
- “If you want spell components, go to the blue-and white-striped tent at the back of the Elven market. They’ll take care of you.”
- “A lot of folks have disappeared lately. . . . don’t know why, but I don’t like it.”
- “In Lord Kalak’s palace, the doors are solid iron and he’s filled a whole room of the Golden Tower with smelted iron.”
- “Steer clear of Doreen’s templars. She’s become a shrieking tembo about this ziggurat thing and they’ll take it out on anyone.”
- “If you’re looking for—um—special supplies, you might visit the *Inn of the Bleached Inix*.”
- “When they were digging a new cistern for Senator Minval, the slaves broke into a huge underground chamber. Not long afterward, the templars showed up and ordered the hole sealed and the villa razed to the ground. After that, they marched off every one of Minval’s slaves to work on the ziggurat.”
- “I hear the arena’s looking for new gladiators.”
- “Kank honey is going to be rationed soon—might be a chance to make a killing.”

Seven:  
Arena



Eight:  
Verrasi of Minthur



As you hustle along, one of your hulking half-giant escorts cannot resist gibing you:

“Well, you picked a fine fight. Think you’re tough, huh? Know who you just picked on? Verrasi of Minthur, that’s who—son of Senator Trevalis.”

Noting the blank looks on your faces, he continues:

“Minthur, you know, MIN-THUR. The *rich* Minthurs. The ones that gots all the money. Gots enough money to buy off a templar—even King Kalak I’ll bet . . . and you little runts go picking a fight with daddy Trevalis’s boy. What are you, dumb or something?!”

He saunters along in silence for a time, then blurts:

“You’re strangers, huh? You may be heroes where you come from, but here you’re dirt. . . less than dirt—you’re sewage. On the top’s King Kalak, the sorcerer king—everybody does what he says, if they’re smart. Then there’s his high templars—Doreen, Tithian, um . . . I don’t know: there are about six of ‘em. After that comes a whole bunch more templars and guys like me. Then you got merchants and tradesmen and a bunch of other folks. Finally, way down there with the elves and slaves, are you guys—a bunch of crudballs making a stink.”

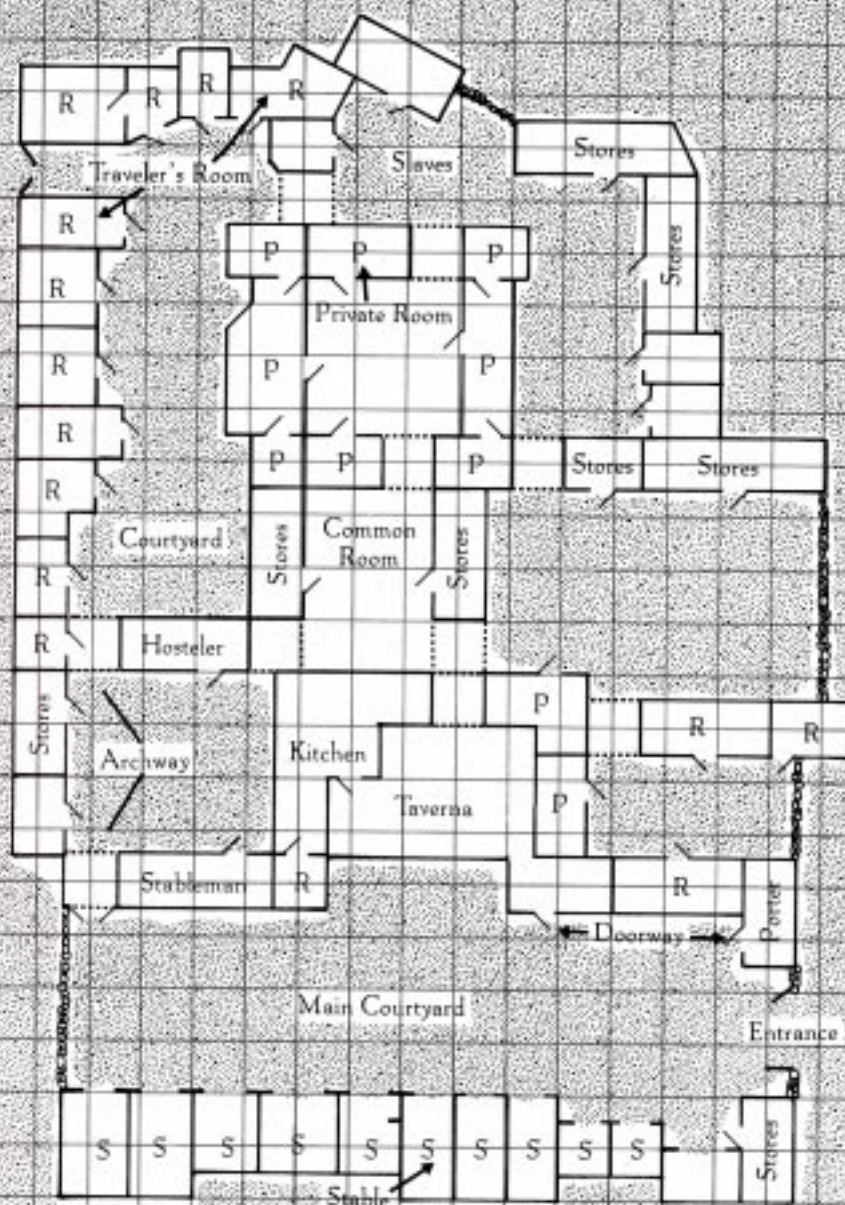
He eyes you with malice. Whether you respond or not, he continues:

“The guy you tried to lean on, he was a senator—less than a templar but lots more than you. Senators got what you don’t—money and clout. Most of ‘em own big farms outside the walls. People gotta eat, so they pay the senators. Course, King Kalak could squash any of ‘em whenever he wants. What are you looking at? You dumb or something?”

With that the half-giant shoves you along, takes an interest in another prisoner, and starts in with him.

Nine:  
Inn of the Bleached Inix

1 sq = 5'



Ten:  
Mob



## Eleven: Equipment

The equipment available is:

Bastard sword, stone

Club, stone

Dagger, obsidian

Flail, stone

Gythka, obsidian

Javelins (6)

Light crossbow, bone quarrels (10)

Net

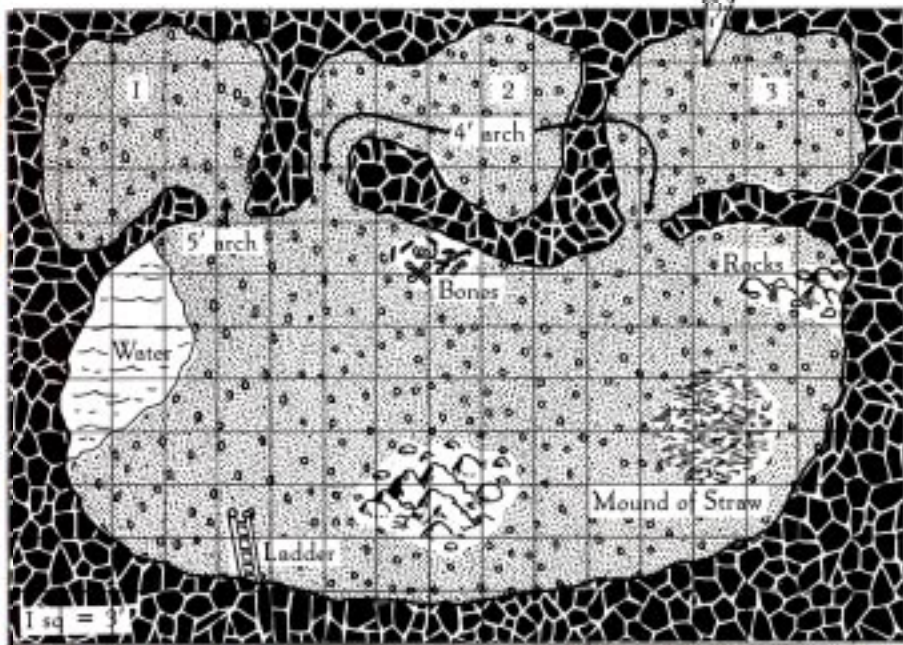
Quarterstaff

Short sword, bone

Spear, bone

Whip

Wrist razor, bone





Twelve:  
Tembo



Thirteen:  
Templars

• B&W 91 •



Fourteen:  
Street Map

1 sq = 3'

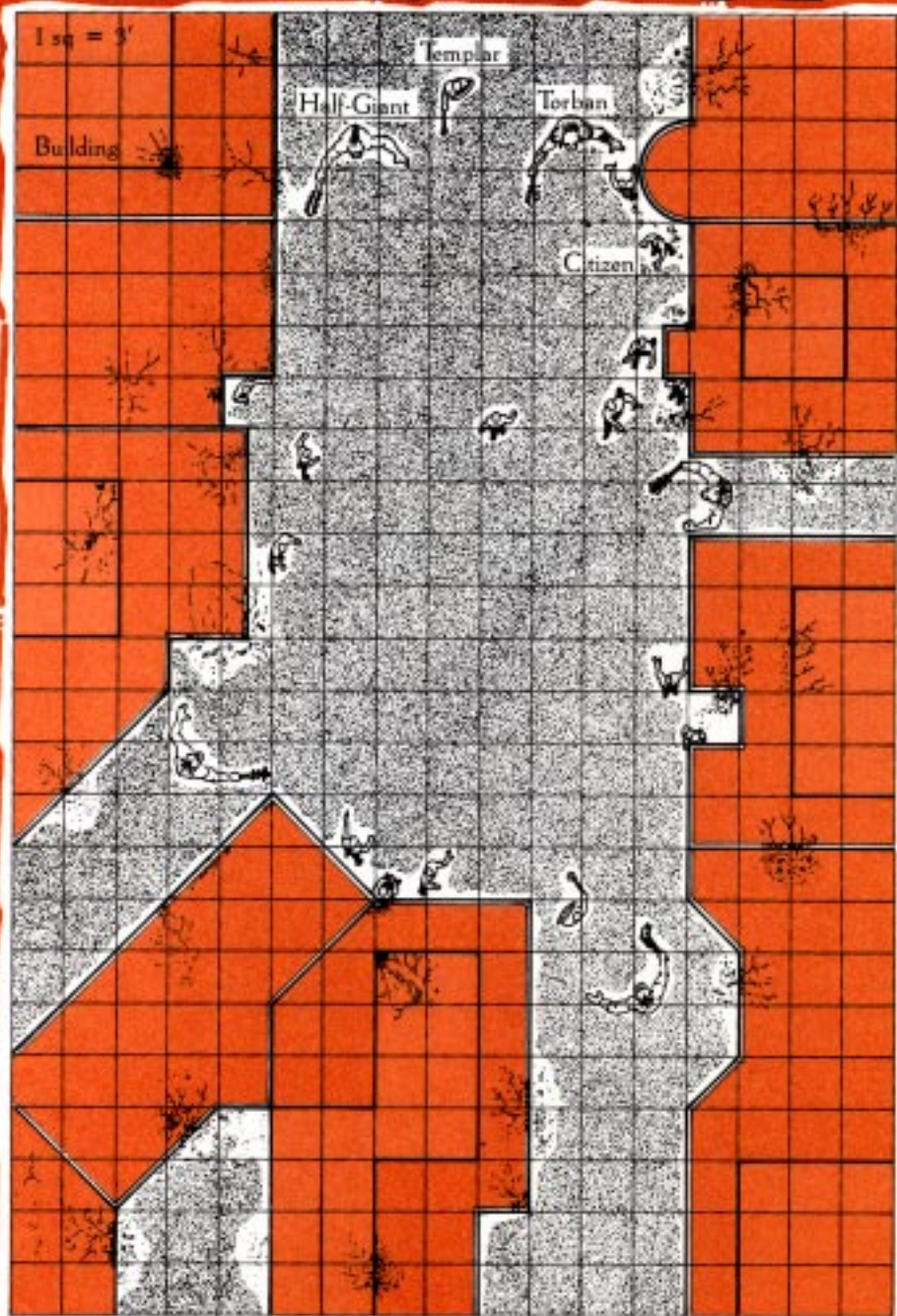
Building

Half-Giant

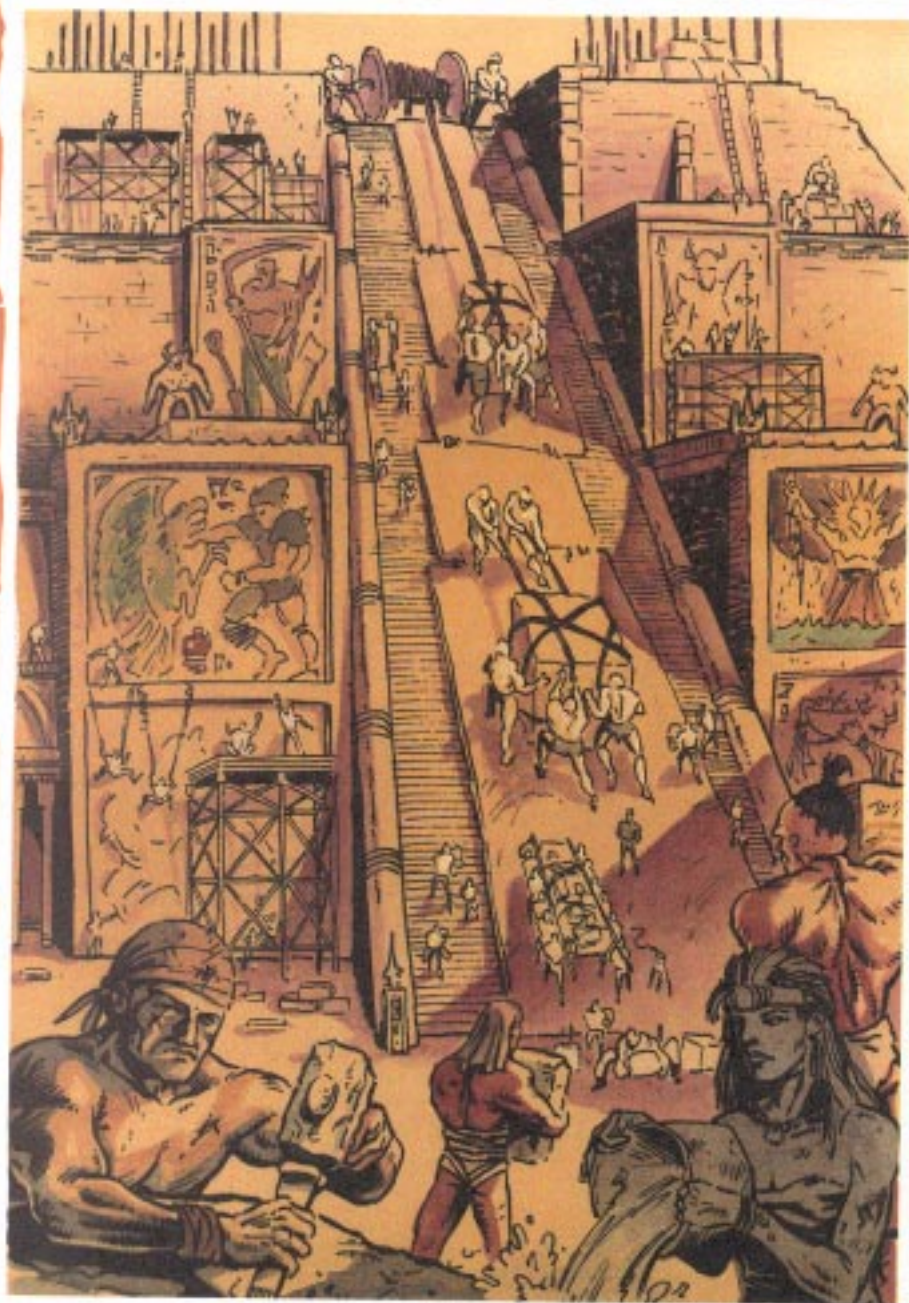
Templar

Torban

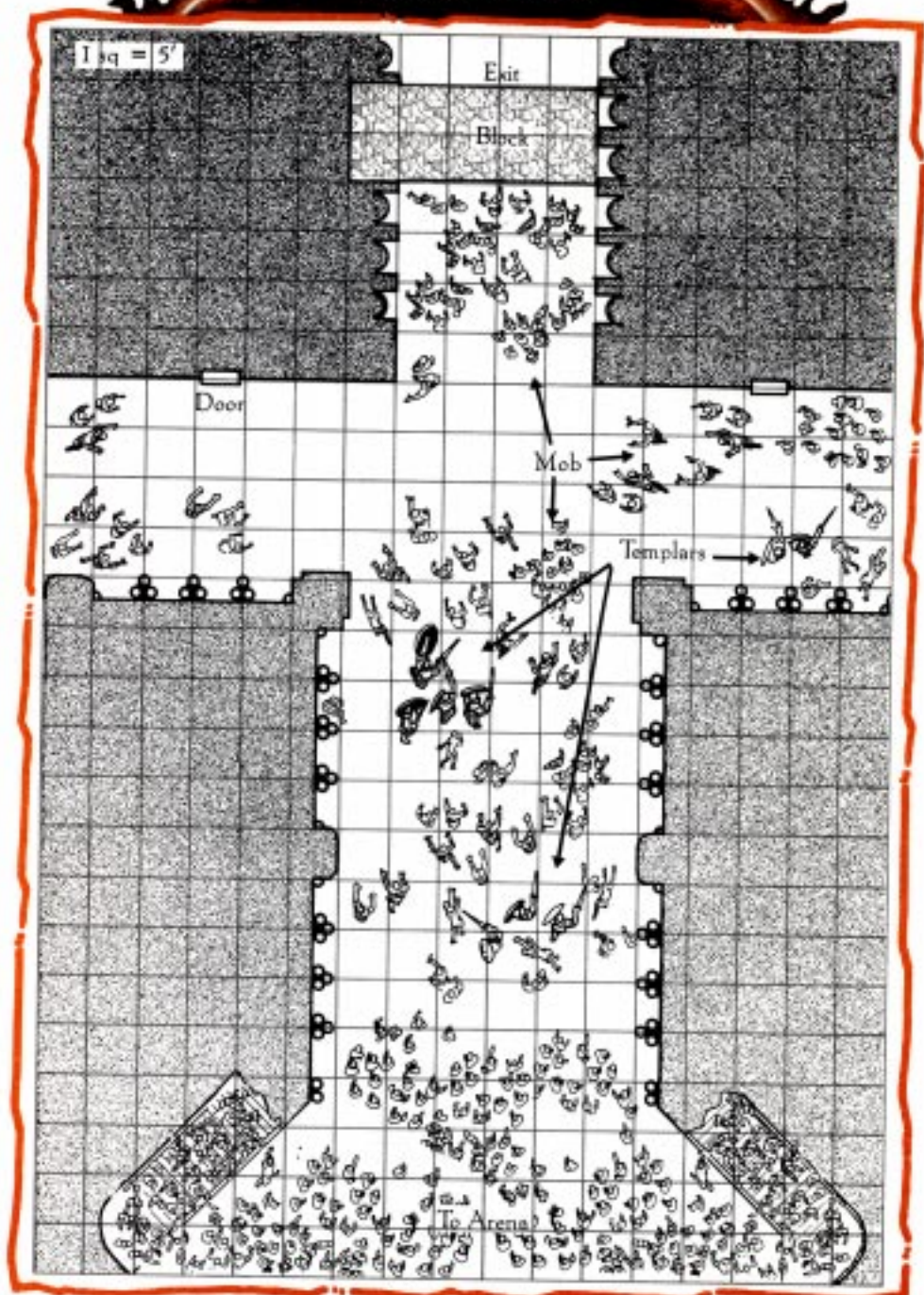
Citizen



Fifteen:  
Ziggurat of Tyr



Sixteen:  
Passageway Map





Seventeen:  
A Message

To Eth, at the Templar's Shade Tavern,

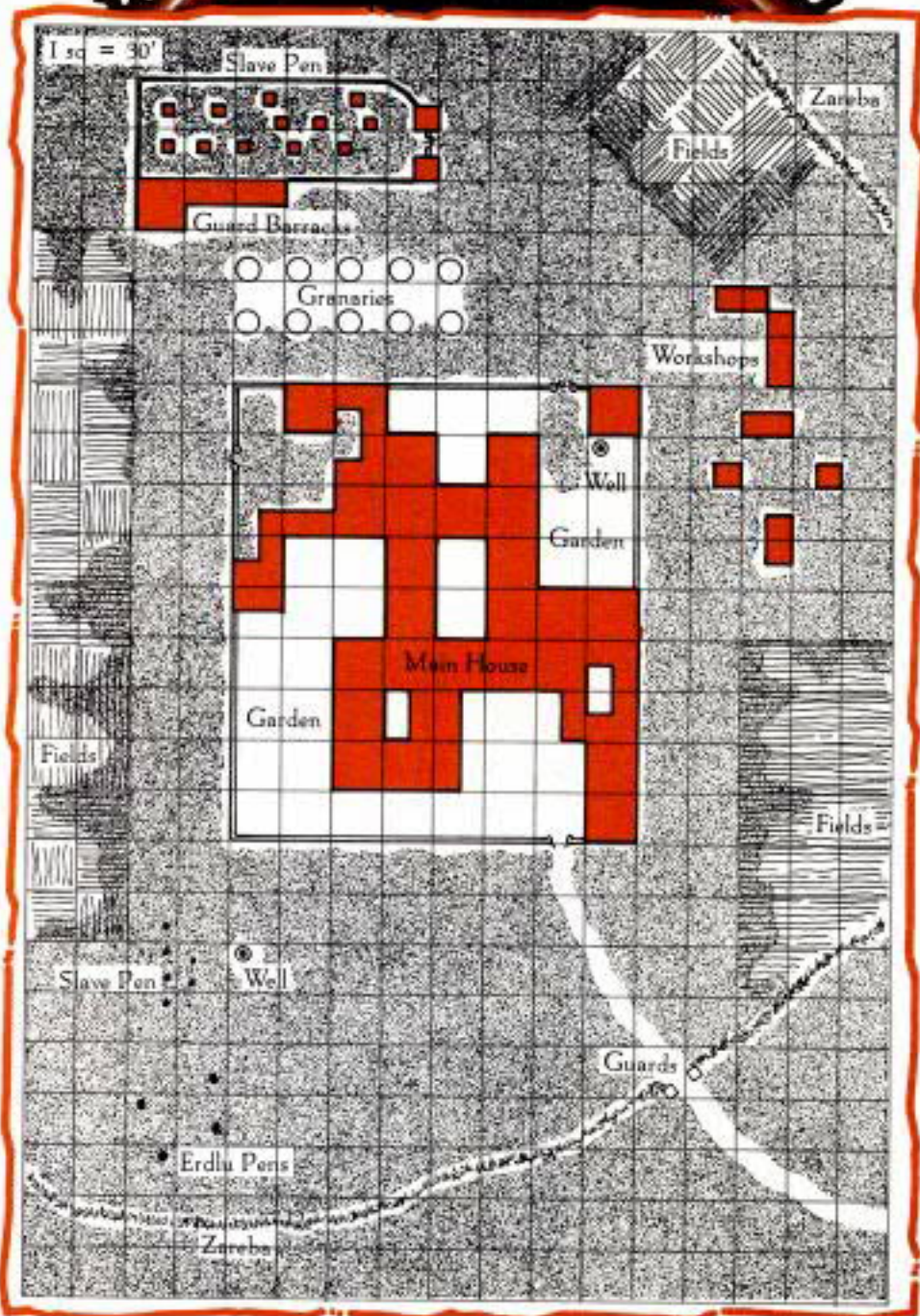
Sad news from Bixul: Upon entering the village, an inix bolted and caused considerable injury to the village guard, and to some of our merchants. The locals are little amused and their refusal to cooperate means this missive reached you only with difficulty. I cannot say when I can write you again.

I hope you and your family are well and your business prospers. Sadly, this latest set-back may have ruined our expedition—we have missed much of the season. The market will soon close. We have had little time to offer our goods or even secure a place in the stalls. As of now, I have but two main contacts, and I must bank our whole shipment upon them. You may wish to shift your investments quickly to more profitable markets.

As ever,  
Your servant, F.

Find it in your heart to offer these messengers a drink—they have traveled a long and dusty road.

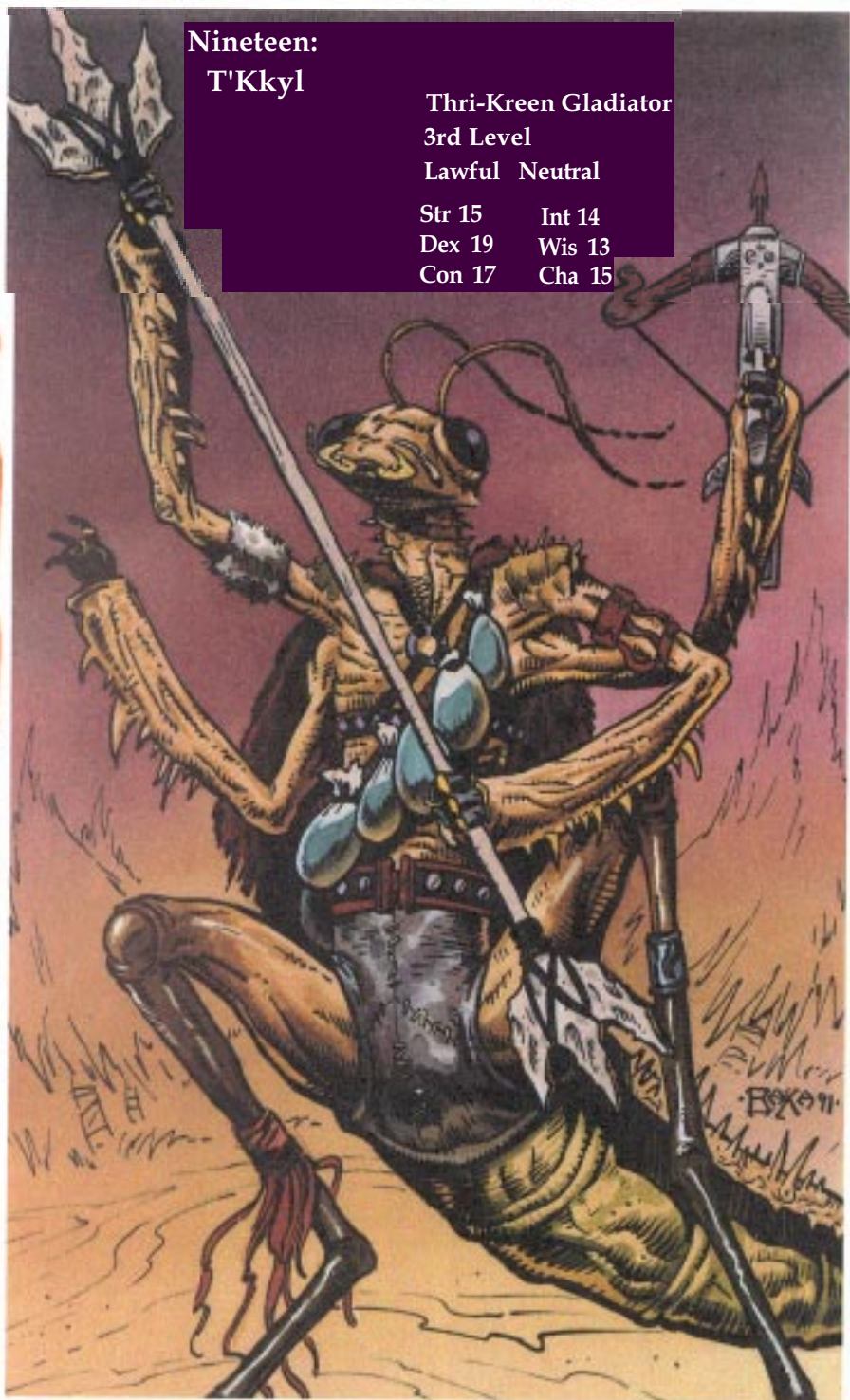
Eighteen:  
Villa of Verrasi



**Nineteen:  
T'Kkyl**

**Thri-Kreen Gladiator**  
**3rd Level**  
**Lawful Neutral**

|               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Str 15</b> | <b>Int 14</b> |
| <b>Dex 19</b> | <b>Wis 13</b> |
| <b>Con 17</b> | <b>Cha 15</b> |





Twenty:

Baqual

Dwarf Fighter/Cleric

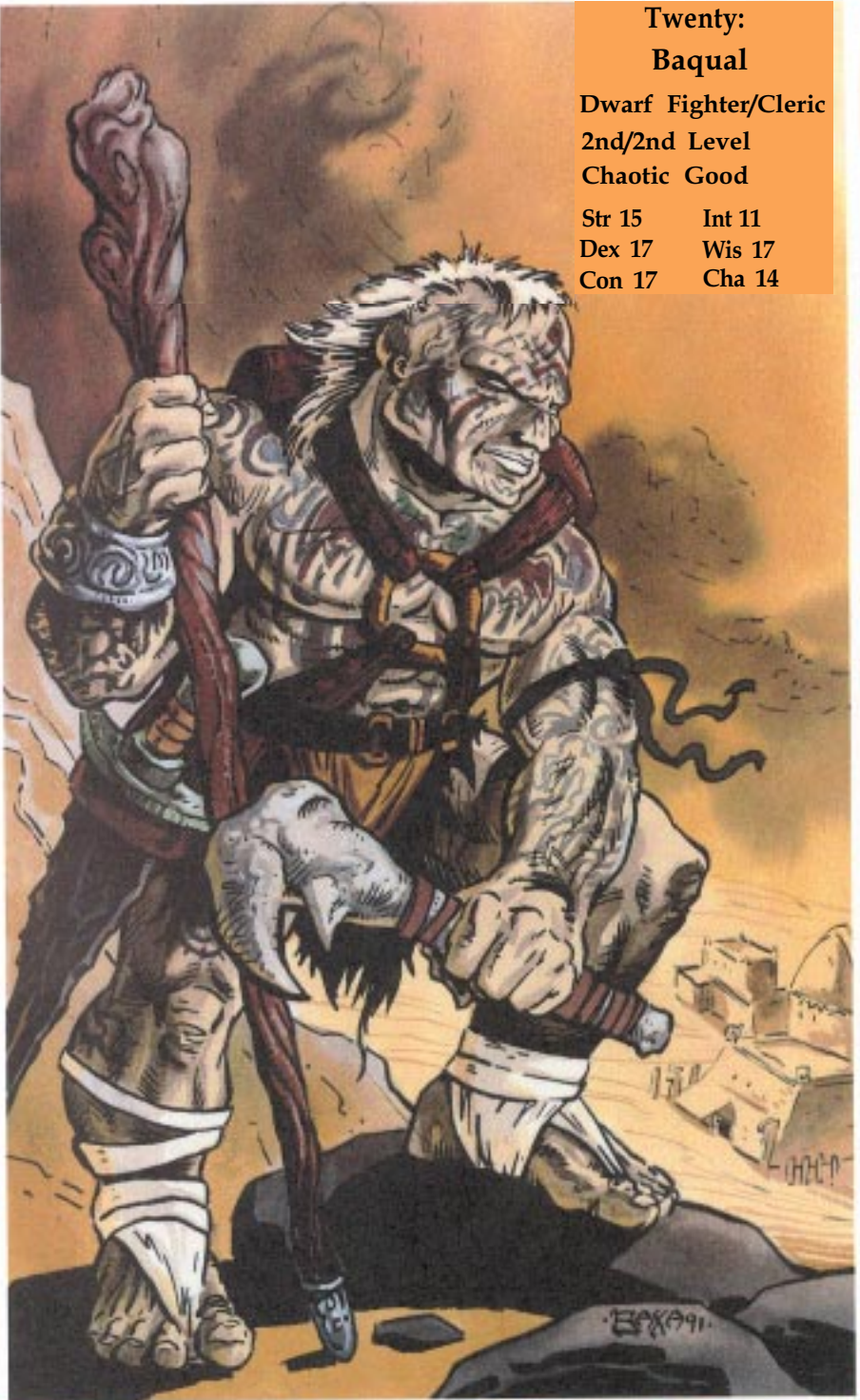
2nd/2nd Level

Chaotic Good

Str 15 Int 11

Dex 17 Wis 17

Con 17 Cha 14



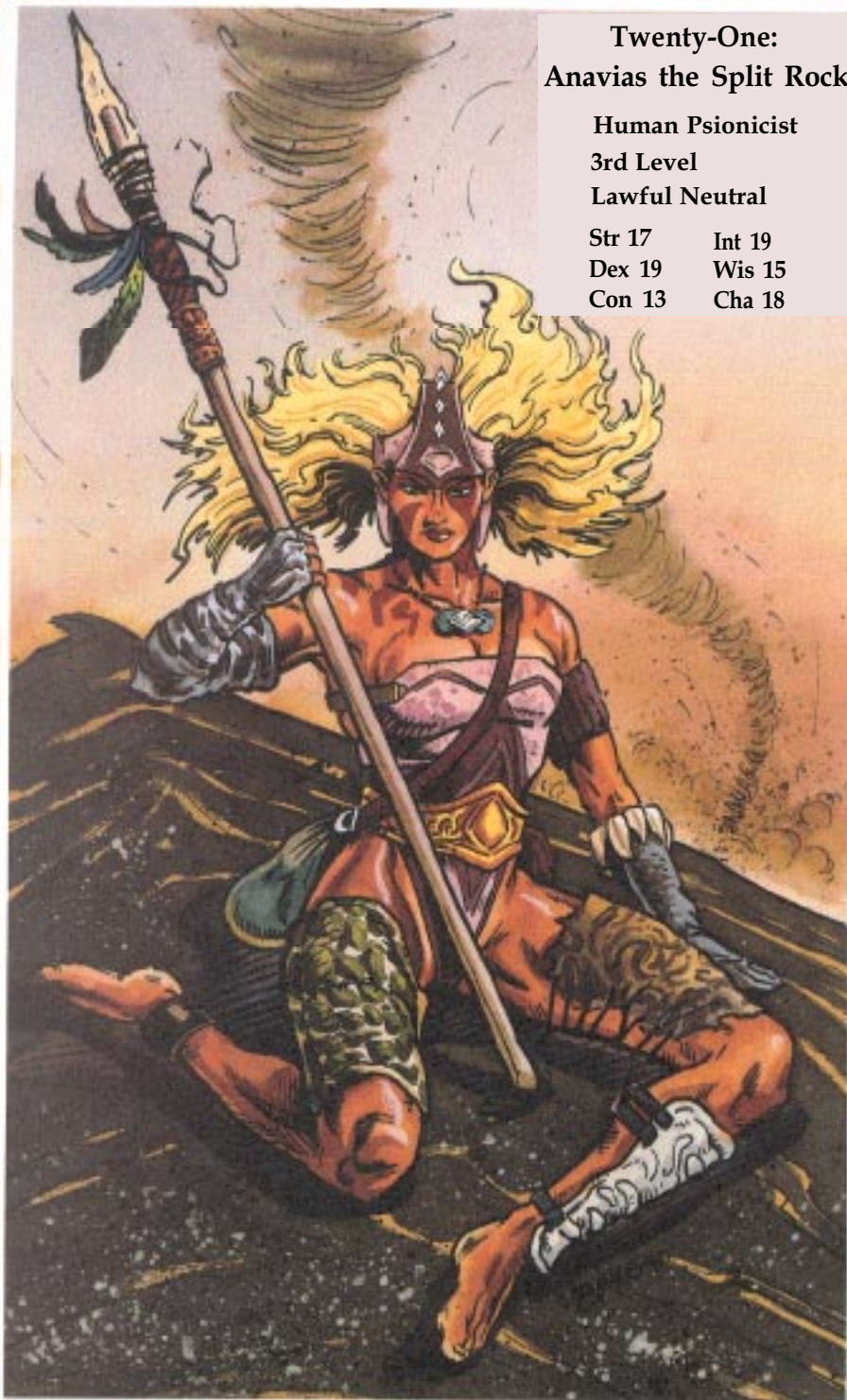
**Twenty-One:  
Anavias the Split Rock**

**Human Psionicist**

**3rd Level**

**Lawful Neutral**

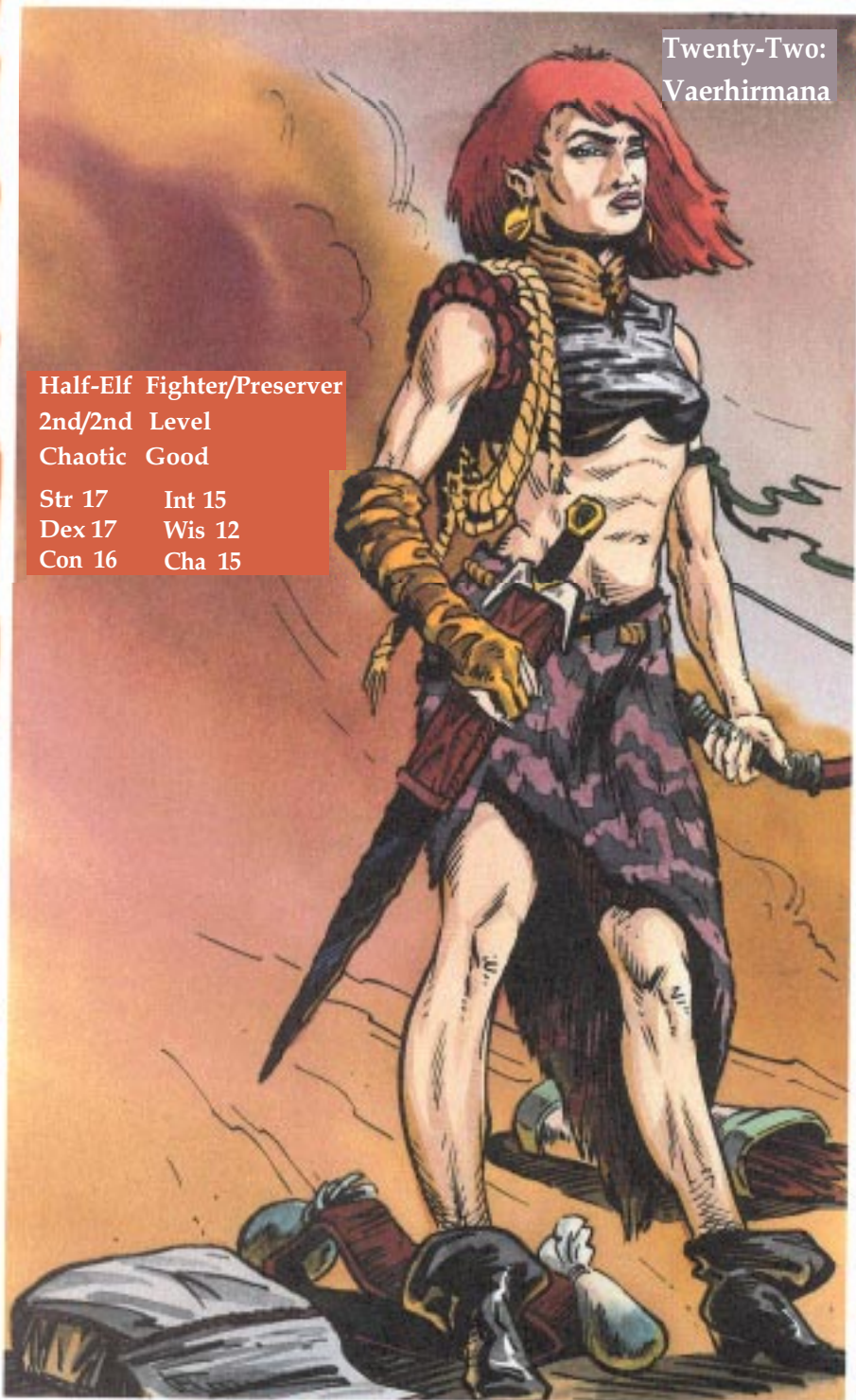
|               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Str 17</b> | <b>Int 19</b> |
| <b>Dex 19</b> | <b>Wis 15</b> |
| <b>Con 13</b> | <b>Cha 18</b> |



Twenty-Two:  
Vaerhirmana

Half-Elf Fighter/Preserver  
2nd/2nd Level  
Chaotic Good

|        |        |
|--------|--------|
| Str 17 | Int 15 |
| Dex 17 | Wis 12 |
| Con 16 | Cha 15 |



**Twenty-Three:  
Herminard the Eloquent**

**Human Bard**

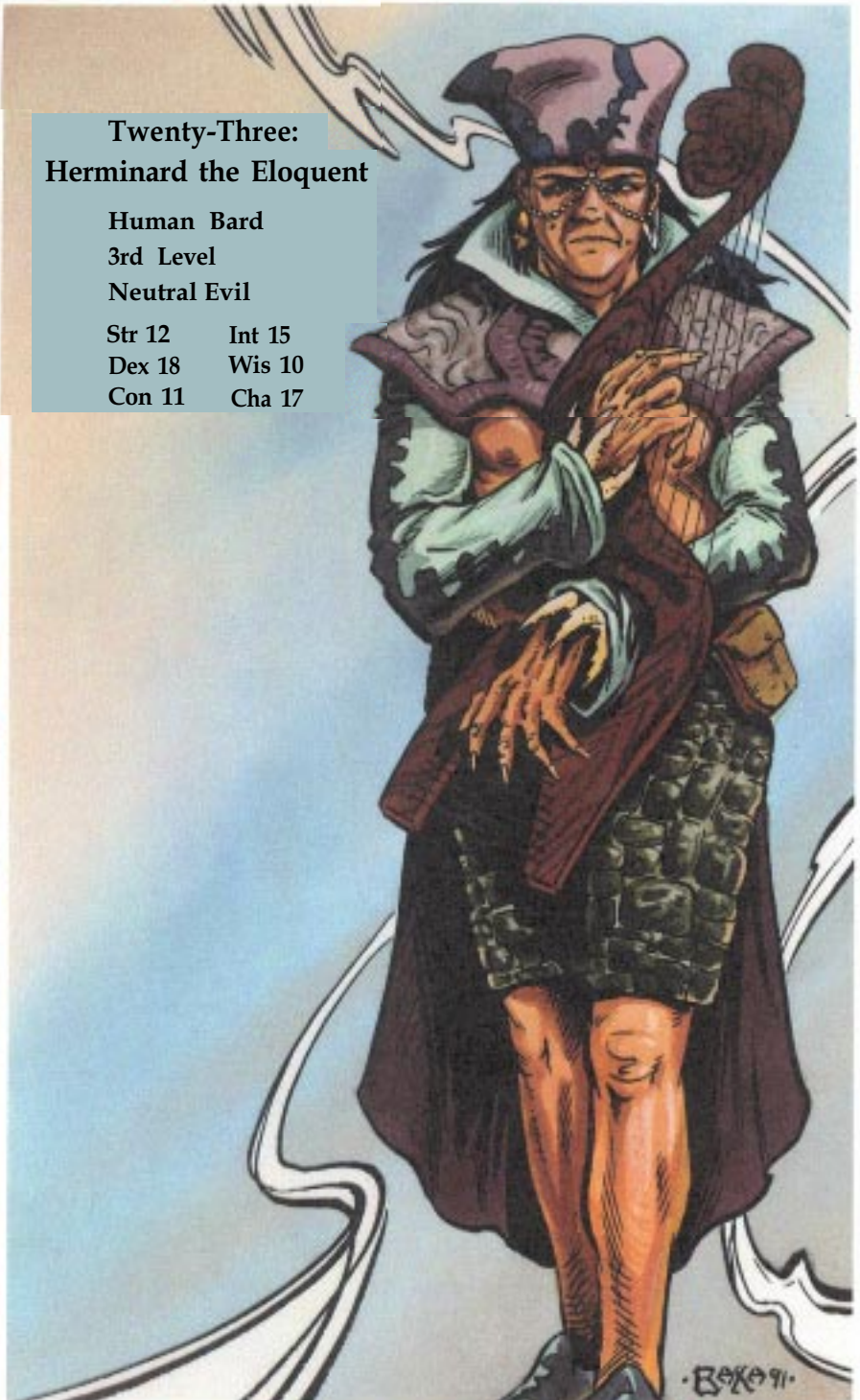
**3rd Level**

**Neutral Evil**

**Str 12      Int 15**

**Dex 18      Wis 10**

**Con 11      Cha 17**



## Twenty-Four: Herminard (Continued)

**Reaction Adjustment:** +2

**AC:** 6/4 in leather armor (modified for Dexterity)

**hp:** 14

**THAC0:**

Bone wrist razor 20

Sling 17

**#AT:** 1

**Damage:**

Bone wrist razor 1d6/1d4

Sling stone 1d4/1d4

**Wild Talent:** Time/Space Anchor

**Power Score:** Int

**Cost:** 5/1 per round

**PSP:** 17

**Thieving Percentages**

|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| PP | OL | RT | MS | HS | DN | CW | RL |
| 50 | 30 | 40 | 30 | 30 | 40 | 60 | 20 |

**Influence Reactions:** -1 die modifier

**Inspire:** +1 THAC0, +1 Saving Throw, or +2 Morale

**Identify Magical Item:** 15%

**Saving Throws**

|    |     |    |    |    |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| DM | RSW | PP | BW | Sp |
| 13 | 14  | 12 | 16 | 15 |

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Wrist razor, sling

**Non-Weapon Proficiencies:** Disguise, Reading Lips, Ventriloquism, Etiquette, Heraldry

**Poisons Known:**

B (Injected, Onset: 2-12 min., Str: 20/1-3)

C (Injected, Onset: 2-5 min., Str: 25/2-8)

E (Injected, Onset: Immediate, Str: Death/20)

**Equipment:** Bone wrist razor, sling, pouch of 40 stones, five glass vials, belt pouch, various herbs (for poisons), bell of twine, bone hook, thief's tools

**Starting Money:** 210 cp

### Background

Ah, a new city, a new life—just what you needed. Balic was such a dead-end place, full of petty annoyance. The latest annoyance had been the worst so far: Dictator Andropinis's templars, those humorless cads, arrested the man for whom you had appropriated some royal artifacts. When a city state loses its sense of humor (or when its templars come looking for you), it's time to move on. Packing a few essentials, you finagled your way into a caravan and headed out of Balic. The caravan was bound for Tyr and, how about that, so were you!

Now, here you are, out of work but still among the living. You are hardly at a loss for opportunities if Tyr lives up to any of the rumors. A new name, new identity, new city—now all you need is a new patron. That shouldn't be hard to come by, especially in a place where most things can be bought, and anything can be stolen.

## Twenty-Five Vaerhirmana (Continued)

**Reaction Adjustment:** +2

**AC:** 7/6 with shield (modified for Dexterity)

**hp:** 14

**THAC0:**

|               |    |
|---------------|----|
| Bastard sword | 20 |
| Short box     | 17 |
| Stone club    | 19 |

**#AT** 1

**Damage:**

|                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| Bastard sword, |             |
| 1-handed       | 1d8/1d12    |
| 2-handed       | 2d4/2d8     |
| Bone arrows    | 1d6-1/1d6-1 |
| Stone club     | 1d6/1d3     |

**Wild Talent:** Hear Light

**Power Score:** Wis -3

**Cost:** 6/3 per round

**PSP:** 22

**Spells:** Two 1st-level spells

**Saving Throws**

| DM | RSW | PP | BW | Sp |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| 14 | 11  | 13 | 15 | 12 |

**Background**

Nobody needs you. That's fine. You don't need anybody either. You've scorned and been scorned by humans and elves alike since birth. Naturally you got lumped with the other outcasts, like old Thangros. That crusty old Preserver played a little loose with his magical dabbings—loose enough that you saw what he was up to and wanted in on it. Slowly and secretly he handed you the mysteries of magic. Outcasts and magics—they seem to go together.

Thangros's carelessness caught up to him, though. The old man couldn't long keep at bay the mob that came for his hide, but he stalled them long enough for you to escape. "Get out while you can! Lose yourself in some big city," were the last words he said to you.

Though it hurt to leave your only friend, you did flee. The murderous shouts of the neighbors left no question about Thangros's fate—and yours if you stayed. Tyr seemed the place where nobody would find you, and where you might find a new teacher.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Bastard sword, short bow, club

**Non-Weapon Proficiencies:** Psionic Detection, Heat Protection, Survival (stony barrens), Armor Optimization, Somatic Concealment

**Languages:** Common, giant, thri-kreen

**Equipment:** Obsidian bastard sword, short bow, quiver with 20 bone-tipped arrows, stone club, three waterskins, backpack, rope, 5 sheets of papyrus, bottle of writing ink, quills and quill case, bone map case (spellbook)

**Starting Money:** 300 cp

**Spell Book—** 1st Level

*Change Self*

*Detect Magic*

*Enlarge*

*Phantasmal Force*

*Read Magic*

*Unseen Servant*

## Twenty-Six: Anavias (Continued)

**Reaction Adjustment:** +3

**AC:** 6/4 in leather armor (modified for Dexterity)

**hp:** 9

**THAC0:**

|            |                |
|------------|----------------|
| Stone club | 18             |
| Bone spear | 19/15 (thrown) |

**#AT** 1

**Damage:**

|            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| Stone club | 1d6+1/1d3+1 |
| Bone spear | 1d6/1d8     |

**Discipline:** Psychokinesis (prim.), telepathy (sec.)

**Sciences:**

Telekinesis (Wis -3, IC 3+, MC 1 + /rd, R 30 yd)

Project Force (Con -2, IC 10, R 200 yd)

**Devotions:**

Animate Shadow (Wis -3, IC 7, MC 3/rd, R 40 yd)

Control Light (Int, IC 12, MC 4/rd, R 25 yd)

Molecular Agitation (Wis, IC 7, MC 6/rd, R 40 yd)

**Background**

The reclusion is done. The testing has come. At a mere 12 years old, your latent talent for the Way surfaced. Untutored and undisciplined, you struggled to rein in your powers. The resulting havoc earned you fear and approbation. Your parents, unable to help you control your power, sent you to a distant teacher of the Way.

With Master Ghil you have lived ever since, honing your mind and chaining your desires. For all his severity, the Master has always been kind and generous, filling the void your parents left. But now, after endless years of meditation and concentration, Master Ghil has released you—cast you out. “So begins your final test,” he said as he pushed you from his door. “Learn control in the clamoring world. Only then will you be a Master of the Way.”

With that he sent you to Tyr, calling it the “true crucible of our art.” You must develop and refine your psionic skills amid the teeming market and rotting slums before Master Ghil will welcome you again. But then he will receive you as master, not child.

Soften (Int, IC 4, MC 3/rd, R 30 yd)

Contact Win, IC var., MC 1/rd, R sp)

Conceal Thoughts (Wis, IC 5, MC 3/rd, R 0 yd)

**Defense Modes:** Tower of Iron Will, Mind Blank

**PSP:** 44

**Saving Throws**

| DM | RSW | PP | BW | Sp |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| 13 | 15  | 10 | 16 | 15 |

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Club, spear

**Non-Weapon Proficiencies:** Harness Subconscious, Meditative Focus, Psionic Detection, Rejuvenate, Read/Write Common, Survival (sand wastes)

**Languages:** Common, halfling, thrireen, gith

**Equipment:** Stone club, bone spear, belt pouch, five candles, fire kit, papyrus, ink, quill, sealing wax, personal seal, water bladder, leather armor

**Starting Money:** 210 cp

## Twenty-Seven: Baqual (Continued)

**Reaction Adjustment:** +2

**AC:** 7 (modified for Dex)

**hp:** 17

**THAC0:**

Stone club 18

Sling 19

Short sword 21

**#AT** 1

**Damage:**

Stone club 1d6+2/1d3+2

Sling 1d4/1d4

Short sword 1d6-1/1d8-1

**Wild Talent:** Enhanced Strength

**Power Score:** Wis -3

**Cost:** 6/3 per round

**PSP:** 22

+4 to saves vs. poison and magical attacks

**Spells:** Two 1st level spells—Major access to Plane of Earth, minor access to Plane of Cosmos

**Saving Throws**

| DM | RSW | PP | BW | Sp |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| 10 | 14  | 13 | 16 | 15 |

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Sling, short sword

**Weapon Specialization:** Club

**Non-Weapon Proficiencies:** Ancient history, Carpentry, Engineering, Navigation, Somatic concealment

**Languages:** Common, gith, braxat

**Equipment:** Hand-made stone club, sling and pouch of stones, obsidian short sword, firebow, water bottle, backpack, hiking staff, spare sandals

**Starting Money:** 270 cp

### Background

During your brief lifetime, you have struggled to believe in and serve the powers of earth. The earth of Athas is a font of strength and immense energy, as anyone who has lived in the wastes can clearly see. Ever since youth, you have known your purpose—to advance the cause of the earth spirits. After years of teaching, you have left a circle of trusted disciples to tend your village, and embarked upon the dust-choked roads to serve the unenlightened.

What richer field could you hope to harvest than Tyr? That great city, though depraved and infidel, is steward of a wondrous gift from the earth spirits—iron. You plan to enter the ancient city and spread news of the earth spirits' power and beneficence, as evidenced by Tyr's hidden mines of iron. Indeed, to see the mines yourself—that would be the pilgrimage of a lifetime! Perhaps your message might even free the ore for all people of Tyr. Perhaps you may cast a blessing over the mine, bringing it to full yield. Oh, to leave Tyr with a steel sword at your belt!

You are no fool, though—there will be resistance. Kalek is currently sole owner of the iron, and he rules Tyr with sorcery and an army of templars. But surely the earth spirits will forge a victory for you.



## Twenty-Eight: T'Kkyl (Continued)

**Reaction Adjustment:** +3

**AC:** 1 (modified for Dex)

**hp:** 31

**THAC0:**

Obsidian gythka 19

Natural weapons 18

Light crossbow 15 (14 pb)

+/-4 to punching/wrestling attacks

**#AT** 2 (weapon and bite) or 5 (4 claws and bite)

**Damage:**

Gythka 2d4+1 / 1d10+1

Quarrels 1d4+1 / 1d4+1

Claws 1d4

Bite 1d4+1

**Wild Talent:** All-Round Vision

**Power Score:** Wis -3

**Cost:** 6 initial/4 round

**PSP:** 30

Leap forward 50', upward 20'

**Saving Throws**

| DM | RSW | PP | BW | Sp |
|----|-----|----|----|----|
| 13 | 15  | 14 | 16 | 16 |

**Weapon Proficiencies:** All (1 unused)

**Weapon Specializations:** Gythka, light crossbow

**Nonweapon Proficiencies:** Tracking, Navigation, Direction Sense, Survival (stony barrens)

**Languages:** Thri-kreen, common, elven

**Equipment:** Obsidian gythka, light crossbow, 15 bone-tipped quarrels, waterskin, fire kit

**Money:** 330 cp

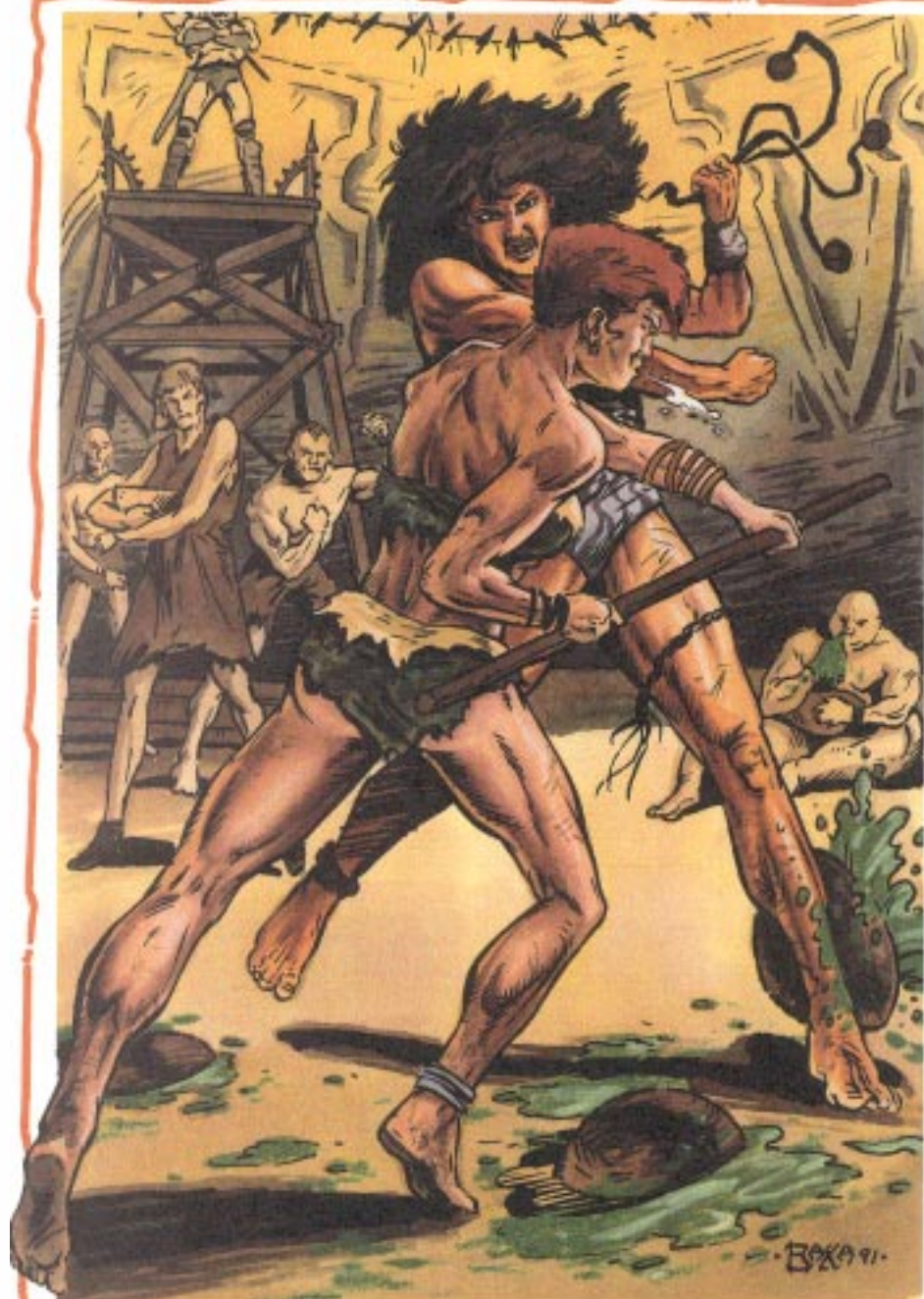
### Background

Native to the stony barrens in the Tablelands, your pack, through misadventure and misfortune, fell prey to human exterminators. A marauding bend of mercenaries, these exterminators psionically ambushed your pack of thri-kreen "criminals" in retaliation for your hunting raids on passing caravans. Though you now harbor a lethal hatred toward the exterminators, you do not hate humans more than before. Just like thri-kreen, they act only to survive.

Only you and a few others escaped the devastating psionic attack. A fierce sandstorm soon separated you from the other survivors. Alone you have come to Tyr, realizing that without the security of a strong pack, you are vulnerable to innumerable enemies in the desert.

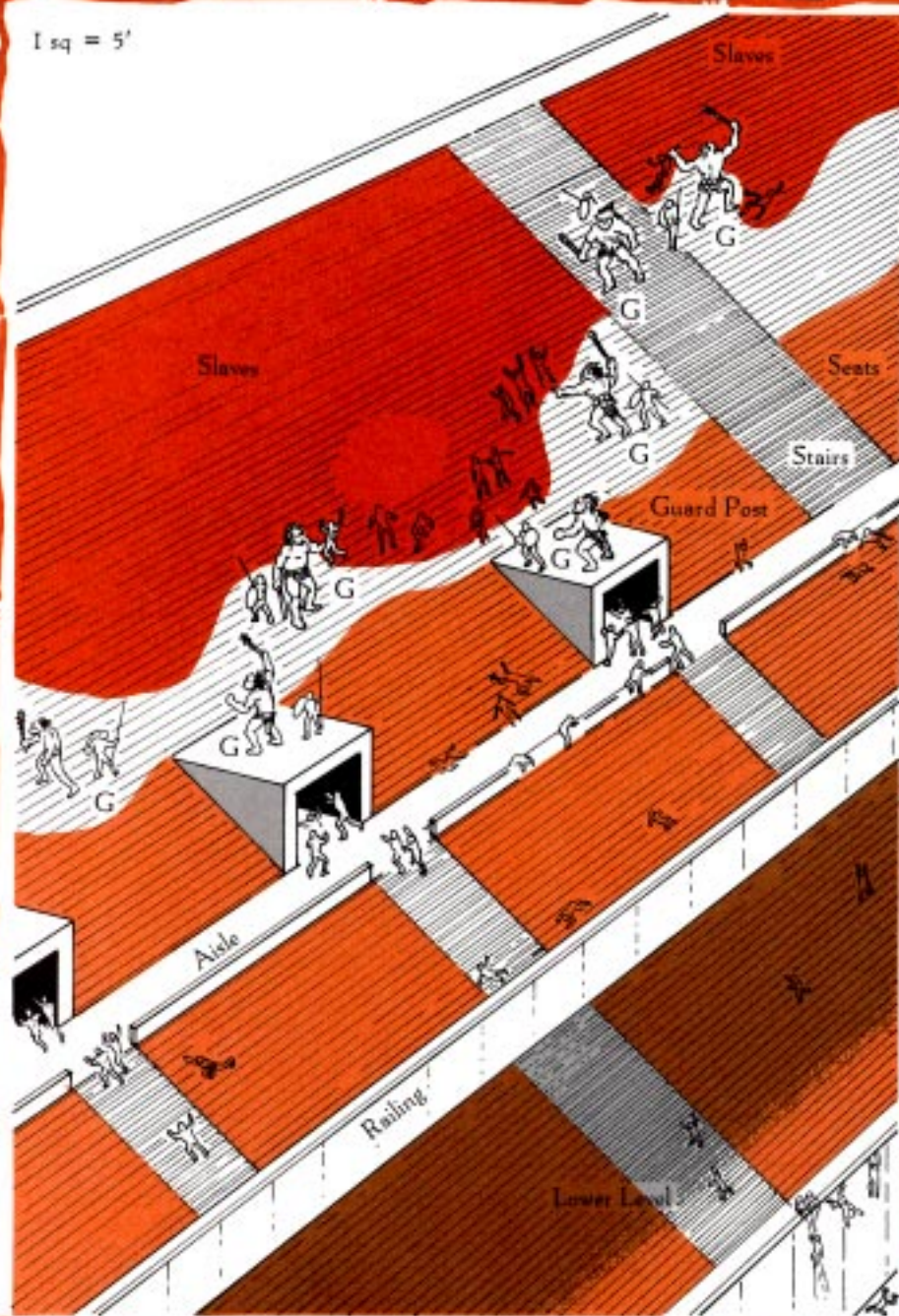
Having lived all your life in the wastes, you find the ways of city-dwellers mysterious. Indeed, only with difficulty have you restrained yourself from hunting the easy prey that wanders the streets. You tried to snatch such an "easy meal" once on the road to Tyr: a plump and juicy band of slaves was being herded the other direction. You barely escaped that episode with your life. Clearly you have much to learn. You seek to form a new, strong pack within the walls of Tyr.

Twenty-Nine:  
Duel in the Sand



# Thirty: In the Tiers

1 sq = 5'



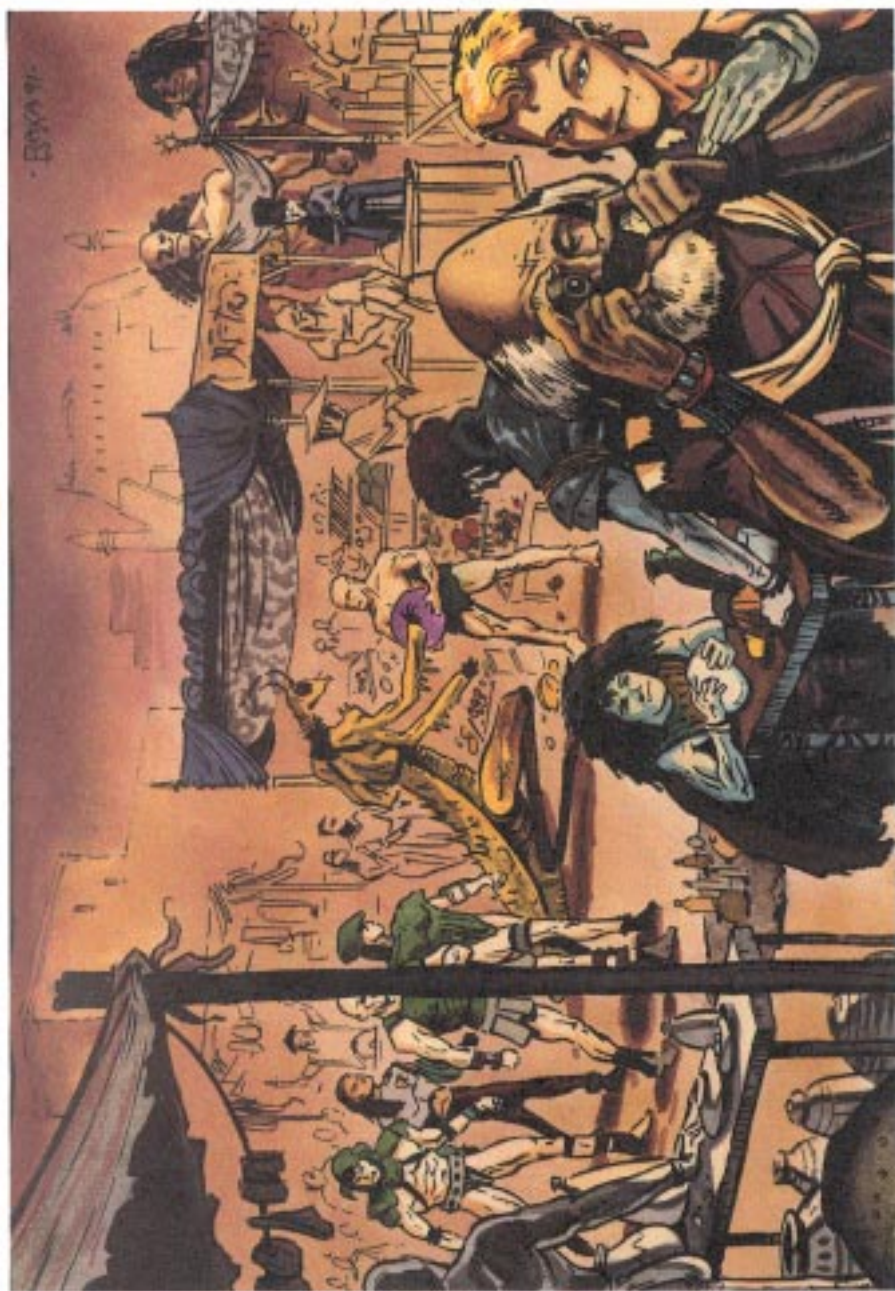
Thirty-One:  
The Spear



Thirty-Two:  
Decisions



Thirty-Three:  
Street Scene



Thirty-Four:  
Perilous Descent



Thirty-Five:  
Veiled Alliance





Thirty-Six:  
Night Fight

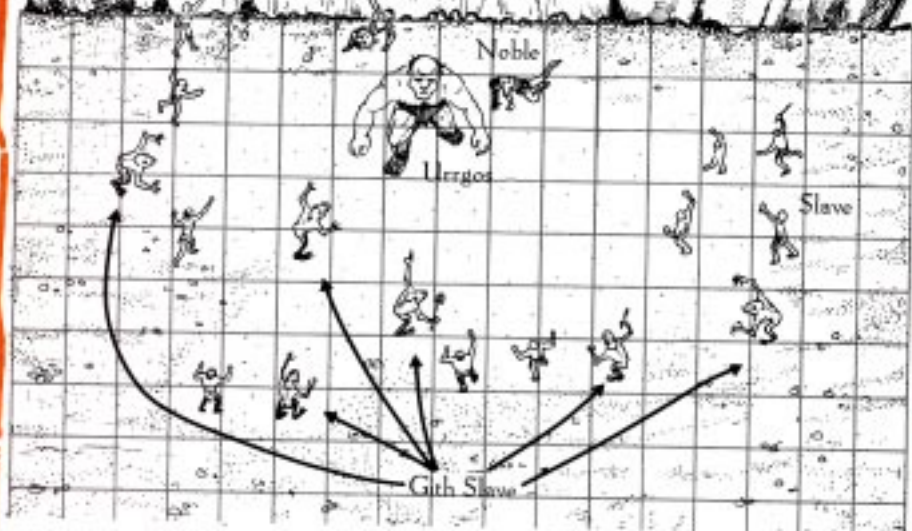


Thirty-Seven:  
"Work Smarter, Slaves!"



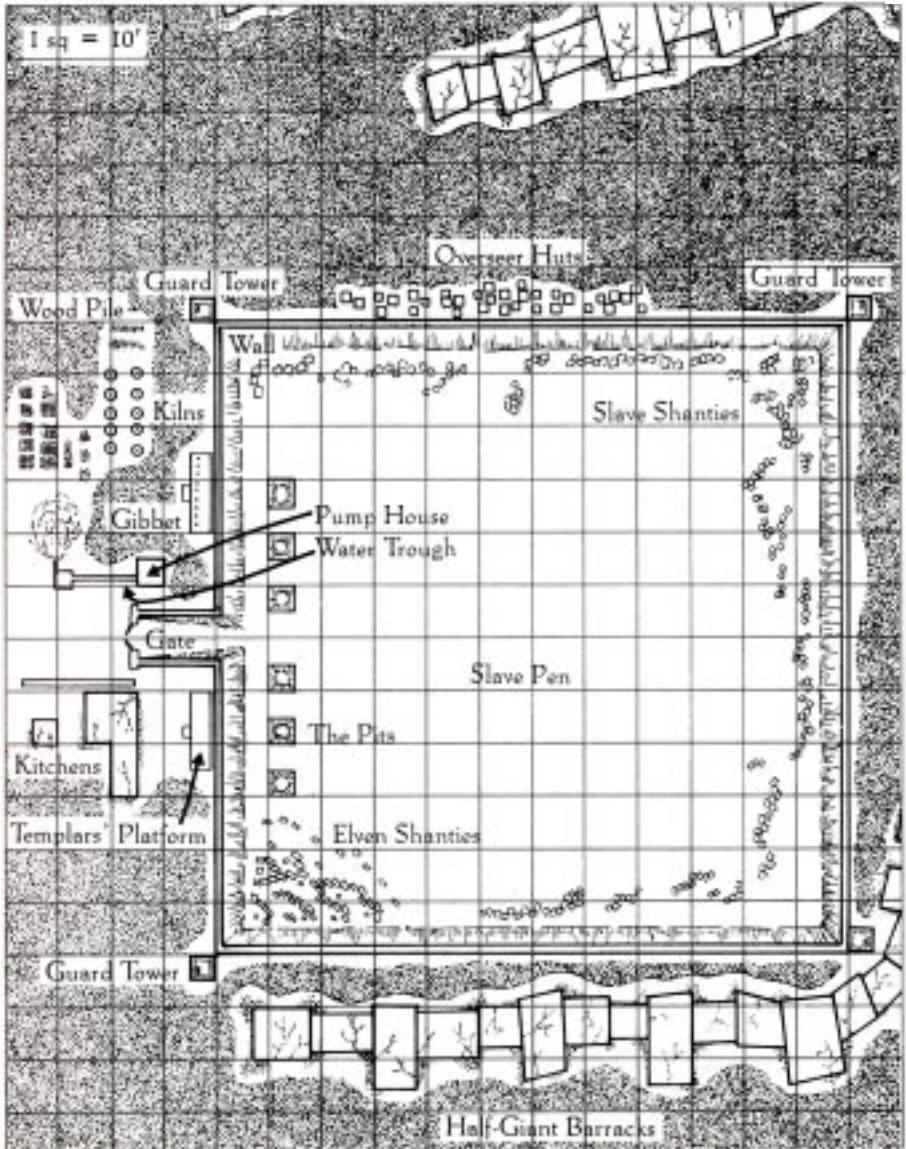
# Thirty-Eight: Bodyguard

1 sq = 5'



## Thirty-Nine: Slave Pens

Now that the slave pit of Kalak is your new home, you wisely observe your surroundings. While laboring on the ziggurat, you study the area and make a mental map. During the evening, your group finds a quiet spot to discuss your observations and bed down. The map here reflects what you have learned.



## Forty: Arguments

### #1. Hivash the Dwarf



"I am Hivash, a leader of my people in these vile pits. I speak for all true-blooded dwarves when I say that we are wasting time! How can we sleep another night knowing that the lash will be upon us in the morn? We must escape now before the night is gone! How many of us will be left tomorrow? Three? Four? And will those survivors also fret away their nights in futile talk? Tarra and Flandofar died today under the templars' whips, and Cinar died yesterday of thirst. If we remain, we will all die, whether quick by the knife or slow by the whip and sun! Not me! I will escape tonight, and tomorrow I will have salve for my back, wine for my tongue, and bread for my belly. I will have freedom!"

### #2. Granj



"Rash action will bring certain death! Look at this pit—fortified and guarded—it is *designed* to thwart a mindless rush for freedom! They think we are stupid and desperate beasts, and as long as we act that way, we haven't a chance. No—we must use foresight and patience. We must marshal the warriors and psionicists among us, then use our talents to get out alive. If we rush the walls like stampeding erdlus, the guards will skewer us and roast us alive. But with patience and planning, we'll each march from here with a templar's head on a gythka."

### #3. Cavasaideen the Mul



"Escape is hopeless. To what would we escape? Where can we run? The streets of Tyr hold only death for us, as too does the vast desert. Death lies behind every corner. But the certainty of death gives us true freedom—freedom from the future! If we must die, let us die in valor rather than squalor! Let us die rebels and martyrs, not slaves! Why should my blood mortar Kalak's ziggurat? Let the blood of templars mortar my grave! I may die tomorrow, but I will hold in my hand the still-beating heart of Tithian, the high templar!"

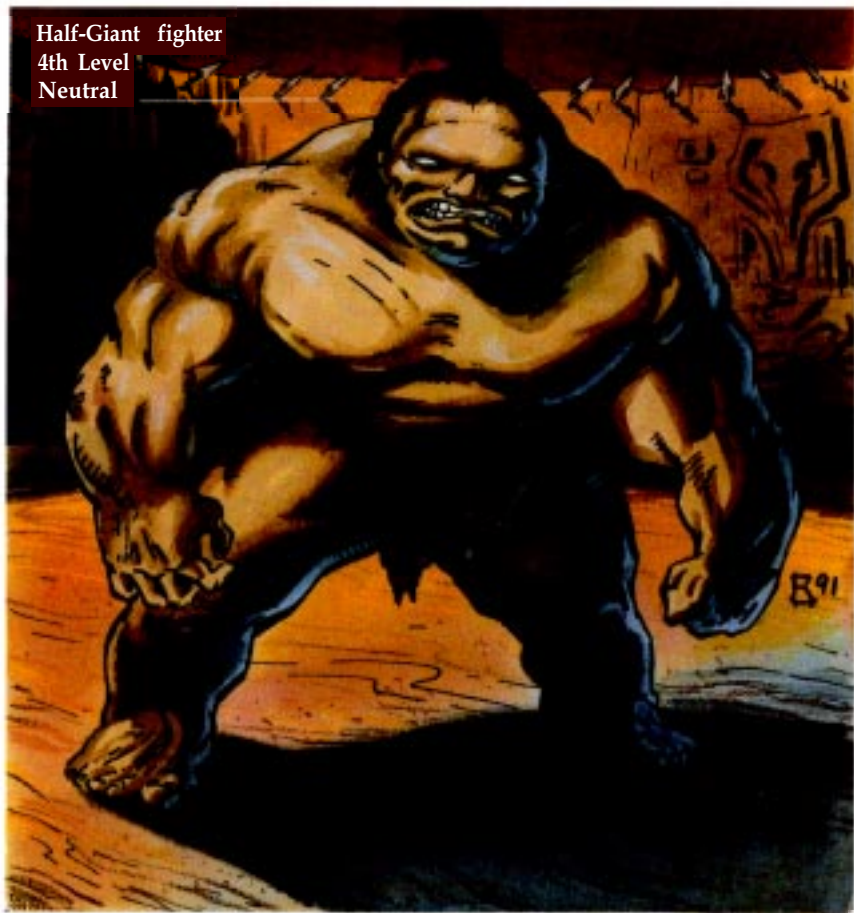
### #4. Niave of the Waste, a half-elf



"You slaves are pathetic. What a bunch of dreaming, wind-blown refuse you are. You plan and wait—talk of heroic deaths and mass escapes—but you only want someone to hold your hand as you die! Give it up: let everyone find his own way out. One of us alone stands a better chance than a skittish rabble. I say we split up and each find our own escape."

Forty-One:  
Urrgos

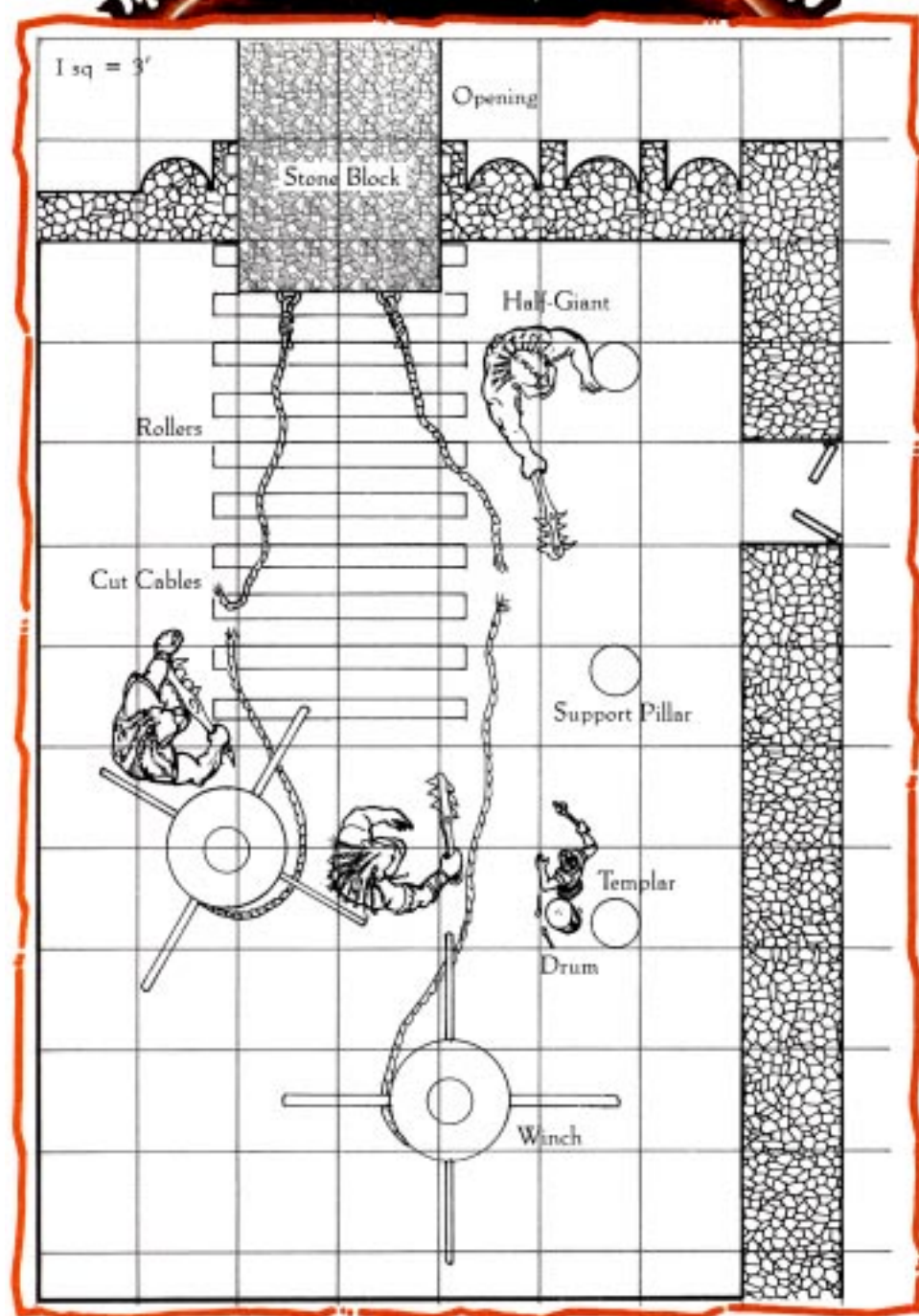
Half-Giant fighter  
4th Level  
Neutral



This lumbering half-giant has become a nearly inseparable partner of your group. He exhibits the traits common to his people: gullibility, good-heartedness, and slowness to anger. You sense that he doesn't soon forgive an offense, but neither does he soon forget a favor. Judging from his size and bulk, you will want to keep yourself on the favored list.

Urrgos says he grew up in a village on the shore of the Silt Sea; he tells many fascinating tales of the dust ocean. As best you can understand, your half-giant companion simply woke up one morning with the urge to leave the village. No one tried to dissuade him, not even his parents. Apparently, this volatile wanderlust often infects his kind. Even so, Urrgos seems oddly undisturbed by his current captivity in the slave pens. Half-giant minds—for they do have minds—are among Athas's greatest mysteries.

# Forty-Two: Winch Map



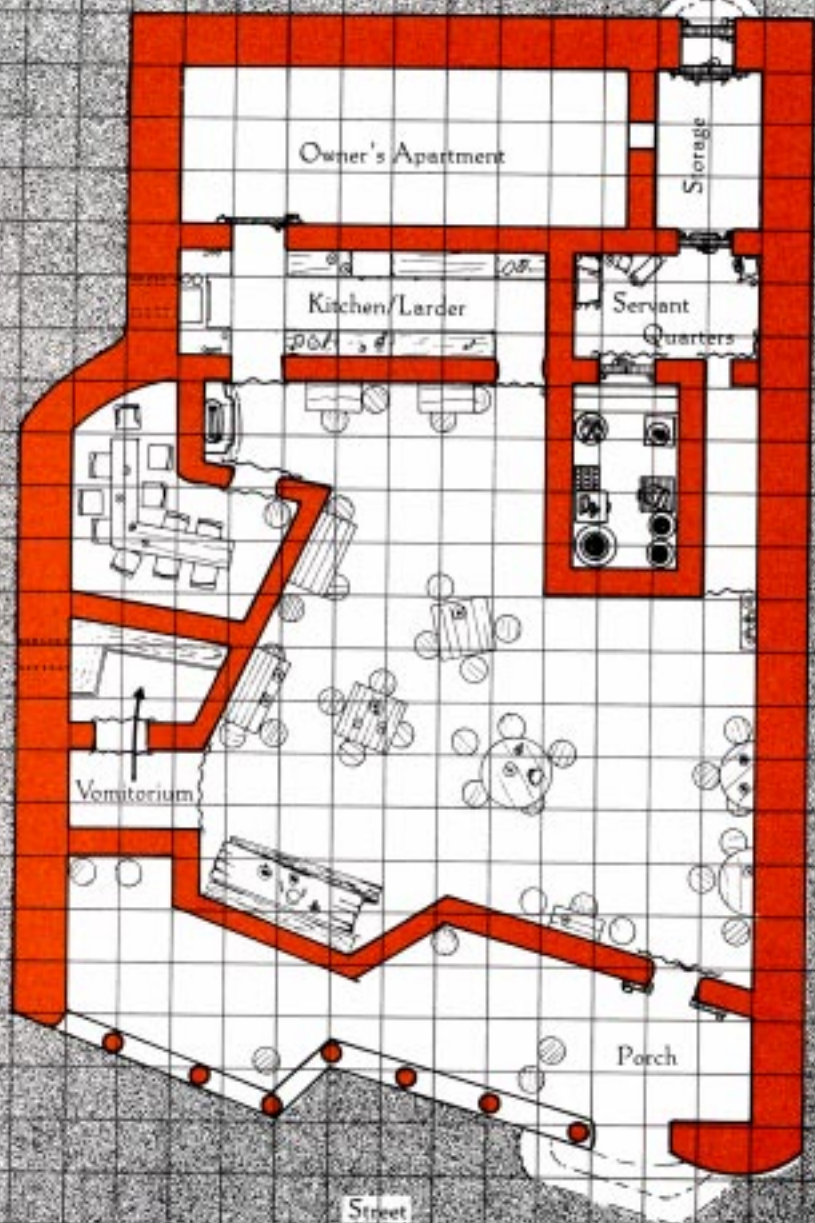
Forty-Three:  
Tithian Triumphant



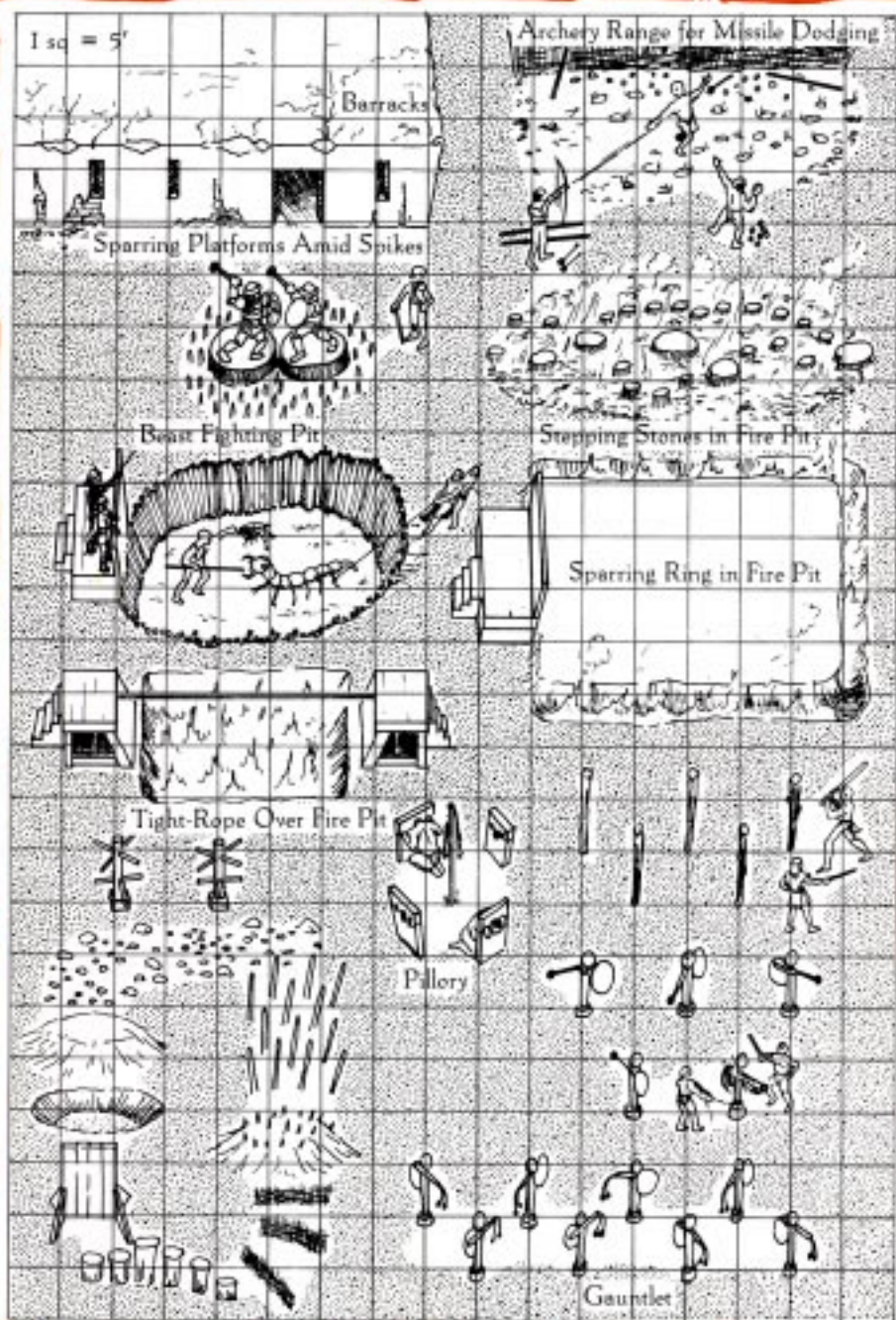


# Forty-Four: Wine Shop

1 sq = 3'



# Forty-Five: Arena Training

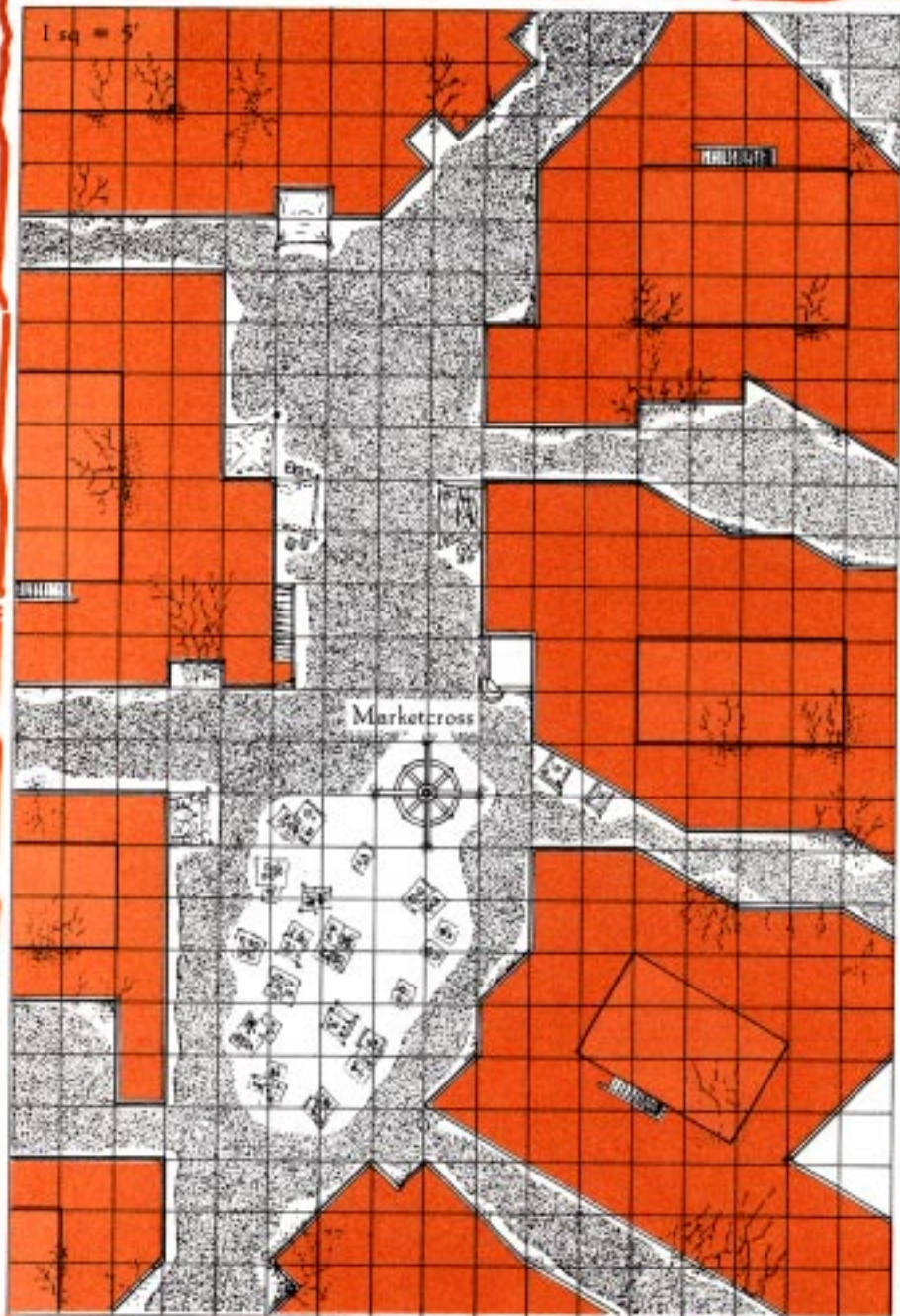


Forty-Six:  
Gladiators



# Forty-Seven: Elven Plaza Map

1 sq = 5'





# Shackles

Allen Varney

A broiling wind blew in over the stadium wall. It set pennants snapping on every level of King Kalak's ziggurat, swept dust and flecks of dried blood into the packed grand stands, then escaped over the upper tiers to race across the domes and flat stucco roofs of Tyr. In its wake, dust devils whirled across the arena, blowing sand into gladiators' eyes, into the colosseum's low passages crowded with latecomers, and through an open archway into the Magestalos staging room.

One of the gladiators coughed at the dust. "Still two hours short of noon," he said. "Gon' to boil over today, it is."

The others ignored him. They were watching Oghran, the stable champion, torment Jona in the stocks. Jona was tall and young, with bulging muscles and bronzed skin. Like the other gladiators, he wore only a breechclout and sandals. Beneath a mop of black hair, Jona had blocky features ridged with several scars— and now Oghran was about to add another.

"Wrist razors." Oghran the mul held the blades under Jona's nose. "Look how they shine so pretty, eh? You know they're real metal then." The mul flexed his knuckles. Strapped across the back of the gladiator's thick hand, the three steel blades spread like claws. Jona struggled to lift his head, but the stocks held him tight.

The other ten fighters sat quietly, looking sidelong at the line of empty stocks beside Jona. One wrong word and Oghran would wrestle them into the stocks too— head and hands trapped in a yoke of gray-yellow Gulg hardwood so Oghran could have his fun with them.

Orange sunbeams lighted the cramped stone chamber, a basement with a small window opening directly on the arena floor. The light glistened on Oghran's coppery bald skull and on the wrist razors as Oghran slipped one thin blade up Jona's right nostril. Jona gasped.

"That templar, Roven, just gave 'em to me," the mul continued in a purring voice. "Present, for downin' that big Urikite in the first round. That slave, he liked being alive as much as you. But not as much as me. Come to think, he had a scar on his nose." Oghran gently turned the blade, and Jona sucked air through clenched teeth.

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## Shackles

Blood trickled onto his upper lip.

Oghran's face was very close to Jona's. The cross-breed's breath smelled of meat. Beneath his bulging, hairless brow, the black eyes stared at the razors with an expression the junior fighter had never seen there before: affection.

Jona found his thoughts drifting crazily. *Of course*, he thought, *what else could Oghran love but a fine new weapon?* Love—Oghran's rarest look. After a moment, Jona corrected himself: second rarest. There was one other look that those in the stable had never yet seen the champion display.

"I'm the best gladiator in this stable, see?" said the mul. "I told you before. But you took down that first-rounder, the half-elf, in record time! I don't like to see that."

Jona winced as the blade dug deeper. Of course he meant to win, but he didn't dare let Oghran know it. Stall! "I wasn't the only one that finished the round," he said through his teeth.

"But you're the only one I'm worried about. These others, they won't finish their fights alive. I just want to remind you what's waitin' if you get back here still breathin'."

Jona could see the mul was about to pull the blade. He thought fast. "That half-elf knew about your power. He bragged about it to me before the match began. If I hadn't killed him, he would have told everyone."

The razor made the lightest of cuts on its exit from Jona's nose as Oghran stepped back. "That scrawny greenstick elf? How did he know?"

Jona knew he would survive this encounter with nose intact. He'd have to play out the lie, though. "He had a gift for knowing thoughts, he said. I know you don't like spreading your power around too widely. Not good for your future."

The mul considered. "Why should I believe you?"

"Tolli heard it too." Jona looked over at Tolli, standing in one corner. He was a gangly, tonsured slave boy with skin the color of arena sand. Jona continued, "Isn't that right, Tolli?"

After some hesitation, the boy spoke with a Raamish accent. "It is most true, Oghran sir."

Oghran stood a while. "Well—"

A gladiator jumped up. "Master!" he shouted.

The others stood as their master strolled in. Maddilondo of Magestalos wore the customary belted white tunica and silk cape, both edged with the twin purple stripes of senatorial rank. His thinning blond hair was curled in ringlets, in the fashion of younger men. Seeing Jona in the stocks, Maddilondo frowned petulantly. "Not again! Will this peasant ever learn proper conduct?"

Oghran said, "Can't say, master."

Maddilondo shook his head and clucked his tongue. "Really, Jona. What was it this time?"

Jona thought fast. "Oghran was just showing me his new wrist razors. He got them from a templar."

This announcement caused consternation, in Maddilondo and Oghran both. The noble glared at his champion. "Indeed, those are new razors! From whom, Oghran?"

"Well, master . . . Roven was just . . . he—" Oghran flashed Jona a look of hatred.

"I don't wonder that Roven can afford to give steel razors! He's already extorted huge bribes from me on the most ridiculous pretexts. Just thinking of it makes me—Oghran, explain this!"

The mul just stammered. At last Maddilondo said, "I will let you keep those razors because they improve your chances today. I have much riding on your victory. In fact, as I came down to tell you, it's almost time for your next contest." He whirled with a swish of his cape and marched away.

"Oh, and one more thing," he added at the doorway. "I've purchased two new fighters; they'll arrive soon."

The noble might have produced the same surprise if he'd said he was flying to the second moon for lunch. Oghran said, "But we . . . master, we haven't trained with them and . . . and anyway, the contest has already started!"

"You need not train these men." Maddilondo's eyes



sparkled. "As for the contest rules, well, gold knows no rules." He fingered the coin pouch at his belt, his usual sign for bribery. "Now, Oghran, your contest! Your victory today will buy me a new villa—and perhaps much more for you!"

Oghran stared as the nobleman departed. He turned to Jona and said, "I'll handle you later." Placing one great hand over Jona's face, with the other he pulled the stock-peg and flipped back the yoke. He shoved. Jona crashed against the rear wall and down to the sandy floor.

Jona shook with rage. He tried and failed to find the Unseen Way of the mind. He could almost hear Thoronno, his old mentor, chiding him from the past: "Too angry! Turn loose of anger! Your mind fights itself. Let the power work the mind, not otherwise." If Jona could only—but he found the Way hardly one time in ten. He stood no chance against Oghran, whose power was firmly under control.

Oghran was buckling on a leather cuirass and a spiked skullcap. He addressed the gladiators. "Now, I'm goin' out to fight one of old Vandural's half-giants. This one thinks he's the best in his stable, too. When I slaughter him, you all watch." He left.

Tolli rushed to Jona's side and daubed at the fighter's lip with a filthy rag. "You are real certain fine, Jona sir. Only the little blood, it is fine. Feel calm, as Thoronno said!" He lowered his voice. "And please, Thoronno also said we don't lie, okay? Look, look what I do."

The boy stared at the far wall, where the morning sun cast long shadows. The shadows began to flow like reflections in oil. They became silhouettes of animals, buildings, caricatures of Maddilondo and Oghran. The other fighters laughed.

Jona did not; the irony was bitter. Tolli showed amazing skill in a trivial power. But Jona could no more master his own strong power than tame a mekillot.

"Look! I make the inix move over the sand, tromp tromp tromp. See?"

Watching the humped shadow lope along the wall, Jona thought of Thoronno. The old man, there in

Jona's village to the north, had taught Jona psionic discipline—or tried to. "You are too attached to your feelings to find the Unseen Way," he often said. "And if the Way is elusive, freedom is a hundred times harder."

The desert of Athas bred both psionic mastery and philosophies of life, each a way of coping with the harsh world. Thoronno believed freedom was as much in the mind as the Unseen Way. He often said, "The races of Athas are tied to the slave train of misery by ropes of their own weaving. The source of misery is unfulfilled desire. To remove misery, remove desire."

There in the staging room, with the reek of sweat and blood in his bleeding nostrils, Jona thought, *The way to remove misery is to remove Oghran, Maddilondo, the arena, the whole infested city.* For a slave, Thoronno's teachings were useless, though out of boredom Jona had passed them along to Tolli, who seemed to like them better.

To think that Jona had left his village to seek wealth here! He hadn't gotten a block within the city gates before he ran into trouble. A man in black robes was beating a Raamish beggar boy. Jona had rescued Tolli, injuring the man in the process, and so he discovered how much power the king's templars exert in Tyr.

On the spot, the templar sentenced both Jona and Tolli to slavery on King Kalak's ziggurat, two more lives to be dashed against the stone pyramid like tens of thousands before them. By chance, Maddilondo of Magestalos, nobleman and senator, was present at the scene and bribed the templar to commute the sentences to servitude in the arena as part of his gladiator stable.

"There are great games coming up in two months," he told Jona at the time. "If you do well for me, those games will do well for you. King Kalak is granting the winning gladiators their freedom, and I will free the champion of my stable as well. Study under Oghran, my mul. He'll give you the will to win!"

Jona climbed on a bench and looked out the window as Oghran began his second match. This morning's preliminary rounds would entertain the crowd until the





## Shackles

afternoon's final free-for-all, starring major gladiator teams like Rikus and Neeva.

From here, Jona could see King Kalak's ziggurat looming at one end of the arena. It had been started before Jona was born and completed just hours ago. Even now, slave gangs were giving a final polish to the murals on each level. Trumpets sounded the start of Oghran's contest. Elsewhere in the stands, the music echoed thrillingly, but the ziggurat seemed to absorb and mute it.

Nearby, Jona saw Maddilondo being hailed by the templar, Roven. "A moment of your time, Senator Maddilondo." Roven spoke the "Senator" with cloying politeness, the templar's routine slight to members of Tyr's ineffectual legislature.

Roven, a portly, middle-aged man, had a full head of silver hair, impeccably styled like a mane. Having finished a snack of junnfruit from his own gardens, the templar threw away the tough rind and drew out a spool of thin twine. He kept Maddilondo waiting as he meticulously slipped a length of twine into the gaps between his teeth, cleaning them of fibers. When he had finished with this task, Roven said, "King Kalak has decided that stable owners are not allowed in the arena during contests."

Maddilondo scowled, then said, "I wasn't informed of this. Perhaps the last 30 silver I paid you, for—what was it, 'sand-pit maintenance'?—is worth a small indulgence."

"I dispense my indulgences carefully. But your violation is trivial. I'll dismiss it this time unless you compound it with further offenses. I see that your half-breed is fighting especially well today."

They turned to watch Oghran in battle. The mul faced a half-giant of moderate size, about ten feet tall. The hulking Volg was not a trained gladiator but a convict, slope-browed, pot-bellied, bowlegged, with a slack, protruding jaw and a desperate attitude. For all that, Volg looked more than a match for Oghran. The half-giant's greaves rose above the mul's waist, he had more than twice Oghran's reach, and he carried a huge hardwood club as lightly as a dinner fork. Oghran had only

his usual shield, helmet, and cuirass—and the new wrist razors.

With a trumpet call and an answering roar from the crowd, the match began. The giant swung his club straight down, striking the ground and scattering sand, for Oghran had moved smoothly aside. Then the mul stepped in and, with a graceful half turn, raked the razors down Volg's club arm. The half-giant's howl merged with another roar from the crowd.

Oghran had developed his technique as a caravan guard in the wastes south of Tyr, in combats with the belgoi. The bell ringing in the night, the lure into darkness, the clawed hand reaching from the shadows for a caress—Oghran had faced the savage creatures to protect his cargo and, later, for sport. As the belgoi dodged in, struck with claws, and leaped back, out in the dunes, so Oghran struck and leaped in the arena of Tyr.

In a less than a hundred heartbeats, Volg was bleeding from a dozen gashes and had not touched Oghran.

"The wounds are light and will hardly slow the giant," said Roven. "Do you suppose—?"

Maddilondo was smug. "Oghran merely takes the measure of his opponent's mind, as the belgoi do. Watch, he strikes!"

Oghran was not striking, yet the giant shook in every limb in an apparent seizure. With the frenzied cheers from the crowd, only those near the battle could hear Oghran's command: "Stand still!"

As always, Jona watched the mul use his psionic ability with a mixture of envy and revulsion. Oghran had never yet failed to dominate an opponent. The half-giant, paralyzed as he watched the mul disembowel him with the razors, soon became just one more on a long list of kills.

Oghran stood atop the body, unmarked and breathing easily. The crowd applauded thunderously, then chanted his name for most of a minute. Jona felt violent distaste. These were the people he fought for, risked his life for.

When Oghran strode off the field, Maddilondo greeted him almost as an equal. "Congratulations! You



advance to the next round. Your next opponent, Krobard, is quite weak. Odds are 100 to 12 in your favor. Not much money to be made against him, I'm afraid."

Jona noticed Roven's eyes widen as if startled, a look quickly concealed. "Congratulations, Oghran," the templar said. "I've profited from your victory." He seemed to address the last to Maddilondo, not the gladiator.

The nobleman paled. "You? You wagered on that round?"

"There is no prohibition for templars against wagering."

"Of course not," said Maddilondo bitterly. "How can there be, with no prohibition against outright th—"

"Tut!" Roven held up a finger. "Demearing a templar is a serious offense." As Maddilondo stalked off, Roven continued, "Oghran, take this new gift—not so useful in the arena as your razors but delightful nonetheless. Figs, from my own orchards." He held out a small leaf-wrapped parcel.

Oghran took it casually. "Thank you, sir. I hope to do even better for you —and for my master, of course— in the next round."

"We may discuss that later," said Roven, and with that he departed.

By noon, two other gladiators had gone out to fight and had not returned. The mood in the staging room was tense and quiet.

Jona prepared for his own next round: a dagger fight with a gladiator he didn't know but would have to kill. He thought of old Thoronno. His mentor had taught that killing was wrong, but he had also said, "The master bears the burden of the slave's action." If told to kill, Jona could only obey. Still, the problem nagged.

As Jona was strapping on his cuirass and checking his obsidian blade, a sudden commotion drew him and the other gladiators out of the room, into the corridor leading to the arena.

Not a hundred feet away on the arena sand, an inix had gone berserk.

The giant lizard's shell, painted with the emblem of Kalak's army, was already spattered with the blood of guards, gladiators, and officials. Maddened by the smell of the crowd or the noise of the trumpets, the creature hurtled into a line of guards, crushing several in its jaws and lashing aside the survivors with its tail.

A timekeeper sounded the alarm on a kettle-gong. More guards ran up, charged the beast with iron-tipped spears, broke their weapons on its thick shell, and died or fled. Still more guards, half-giants in leather armor, ran in from the stadium passage. The beast roared its fury. In response, the crowd roared its enthusiasm.

Suddenly, amid the turmoil, one high voice cried out, "In King Kalak's name!"

Everyone nearby ran for cover.

Two figures remained: the inix, trampling a pile of bodies, and Roven, templar of King Kalak, preparing the magic that Kalak bestowed on him.

Jona could hardly see what was happening. Fleeing guards and onlookers had crowded into the passage out-



## Shackles

side the staging room, pushing him and the other fighters down the corridor ahead of them. Now they were all crowding back to the doorway, eager to see the battle.

Observing carefully, Jona saw that everyone around was watching the battle. He looked the other way, to the passage's exit. Tolli was standing there, peering out. The boy looked back, saw Jona, and waved him over.

In the arena, Roven was invoking the king's name. Then Jona heard a loud crack, like lightning. The inix roared. The crowd in the passage gasped, fascinated. Jona edged toward the exit.

The passage was low, the stone ceiling covered with soot from centuries of torchlight. Jona thought of tunnels in an animal burrow. A breeze from the stadium entrance blew odors of stale bread, bonepipe smoke, and sweat.

Tolli whispered, "No guards, Jona sir!"

Jona thought, *Never count on a half-giant for discipline.* He and Tolli started to run for the open air.

Jona stopped at the guard room, a locked cubicle just beside the exit. *Weapons*, he thought. *Water, maybe money.* He tested the locked door.

Jona sir, no," said Tolli. "Thoronno said, 'Do not take what is not freely given.' "

"If Thoronno knew how much we need these things, he'd tell us to go ahead." Despite the boy's protests, he put his shoulder to the door and pushed. On his third lunge, it flew open. Jona fell forward, and so when a long brown shape leaped out, it missed him. In an eyeblink, the watch-python's coils passed with a silken rustle around Tolli's thin limbs.

At that moment, a squad of guards appeared far down the cross passage. Jona drew back around the corner before they saw him, but they spotted Tolli and broke into a run.

There was still a chance. Jona closed his eyes and concentrated, seeking the cool point in his mind, the Unseen Way. He could solve everything, if only . . . He squinted and cursed. Nothing again!

Jona looked at Tolli. The boy had become motionless as the python tightened its coils, staring ahead with a

haunting and pathetic look of doom, of resignation to the inevitable. The guards were running now, but they'd never make it in time to rescue Tolli, even if they cared to.

Jona looked out the exit. The streets beyond stretched empty to the edge of town, a couple of bow-shots away. A fresh wind was chasing the horizon. He could be gone before the guards knew he was here.

Two looks, two seconds. Snarling, Jona drew his dagger.

The guards arrived to find Tolli bruised and in a dead faint, but otherwise unharmed. Jona ignored their calls for surrender. Over and over, like a slave driver with a whip, he kept pounding the snake's limp body against the floor.

As the guards marched them back to the staging room, Jona cursed his fury and his stupidity. He had been treated as an animal so long, he was still acting like one. The bonds of his slavery went beyond the arena.

In the arena, the inix—its shell scorched and smoking in a dozen places, its eyes filmy, its movements slowed—floundered, submerged almost to the shoulder in a pool of brown, viscous mud. Roven watched arena guards finish off the beast. Then the templar called, "A junnfruit, if you please!" Eight different officials rushed to bring him fruit.

The guards handed Jona and Tolli over to Maddilondo. All the other gladiators except Oghran had tried to escape, too, and three had made it. The other five stood in the stocks, where Jona and Tolli soon joined them.

Maddilondo was strangely calm. "Your betrayal hurts me, but it does no great harm. The new arrivals are due shortly. I believe they, along with Oghran, will carry forward the stable's honor—now that you, Jona, have abandoned your chance for freedom."

Jona realized, with mingled regret and relief, that his escape attempt would disqualify him from the contest. At least Oghran would be happy.

He saw Oghran half an hour later. The mul was furious.

Before the inix went berserk, Oghran had left the staging room at Roven's request. The templar had said



he wanted to place a blessing on the gladiator, and Maddilondo had warily agreed. Now the champion was back, his head down, anger radiating from him like heat from the sun. Seeing Jona in the stocks, he shouted, "What're you looking at?"

To calm him, Jona said, "I was disqualified for trying to escape. The contest is yours to win."

Oghran pulled open the yoke, grabbed Jona by the arm, and threw him against a wall. "And I can do it! I'll win! Do you think I can't?"

Dazed and astonished, hearing the other gladiators raise an alarm, Jona saw that he was in a blood fight. The mul had already killed twice today and looked ready to raise his score. Sunlight glared on his wrist razors. As the mul closed with him, Jona thought of the belgoi of the south, and the caress of their claws.

The razors flashed. Jona twisted aside, right into Oghran's kick. Breathless from the impact, Jona pushed forward and shoved the surprised mul to the floor. But Oghran instantly rolled to his feet and they circled warily. The others fell silent.

Jona thought of a dozen tricks, but the mul looked ready for all of them. Then he felt a touch in his mind. With a shiver, he recognized the mul's first psychic contact. Before long, Oghran could dominate Jona as he had the half-giant.

Jona tried his own power, concentrating as best he could in battle. He almost felt the entry, the coolness—but the Way remained elusive. With a frustrated scream Jona fainted left, then kicked Oghran's right leg, toppling him again. This time Jona followed him down, fists ready.

But the mul fought like a belgoi on the ground, too. He held Jona's arms back easily, rolled him over, and pinned the arms under a scarred knee. He raised the razors—

A tremendous hand fell on Oghran's shoulder and pulled him aside like a doll. A looming mountain of flesh extended an arm, many feet long, and pulled Jona to his feet. It was human, he belatedly realized—or humanlike, anyway. And its twin was standing right behind it!

Maddilondo sidled forward. "Gentlemen, please welcome your newest colleagues, two powerful fighters I've imported from distant Draj on the shores of the Sea of Silt. These new men will fight in the upcoming round. Wish them luck!"

Someone asked, "What are their names?"

Maddilondo seemed taken aback. "Names. Umm, yes. Well, this one will be called . . . mmm . . . Gold, and the other one is Silver." He giggled. "Now, everyone, show them their places. They don't talk much, but you'll find they take orders well." With that, he waved to his new recruits and left.

Jona watched the new men in fascination: their over-long arms with rippling tendons, their bandy legs, the strange way they tilted their heads and looked at the stocks. "Half-giants, maybe," he said, doubting his own words.

Tolli whispered, "I think no, sir. Not Draj, either. I see Draj city. I see no one like them. They are like big monkey I hear about, it live in the Forest Ridge. Pull arms off halflings." The boy clutched his own arms, perhaps afraid he looked halfling-like.

Oghran himself seemed skittish around the new fighters. Still angry, the mul retreated to a corner and brooded. He stared through the stone wall as though seeking a distant view, blocked by an impervious barrier.

In their first match an hour later, Gold and Silver faced an experienced team of thri-kreen. Their battle against the mantis-warriors, though brief, left the men's bodies covered with greenis ichor and pieces of chitin that smelled like turpentine. In the staging room, trying not think of his aching back and shoulders, Jona watched from the stocks. The two newcomers picked the flakes off each other and stared at them curiously. Gold extended a long pink tongue and licked a piece. Jona closed his eyes.

Maddilondo, almost floating, told the gladiators, "Things proceed well, very well! Even our friend Roven has been caught with his wagers down. The way he watched Gold and Silver in the battle, you know, I be-



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lieve he was quite perplexed."

Jona thought, So are we.

"Master," said Oghran, "I'm startin' my next contest—"

Maddilondo waved the mul out. "Yes, yes. Good luck, old fellow."

Jona watched the mul go. In the archway Oghran paused, breathing deeply. After a moment he slammed his fist into his thigh, then trudged out. His opponent in this round was a thin human named Krobard.

The crowd roared. The battle began.

While the contestants circled, Roven stole into the staging room and moved quietly beside Gold and Silver. Jona saw the templar murmur something. So did Maddilondo, for the noble ran to interfere. "Here now! What is the problem? Do you need another fee paid?"

Roven made sorrowful tut-tut sounds. "If only a fee could solve this new crisis. Dear senator, you have been duped. These contestants are not men! Witness!"

"Roven, no—!"

But the templar had already begun chanting: "Let King Kalak's might expunge all deceptive enchantments here! Let truth shine forth!" Almost at once, Gold and Silver began to change.

Their noses vanished. Shoulders widened, jaws jutted, teeth sharpened to points. An odor of vinegar filled the air. With moist popping sounds, the figures' ribs sprang to new positions, the spines hunched and sprouted knobs, and the bulging torsos shriveled. Scales grew in patches like fungus, spreading to cover the lengthening limbs. And there were claws, many long claws.

Jona recognized them first. "Gith!" he shouted.

The two gith stood naked and grotesque, their lipless teeth clacking in puzzlement. Then, with agile leaps astonishing for their twisted limbs, they grabbed daggers and shields. They stood back to back, hissing. One stared hard at a long wooden bench; it trembled and began to slide across the floor.

The gladiators, trapped in the stocks, shouted in fear. "What's happening?" one cried.

Jona, beside Maddilondo, thought he knew. "They

were never men at all. You tracked down some magician to make them appear so."

The nobleman looked away. "I don't know what you're talking about," he muttered. He busied himself freeing his screaming gladiators from the stocks.

The bench lifted clumsily in the air and flew toward Roven. The templar ducked as it smashed into the wall. One gith charged him, dagger held at a strange angle in its oddly jointed limb. It screeched a sibilant war-cry.

Tolli turned to Maddilondo. "Do we help, master sir?"

The noble was calm. "Help whom?"

Roven, it seemed, needed no help. He spoke King Kalak's name quietly, almost soothingly, and more words that Jona couldn't hear. One gith stared at the templar as though mesmerized, then turned on its fellow and slashed with its dagger. The other recoiled with a scream, and in moments they were fighting. The gladiators watched in fascination as Roven guided one gith's movements. It attacked fearlessly, oblivious to pain.





"A handy spell," Maddilondo said quietly. "Would that I had such magic for this stable." Jona heard and shivered.

The battle was soon over. The gladiators, still afraid to move, watched the two monsters collapse and die. Roven summoned guards and ordered the bodies carried away to the animal pens.

The templar breathed deeply and said, "Of course, Senator, you understand that there will be an investigation. To avoid controversy during the games, I must regretfully disqualify your stable from further competition."

Maddilondo's blond ringlets shook. "This is—!"

"Unfair? Monstrous? A miscarriage of justice? That may be. If you insist, I can call a truth-senser and clear you at once."

The noble's eyes widened. He paused. "No," he said at last. "Don't . . . inconvenience anyone . . . right now."

"I understand perfectly," Roven said as he walked out the door.

"Well," said Maddilondo, swallowing, "this is very bad. But all is not quite lost. Perhaps I can recoup some losses from this battle Oghran's fighting." He and the others peered out the window into the arena just in time to see the mul place a foot wrong, stagger, and fall. His head struck hard, and he lay still. Oghran's opponent, Krobard, was already down and bloodied but still alive. He struggled to his feet and prepared to run the mul through with his sword.

"No! No!" As one, the crowd jeered. Krobard looked to the stands for guidance. King Kalak himself, a short withered man, rose, and the stadium fell silent. Jona could barely tell at this distance, but Kalak's perpetual frown seemed to give way to a twitching, ironic grin.

The sorcerer-king held out his arm. Jona counted three heartbeats. Then Kalak flashed the signal: thumb up.

The crowd cheered. Krobard had won, but Oghran would live to fight again.

Maddilondo stared at Jona, at the staging room, at everything. "I—" His eyes were glazed, like a victim of concussion. "Why, I've lost everything. This stable. My estate. My properties, my vineyards . . ." He choked and stopped.

His eye fell on Roven across the sandy field. The noble seemed to gain new strength. "Well! At least this hot wind has not scorched me alone. Roven also had much money wagered on this battle, I understand."

Even as he spoke the words, a courier carrying a large, heavy bag ran up to the templar. Roven took the bag, then reached in and pulled out a coin to tip the courier.

Maddilondo gasped. "But he lost! How—?" Then Maddilondo saw Oghran rise to his feet. The mul, who seemed little injured, looked toward his master, then looked away. "Ah," Maddilondo said calmly. "At last I understand."

The gladiators—except Oghran, who did not return to the stable—watched the last of the opening rounds. Only Tolli worked, and he was hard put to find enough water to quench everyone's thirst.

The only distraction came when a band of templars, preparing for the finale, placed a huge obsidian pyramid in the arena. It floated in like a cloud as the audience watched in total silence. A bizarre monstrosity crouched atop the pyramid, a beetlelike thing of many legs, numerous wasplike eyes, and huge mandibles. Jona wasn't sure it was alive until he noticed short tentacles writhing above its mouth.

He saw Tolli shiver and asked, "Do you know what that is?"

"It is gaj, Jona sir." The boy said no more.

Jona thought he could see sunlight reflecting through strange depths and angles within the pyramid. The sight bothered him in the same way the giant ziggurat bothered him. Both objects were inscrutable, conceived by a mind he could never comprehend.

But this was foolish. The pyramid was nothing more than a prop for the final battle.

The star gladiators arrived, and the finale began.



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Then, minutes later, came a loud gasp from the audience, and the cry:

“The king is dead!”

A minor templar unknown to Jona ran into the room. The thin young man was trying to appear calm and failing. “Put Master Roven’s slaves in the stocks!” he screeched.

Maddilondo said, “Whose slaves?”

“Well, whoever’s slaves. Lock them up and keep them out of trouble!”

Fuming, Maddilondo ordered the gladiators into the stocks, even Tolli. He cursed as he locked the yokes, coming at last to Jona. By then the templar was satisfied and had run out.

As Maddilondo started to fasten the final peg, Jona took a chance. “I see Roven approaching to claim his new stable. Too bad if anything happened to him.”

Maddilondo stopped cold. “What do you mean?”

“It’s dangerous, taking over a new stable. A fighter might not like the new master.”

The nobleman stared at him for long seconds, then went to the window to confirm that Roven was approaching quickly, still holding his sack of money. Then, without a word, he walked quickly from the room down the passage.

The senator carried with him the locking peg for Jona’s stocks.

Jona slipped free and found a dagger. The other slaves cried out, but he brandished the obsidian blade and said, “If you want to get free, keep quiet.” He crouched in a shadowed corner. “Tolli, distract him.” The boy nodded.

With a clink of coins, Roven entered, slightly breathless. He started to speak, then paused. A cloud of wasp-like shadows fluttered up one wall and across the ceiling. “What—?” he asked, just as Jona’s dagger drew a long slash down one cheek.

Roven screamed, gestured one-handed, and babbled, “In King Kalak’s name!” Jona felt a sharp pain in his wrist and cried out as the dagger disappeared from his hand. Yet he lived. Roven’s spell must have misfired—

perhaps because the templar would not put down his bag of money.

Saying, “This seems to hinder you,” Jona grabbed the moneybag and swung it one handed. With a metallic crunch, it struck squarely on Roven’s silver mane, and the templar fell unconscious. But the bag exploded, scattering a colossal fortune in silver and ceramic coins.

Jona jumped to grab the coins, then he recalled how his greed had nearly gotten Tolli killed at the stadium exit. With an effort he stood up, ignoring the wealth.

The other gladiators made no such effort. “Let us free!” they shouted. As Jona flipped back each stock, the gladiators leaped headlong to grab handfuls of coins. Jona, staring down at them, thought of rats in a frenzy.

Suddenly he felt weak and dizzy. His wound? No, the others appeared to be suffering as well, and a gold blur was seeping from them, a current of mist almost too thin to see. It flowed from their bodies toward the pyramid.

In the arena, the obsidian pyramid was pulsing with a golden glow; silk-white ribbons of light crawled over its surface. The audience noise rose steadily, on the edge of panic. Then, atop the giant ziggurat, maroon flame flared against the hazy sky. Seeing it, feeling his weakness, Jona suddenly recognized danger.

He ran back to Tolli. “Something awful is happening. Come on, we’re going.” The other slaves fled, but Tolli just looked past him in shock. Jona whirled, right into the heel of a thick hand driving into his chin. He fell, and Oghran the mul stood over him in a cloud of golden light, razors sharp and ready.

“Why?” Jona gasped. “Why do you still fight?”

“After you attacked my new master, you ask why?”

A clamor came from the passageway. People were panicking. A shout in the distance: “The doors are sealed!”

“Everything’s breaking down. You can get out. You don’t want him as your master.”

“Shut up!” Oghran kicked hard at Jona’s ribs. “Shut up! A master is a master!” As he drew back to kick again, Jona grabbed his ankle and threw him.

This time, Jona knew better than to fight on the



ground. He leaped up, but his growing weakness made him falter. A flash of pain from his ribs clouded his vision. When it cleared, he felt Oghran clutching his mind. He struggled to close his thoughts.

Oghran said, "Lie down."

Jona lay down. He was furious, but he couldn't remember why. Not because Oghran was sitting on his chest, for hadn't Oghran told him to lie down? Besides, his limbs felt heavier all the time. Something . . . the thought escaped him.

Oghran's smile peeled back his lips all the way to the gums. "Now," he said, raising the wrist razors. "Just relax."

Jona went limp. Freed from his anger, he found, almost by accident, the Unseen Way.

It felt magnificent, like a plunge into cool water. Jona heard a hundred whispers in a dozen languages, secrets murmured just too quietly to decipher. But he understood somehow that many were languages of long ago, drawn from—from his own mind?

Less than a second had passed. With new energy, Jona focused on Oghran. The fighter loomed in his awareness as a dark misshapen form—a belgoi. Even in this perception, a golden glow surrounded the figure, and Jona recognized it as the mul's own life force. Jona viewed the image calmly, as though he himself had created it. The reaction suited his self-image: a puppet master.

As Thoronno had taught him, Jona pictured imaginary strands of silver flame leading to Oghran's joints. Just before the wrist-razors fell toward Jona's throat, Jona plucked back the mul's arm.

Oghran jerked in surprise. Jona pulled the mul-puppet to his feet. Tugging one flaming string, Jona pulled the razors closer to the mul's throat. Oghran panted like the dying inix in Roven's mud pit.

With a fierce joy, Jona saw at last in Oghran's eyes that rarest of looks, rarer than affection, the look none had ever seen before: fear. The mul's eyes bulged; his teeth were clenched, his breath ragged. Jona drew the razors still closer.

He heard Tolli's voice. "No, Jona!"

Nothing more. He did not break his control, but he paused to think. With that pause, he realized how much he was enjoying himself. Like the crowd in the arena.

Jona stood up, and the weakness returned; he struggled to concentrate. Plucking the silver strings above Oghran's limbs, he pulled the mul's arms high, stood him up, and marched him over to face the wall. He directed the mul's arm in a clumsy punch, then another. The razor blades snapped against the stone and clattered across the floor.

Jona's temples were throbbing, and he felt feverish. He walked Oghran a safe distance away, then dropped control. Sagging against a wall, he said, "We have no reason to fight. I could have killed you, but I act as a free man. Now you have that chance, too."

Oghran stared. The moment stretched, with golden light draining from them all the while. Finally the mul fell to his knees. "If this spell weren't making me so weak—" he said. "Get out, or I'll kill you anyway."

Jona silently gave thanks for face-saving lies. Dragging Tolli, he fled into the passage and a frenetic mob. Sparkling light streamed overhead. Old people and young fell, pale and withered. He raced for the exit, only to find it blocked with a huge stone door.

Two passages crossed here; a mob filled the intersection. The air was close, humid, and filled with screams. But someone, at least, showed resourcefulness. A band of gladiators had organized a small army to push back the stone. Yet all their strength could not budge the door more than a foot or two.

At the edge of the crowd, Jona stopped to think. In the distance he heard a hollow grinding—not another stone door, but an animal cry. A tembo! One of the beasts from the arena was stalking the crowd.

Jona shuddered at the thick-veined eyestalks, the yellowed fangs and red-drenched claws. The creature bled freely from a long cut just below the spinal ridge of armor plates, and one square ear was hanging by a strip of tan-colored hide. The crowd's panic had maddened the creature. It snapped at everyone in sight, not stopping to eat its kills.





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Breathing deeply and relaxing, Jona found the Way again. He perceived the silver threads that controlled the beast's body. Twitching them, he sent the tembo charging toward the door, ignoring the beast's cries of outrage. Everyone scrambled to get away. Inserting the tembo's muzzle in the gap, Jona used the animal's strength to force the slab back.

People stampeded through the opening. Jona tried to follow, but slumped against a wall. So weak . . . just a moment to rest. When Jona dropped control of the tembo, the thing fell to the ground, its muscles torn from strain. The sight left Jona disgusted with the deeds he'd been forced to commit.

His thoughts were interrupted by a shriek from the zigurat, a howl that struck like strong wind. Citizens in the passage fell to the ground, weeping, or ran in panic. Suddenly Jona understood, and he wanted to run too. The sound was a scream.

He gasped suddenly, feeling like heavy straps had fallen from his chest. The energy drain had stopped!

Still weak, Jona looked around for Tolli. It took several minutes for him to locate the boy in the crowd. Grabbing Tolli by the arm, Jona hardly noticed a voice echoing through the stadium, someone saying, "All hail King Tithian of Tyr!"

A man cursed nearby. "Tithian! A templar! One tyrant gives way to another."

The voice was still speaking. "No more will Tyr be the city of slaves! You are all free!"

A startled gasp, a hush, then a cheer: a cry of jubilation that grew to colossal volume and went on and on. Jona noticed that people's shadows were leaping joyously back and forth across the passage. His throat tightening, Jona looked at Tolli.

The boy grinned. "Jona sir, what we do now?"

Jona thought of his village far to the north, and of Thoronno, whose instructions Jona would now study closely. Still, Tyr needed rebuilding. He liked both ideas, and he could choose his course freely. But something still weighed on him.

*Turn loose of anger! Your mind fights itself.*

Jona headed back to the staging room, Tolli close behind. There they found Oghran sitting on a bench, staring at the floor. He looked up and glared. "I warned you!"

Jona thought, *Turn loose of anger.* "You're free," he said. "Want to come with us?"

Oghran stared. "Why?"

"There are strange times coming, probably rough times." Even now, in the distance, they could hear the cries of lynch mobs attacking templars. "Safety in numbers. And who knows? We might make a good fighting team."

The mul leaped to his feet. "Get out! I swore I'd kill you if you came back!"

Jona just looked at him. Oghran sat down again.

"I fought hard for freedom," said the mul, staring again at the ground. "And now I've got it. And now I don't know what—" He broke off.

"Oghran sir, you listen to Jona sir. He has good wise words from Thoronno."

"Who's that?"

Jona extended his hand. "I'll take you to meet him."

They were the last three out of the stadium. As they stood blinking at a brilliant maroon sunset, Ral, the first moon of the night, lifted free of the horizon. A cool breeze scented with tamarisk played over them, down the street, and out into the open desert. "Come on," said Jona. "Let's follow the wind."



# Freedom Nonplayer Characters

## Non-Player Characters

As *Shackles* shows, friends on Athas are a rare and precious commodity. The following NPCs from *Freedom* may serve the PCs as friends. With care and consideration, the PCs can acquire long-term allies and henchmen from the following folk, and thus help you people your campaign base. The following treatment of these NPCs therefore extends beyond your needs for roleplaying them in *Freedom*.

### Chch'kraran

Thri-Kreen Fighter

3rd Level

Neutral



Str 15                      Int 12  
Dex 16                      Wis 14  
Con 13                      Cha 13

hp: 19  
AC: 4  
#AT 5  
THAC0: 18  
Dmg: 1d4 (× 4, claws)/  
1d4 + 1 (bite)

A fierce and mysterious insect-man of the burning plains, Chch'kraran arrived only recently in the great city of Tyr. Under orders from his pack, Chch'kraran came to Tyr to obtain the famed steel weapons of Tyrian craftsmen.

Sadly, Chch'kraran's pack little understood civilized life: they sent Chch'kraran with neither coin nor barter to exchange for the weapons, assuming their quarry would be free for the taking. (Tyr has vast iron mines, you know.) Needless to say, Chch'kraran soon found himself stranded in the strange world of the "soft-fleshed folk." Honor-bound by his pack, Chch'kraran continues to hunt for steel weapons.

Humans find Chch'kraran's personality—like that of all mantis men—unfathomable. Despite his naivete,

Chch'kraran has an insatiable curiosity about human customs, which has often been taken (right or wrong) as an interest in humans as edibles. Atop this, Chch'kraran's utter fidelity to his pack's directive to obtain steel weapons precedes all other interests. To humans (who lie outside the pack) he feels no such obligations—he may seem friendly one instant and murderous the next. If, however, Chch'kraran accepts a human as a pack member, he is perfectly loyal.

### Eramas

Human Male Gladiator

3rd Level

Neutral Good



Str 18/13                      Int 14  
Dex 13                      Wis 7  
Con 15                      Cha 8

hp: 18  
AC: 8 (inix leather)  
#AT 1  
THAC0: 16  
Dmg: 1d6 + 4 (bone wrist  
razor)

Eramas came to Tyr's dusty alleys to seek refuge from his gladiatorial life in Urik. The brutal city of Tyr seemed refuge indeed after the bloody crucible of Urik's arena. There, Eramas was a slave and novice gladiator. Slavery had its draw-backs, but being ordered to kill (or die) for others' profit and amusement convinced Eramas to escape. Slipping away from his master's villa, he fled to the wastes. A perilous journey brought him to Tyr and taught him much of the lands between the cities. Since arriving in Tyr, Eramas had hidden out, setting his skills to various and highly questionable jobs.

Now Eramas carefully chooses his work. He dislikes killing—especially killing for profit—and he despises slavers and their ilk. When he encounters a brawl, Eramas customarily sides with the weak or helpless. Indeed, his sense of justice has even pitted him against the powerful



## Freedom Nonplayer Characters

templars of Tyr. Though Eramas lightly dismisses the hardships such adventures cause, he is in no hurry to die.

Eramas projects an impulsive, devil-may-care attitude that borders on rash foolishness. Unless dissuaded by friends, he flies into a rage over slight offenses and attacks with fists and words. For those who can tolerate such idiosyncrasies, Eramas proves a loyal and fearless friend.

### Hamash

Male Mul Thief

2nd Level

Neutral



Str 17                      Int 13  
Dex 17                     Wis 13  
Con 16                     Cha 12

hp: 8  
AC: 8  
#AT 1  
THAC0: 17  
Dmg: 1d6 + 1 (club)

Though once a free man, Hamash is currently owned by the Tuvlic family merchant house, which lies along the Caravan Way. As a free man, Hamash had his hands in everyone's pockets, and this larcenous nature quickly landed him in shackles: during a bungled burglary of the Tuvlic estate, household guards captured him. Thankfully, Master Tuvlic at that time suffered under a shortage of slaves. Instead of submitting Hamash to the templars for certain death, the Tuvlics proposed a deal—Hamash would offer them five years' service in exchange for his life. How could he refuse?

Hamash has held to this odd arrangement, recognizing the practical benefits: in addition to continued life, Hamash receives food, lodging, occupation, and protection from the prying eyes and needle-snouts of the templars. Always watchful for an easy mark, Hamash has used his wits to rise in status among the household slaves

(whom he considers a passel of blockheads). Hamash has even parlayed his skills into management of a lucrative fruit stand in the bustling marketplace of Tyr.

Master Tuvlic perfectly understands Hamash's larcenous tendencies. The fruit stand, however, has only increased in profit since Hamash took it over. Evidently Hamash's scams produce enough money for him to "bribe" his employer into letting him keep the post. As long as Master Tuvlic profits, he cares little how Hamash acquires the money.

Hamash's predatory nature makes him far less than social. To his mind, friendly people are beggars or thieves and unfriendly folk are targets or foes. Hamash constantly schemes to steal more with less effort. Even so, he avoids hurting others because doing so only creates trouble for himself—his five-year enslavement taught him that much. Of late, Hamash has abided a strict code of ethics—thieves ethics, to be sure, but ethics all the same.

### Lissan

Female Human Gladiator

6th Level

Neutral



Str 15                      Int 15  
Dex 15                     Wis 16  
Con 16                     Cha 16

hp: 57  
AC: 9  
#AT 1  
THAC0: 15  
Dmg: 1d6 (quarter staff)

Despite her lifelong slavery, Lissan is fiercely independent. Only her tenacity kept her alive in the Asticles slave farms and gladiator pits where she grew up. Her cruel masters' cunning ambition equalled that of their kinsman, Templar Tithian, and they tolerated no lazy slaves or losing gladiators. Since childhood, Lissan has longed to prove herself in the arena. Now she is becom-

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ing a formidable gladiator, a people's favorite in the blood-sports.

Though Lissan is generally honest and optimistic (as much as a gladiator can be), she enjoys needling those in authority. If sparring partners or even trainers treat her with disrespect, she unhesitatingly lashes back to teach them otherwise. Such outbursts have made her unpopular with handlers and gladiators alike, particularly those who answer to Tithian. If not for her fighting prowess, Lissan would have been returned to the slave pens long ago.

As a gladiator, Lissan loves battle. Unlike most others of her ilk, though, she limits her fighting to appropriate times and places. Lissan never initiates fights outside the arena, but willingly dismantles those who do. Still, if she must risk injury and death, she intends to do so before a crowd: the day she loses her fighting edge is the day she returns to the pens.

### Mahlanda

Female Human Preserver  
3rd Level  
Chaotic Good



|        |        |
|--------|--------|
| Str 13 | Int 16 |
| Dex 17 | Wis 16 |
| Con 13 | Cha 14 |

hp: 7  
AC: 8  
#AT 1  
THAC0: 20  
Dmg: 1d6 (staff)

Even drawing breath in the city of Tyr puts Mahlanda at risk. As a Preserver, her renegade magic opposes that of King Kalak and his templars. Her dedication to the hidden arts of good magic may one day cost her life.

As she grew up, Mahlanda's natural aptitude and curiosity for magic surfaced. Knowing the hidden arts were forbidden, she sought to teach herself. After a series of failures —each of which nearly exposed her—Mahlanda

wandered out into the dark streets of Tyr to find a mentor. She didn't need to look long, for an old man named Fantherveis somehow detected her potential and offered his tutelage. Mahlanda thus learned the rudiments of magic.

Not long after her education began, the apprentice discovered the foul truth of Fantherveis: he was a Defiler—a horrid abomination among spell-casters. Though Mahlanda longed to learn magic, she refused to learn at the price of living things. Worse still, the old lecher had other intentions for her. To escape his horrid advances, Mahlanda fled into the streets. In her panic, a patrol of templars almost discovered her secret magics, but a passing stranger hid her away.

The stranger, a Preserver in the Veiled Alliance, had been watching Fantherveis for some time. Sensing the child's innate talent and goodness, the stranger taught her the true art of magic. She has since learned enough to fend for herself.

Mahlanda, now a minor member of the Veiled Alliance, still knows only three people of that organization. She believes in the cause of the Alliance and eagerly leaps to the fray whenever called upon. Unfortunately, Mahlanda has a talent for misadventure, perhaps because her childish notions of good and evil leave no room for the grayness or uncertainty common on Athas.

The sorceress is slender but not tall and seems filled with energy. She has carefully woven her main spellbook into the patterns of her gown and leaves her other scrolls in her mentor's possession. (Mahlanda knows whatever spells you deem necessary and can be useful to PC spell-casters in replacing missing spellbooks.)





## Freedom Nonplayer Characters

### Orman of the Waste

Male Half-Elf Ranger

3rd Level

Neutral Good



Str 16                      Int 11  
Dex 14                     Wis 15  
Con 16                     Cha 9

hp: 22  
AC: 10  
#AT 1  
THAC0: 18  
Dmg: By weapon +1  
Species Enemy: Gith

Son of a human woman and an elf raider, Orman's life has been far from idyllic. When his mother's pregnancy became known, the villagers shunned Orman's parents and forced them to move to the edge of the wilderness. There the family lived in squalor until Orman's father one day disappeared. Most said he abandoned them, but Orman's mother always believed her husband left in search of a better life for them all. She struggled along, raising her son until he was eleven. At that point she died a broken woman.

Violently independent and proud, the boy set out to find his lost father. The youth spent his teenage years in the wastelands and learned to survive both the cruelty of the desert and the cruelty of man. Years under the broiling sun made him hard; failure to find his father made him cynical. Reaching manhood, Orman believed the worst of his father and, by extension, of all mankind. Abandoning hope and happiness, Orman has little esteem left.

When the player characters encounter Orman, he is a destitute drunkard—surly and suspicious. Clearly the half-elf is not an easy person to get to know or like: he often lashes out in frustration. For all his abusiveness, his pride leaves him more disgusted with himself than with others. During sane and sober moments, the half-elf regrets his temper and seeks to make amends in his own, antisocial

way. Though pathetic, Orman has a sense of personal honor.

Physically, Orman stands 6' 7" and appears as thin as a true elf. Normally he would be bulkier, but years of poverty and wasted living have reduced his frame, though not enough to affect his ability. His hair is blond, thinning on top, and lightly gray at the temples. A man of few words, Orman does not waste breath on kindness.

### Urrgos

Male Half-Giant Fighter

4th Level

Neutral ?



Str 20                      Int 10  
Dex 12                     Wis 7  
Con 15                     Cha 3

hp: 44  
AC: 10  
#AT 1  
THAC0: 14  
Dmg: Punch/wrestle +8

Urrgos is a big, shambling, slow-witted brute (put simply, he is a half-giant) who once lived on the outskirts of Tyr. Early on in life, he befriended a quixotic and ill-fated mad man who gave Urrgos his fixation on "doing good." After the tragic death of his mentor and friend, an ethically mesmerized Urrgos entered the decadent city of Athas to right its many wrongs.

Like most half-giants, Urrgos has a long-suffering, patient, and good-natured temper. When sufficiently disturbed, however, he can erupt into violent rage. (Elves teasing him about his half-giant nature count as sufficient disturbance.) Despite his tendency to emulate a specific role-model, Urrgos is profoundly stubborn once he chooses a course of action. He is at once gullible, fiercely loyal, and cheerfully complacent: Urrgos is thoroughly a half-giant.

## NPC Master Table

| NAME                | CL  | AC | MV | HD/hp     | #AT | Damage                 | AL  | THAC0 |
|---------------------|-----|----|----|-----------|-----|------------------------|-----|-------|
| Citizen, typical    | –   | 10 | 12 | 1d6       | 1   | 1d4-1 (bone dagger)    | Var | 20    |
| Elf, typical        | T3  | 9  | 12 | 3d6       | 1   | 1d6 (bone wrist razor) | N   | 20    |
| Gang leader (mul)   | F5  | 9  | 12 | 5d10 (29) | 1   | Punch/wrestle +7       | CE  | 13    |
| Gladiator, dwarf    | G5  | 5  | 6  | 5d10      | 1   | 1d6+2 (stone club)     | Var | 15    |
| Gladiator, human    | G4  | 7  | 12 | 4d10      | 1   | 1d8+1 (obsidian sword) | Var | 18    |
| Gladiator, mul      | G4  | 6  | 12 | 4d10      | 1   | 1d3+2 (darts)          | Var | 16    |
| Guard, half-giant   | F3  | 6  | 15 | 6d10      | 1   | 1d8+1 (obsidian sword) | N?  | 16    |
| Guard, human        | F4  | 7  | 12 | 4d10      | 1   | 1d6+1 (bone spear)     | NE  | 17    |
| Guard, officer      | F7  | 4  | 12 | 7d10      | 3/2 | 1d4 (metal dagger)     | N   | 13    |
| Karla (human)       | G6  | 8  | 12 | 51        | 3/2 | 1d6+3 (bola)           | NE  | 14    |
| Luirgand (mul)      | Bd2 | 10 | 12 | 8         | 1   | 1d4-1 (bone dagger)    | NE  | 20    |
| Nandlex (elf)       | T3  | 7  | 12 | 7         | 1   | 1d4-1 (bone dagger)    | CE  | 19    |
| Noble, minor        | 0   | 9  | 12 | 1d8       | 1   | 1d4 (metal dagger)     | Var | 20    |
| Overseer, dwarf     | F4  | 8  | 6  | 4d10      | 1   | 1d2 (whip)             | NE  | 17    |
| Overseer, human     | F2  | 10 | 12 | 2d10      | 1   | 1d4 (scourge)          | LE  | 19    |
| Prithen (elf)       | T3  | 7  | 12 | 12        | 1   | 1d4-1 (bone dagger)    | CE  | 19    |
| Slave, dwarf        | –   | 10 | 6  | 1d8       | 1   | Punch/wrestle          | Var | 20    |
| Slave, elf          | –   | 8  | 12 | 1d6       | 1   | 1d4 (bone dagger)      | Var | 20    |
| Slave, gith         | –   | 8  | 10 | 3d8       | 2   | 1d4 (x2)               | CE  | 17    |
| Slave, human        | F2  | 10 | 12 | 2d10      | 1   | Punch/wrestle          | Var | 19    |
| Slave, mul          | –   | 10 | 12 | 1d10+1    | 1   | Punch/wrestle +1       | Var | 19    |
| Templar, mid-level  | Tp6 | 5  | 12 | 6d8       | 1   | 1d4 (metal dagger)     | LE  | 18    |
| Templar, minor      | Tp3 | 8  | 12 | 3d8       | 1   | 1d6 (stone club)       | LE  | 19    |
| Thug                | F2  | 10 | 12 | 2d10      | 1   | Punch/wrestle          | NE  | 19    |
| Torban (half-giant) | F6  | 5  | 15 | 75        | 3/2 | 1d6+10 (copper club)   | LE  | 11    |

*Mid-level templars have a 70% chance of being psionic wild talents.*

*Torban possesses the flesh armor psionic ability. (Con -3; Cost 8/4 rd; PSP 44)*

# DARK SUN

W O R L D

Official Game Adventure

## How to DM Freedom



The two spiral-bound books here contain the role-playing adventure *Freedom*. The *DM's Book* contains each encounter the DM needs, with pertinent tips on running the encounter. The *Player's Book* contains maps, illustrations, and text players need to reference. Players should not casually page through the *Player's Book*— the *DM's Book* will indicate when the players should turn to a page, and what page they should turn to.

Each encounter in the *DM's Book* contains information arranged under the following headings:

**Setup.** This section tells the DM how to prepare for the upcoming encounter.

**Start.** This section indicates how to begin the encounter.

**Encounter.** The main action of the encounter is detailed in this section.

**Role-Playing.** Tips on how to role-play the NPCs appear here.

**Statistics.** Any vital game stats for the NPCs appear here.

**Reactions.** This section occasionally appears, when the anticipated reactions of PCs and NPCs are important to the encounter.

**Outcome.** This section indicates what should result from the encounter.

**Next.** This section tells the DM what encounter to run next.

The sixteen-page book in *Freedom* contains a parallel adventure that will broaden your view of Tyr and Athas.

## Freedom

by David "Zeb" Cook



*Enter the ancient and corrupt city of Tyr, whose tyrannical sorcerer king has ruled for a millennium. As you wander the city, from the wreck of the elven warrens to the sanguine splendor of the arena, you realize that the citizens of Tyr thirst less for water than they do for freedom.*

*Now, after a century of slave labor, sorcerer king Kalak's great ziggurat nears completion. He has promised the city a grand celebration when the monument is done, complete with the most brutal arena*



*spectacle in Tyr's long history. Rumors abound as to the nature of the spectacle: some believe it will bring with it the longed-for manumission of countless slaves; others fear the annihilation of Tyr and her people as a sacrifice to Kalak's hunger for power; and a secret few believe it will be a day of revolution—a day of freedom!*

*Designed for four to seven players of starting levels, the **DM's Book** and **Player's Book** inside this pack provide the DARK SUN™ game DMs with a campaign base in Tyr, and give PCs a brutal introduction to Athas.*

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