

CITYBOOK™ IV

On the Road

a game-master's aid for
all roleplaying systems



13 travel-related businesses and over 72 fully developed non-player personalities, with scenario suggestions for use with any role-playing system.



#8514

Produced by Jaquays Design Studio for Flying Buffalo, Inc.



All-System
Catalyst
Series

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A Catalyst Product

- A catalyst to spark your imagination -

On the Cover: The infamous Dr. Gopp finds the passenger services of Drakkonstar Express very useful indeed.

CITYBOOK™ IV

On the Road

Edited by Paul Jaquays

13

*fully-described business and cultural establishments
for use with any role-playing system,
including over 72 completely developed
non-player personalities to interact with
your players' characters in City adventures.*



Published by
Flying Buffalo, Inc.

Produced by
**JAQUAYS
DESIGN
STUDIO**

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Introduction

Welcome my friend. Welcome to the City! Your timing, as always, is impeccable. But step lively now—for you are just in time to embark with us as we *leave* the City for points unknown! Before we go, we'll take some time to visit a few places that will speed us on our way and carry us in relative comfort (if not safety). After our recent sojourn with the horrid denizens of *CityBook III: Deadly Nightside*, I don't doubt that some of you are more than ready to go. Indeed some may *need* to hurry on before the side effects events of their stay in the City overtake them.

With *CityBook IV: On the Road*, we take a look at travel and transportation between the City and neighboring lands. Most of the establishments in this CityBook will be found outside—often far outside—the City's walls. Each establishment in this book was designed to meet a specific need of a traveler in a fantasy game world such as your own. Here you will find travel agencies and courier services, caravans and river boats, and a bridge that occasionally crosses the gaps between worlds.

The book is divided into two sections, "Travel Services," which includes all the establishments to be found in this book and "Wanderers," which are a selection of NPCs around which one can build entire adventures. The Travel Services section begins with establishments likely to be found in the City itself, such as *The Fellowship of the Blessed Companions* and *Dimensions Unlimited*, and then slowly moves farther afield until, at last, worlds beyond the grave are reached with *The Great Dragon*.

As with all Catalyst books, everything is described in "generic" terms. That means there are no game specific numbers and statistics. CityBooks are written to provide a variety of people, places and things for your games. It is up to you as the Game Master (GM) to add the numbers that will fit these people, places and things into your particular game system and world. The coding system, explained in the section entitled "GM Guidelines," should make this easy, and you should feel free to modify, edit, expand and otherwise change things to fit your game system.

Get used to the name "Forge." The Forge brothers and their powerful Forgeway transportation company have a decided interest in controlling every possible aspect of land-based shipping and passenger service. People who get in their way tend to get hurt, or dead, or *worse*.

As with *CityBook III*, definite crosslinks between establishments have been made. This means that characters found in one establishment will be involved with other establishments in both this CityBook and the three earlier books in the series. Thus we find that the wizard known as "The Master" from *Dimensions Unlimited* was involved in the enchanting of the toll bridge at *Crumbling Skull Rock* and that he is descended from the vengeful wizard who drove Chisan Blackhair to create the pocket dimension of High Haven (thus eventually creating *Tsalini's Stopover Station*). Maybe you've already got a good wizards feud going. If so, then have one of your wizards take the place of The Master or his ancestor. Likewise, one of your deities who has fallen on hard times can easily be substituted for the forgotten god Vrigelian, the somewhat patron of the roadside shrine.

In short, the people and places in this book are yours to play with, change, warp, reform, deform, defame and kill. You can do anything you desire with them, and no one will scream that you've ruined a piece of "art." This CityBook is yours to enjoy and get lots of play from.

Citybook IV: On The Road is a compilation of a number of projects and establishments. Richard Shaftstall's *Fellowship of the Blessed Companion* was written for inclusion in Citybook III. Text got a bit tight as the editors came down to the wire on CBIII and, because Richard's establishment fit so well with the theme of this book, we moved it back. We'd really like to thank Richard for being so understanding about the mix-up: he was very much a gentleman about the whole mess.

The core of this CityBook grew out of a project that Michael A. Stackpole did back in 1984. Originally planned as *CityBook 2.5: Wanderers*, it was a selection of characters with links to establishments in *CityBooks I and II*. The project lingered in a file waiting for time to slot it into production. When finally paired with Richard Shaftstall's *Fellowship*, the Wanderers drew *CityBook IV* around themselves.

The rest of the material appeared in stages. First, came Dennis McKiernan's *The Halfling House*, a direct outgrowth of his Citybook III establishment, *The Yellow Poppy*. It added to the story of his special halflings cast into the City. Then came a two-year hiatus and a shift to a new editor (not in Arizona). Paul Jaquays (that's me) put out the word that CityBook establishments were needed. CityBook fans, hardcore adventure game designers, and a couple new faces from outside the known world of gaming responded to expand the mythos of the City and add their own marks to it. And, just as CityBook is a collection of work by numerous authors, it is now illustrated by a number of highly talented artists. To top it off, the Master Index in the back of the book lists the people and establishments that appear in all four CityBooks.

As always, we're interested in your feedback about the CityBook series. We're leaning toward doing and publishing a full map of the City. Perhaps, if the demand is great enough, we might even turn out a guide to the myriad nations mentioned throughout the series because, oddly enough, they all do make some sort of sense. (We editors are always amazed when one writer says his renegade elf came to the City from the south to avoid persecution, and another writer talks about the genocidal war waged against elves in the south.) Nevertheless, we want to make sure we're doing the things you want and need. Maybe there's an aspect of City life that you feel isn't being covered properly and could use some serious support material. We'd also like to know, in this day and age of books based out of gaming products, if you'd like to see stories and novels set in the City?

If you want to share your feelings on these questions, or have other questions you want answered about this or other Catalyst products, please feel free to write. We can always be reached at: Flying Buffalo, Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252-1467. An SASE is always appreciated, and often earns an answer sooner as opposed to later. Don't forget to mention things you don't like about CityBook too! This is your opportunity to influence what we do in the future, and your chance to insure our books will continue to be useful for you.

The CityBook editors are always looking for talented writers with innovative and creative ideas for new City establishments. If you're interested in writing for a future CityBook, send an SASE to "CityBook Writers' Guidelines" care of Flying Buffalo.

Enjoy.

On Roleplaying

by Michael A. Stackpole

Many of the scenarios in this book are touted as adventures that would be good for role playing. Role playing is very much an emphasis in the CityBooks, but we've never really gone into what role playing can be. It's generally accepted that those who know what it is enjoy it, and those who don't, won't really understand it anyway. That's not a satisfactory situation.

Scott Haring made the comment, in August, 1987, that the emphasis on role playing may exist because the designers of games have gotten older and are no longer satisfied with "shoot and loot" scenarios. In that discussion I noted, "We're asking many young people to role play characters with more personality than they, themselves, have had time to develop." Role playing is not something that's easy to pick up, and it's really the duty of us "old-timers" to share some of our knowledge with those who haven't stumbled upon the ins and outs of role playing.

Role playing, in short, is cooperative storytelling. It takes form in an improvisational production—much like a free-form theatrical play—where the Gamemaster (GM) and the players work out a story. The GM, in the role of director/script editor/storyteller, sets the scenes and provides some basic motivation to get things moving. The players react to both what the GM presents and to each other's actions to move the story along toward some form of resolution. This is not always the ending the Gamemaster has in mind, but it is the product of fun play and belongs to the whole gaming group.

Role playing a character is easy to work into and can be done through some simple steps. First, try defining your character by a stereotype: a strong, dumb barbarian, a sneaky thief or a quiet, but powerful sorcerer. In the case of the barbarian, for example, the player shouldn't tell the GM, "Orgun tells the guardsman to get out of the way." Instead, to be role playing, he should lower his voice and growl, "Out of my way, little man, or I break you in two!" By speaking the lines, much as one would in a play, the player has begun to role play!

Subsequent steps follow as the player is willing to accept new challenges. Once friends challenged me to play an innocent, idealistic 14 year old superhero. It took a while to get the speech pattern down—saying "Golly gosh gee," too much will bake anyone's brain—but eventually, I could force my voice to break at the right moment of excitement, and reacting normally for Firebird became second nature. Having him not always do the wisest thing often worked at cross purposes to the way of *game* playing, but did fit *role* playing perfectly.

The third, and final step, comes when a player lets a character grow and change through his experiences. Firebird once failed to do something and another hero died doing what Firebird had failed at. Thereafter Firebird wore a black arm band and bristled whenever someone defamed the dead hero's country. Through the profound effect of that hero's sacrifice, Firebird grew.

Role playing a character, then, is a skill that can be learned. A player needs to look at her character as a part in a play. She adopts that character's persona during the games and reacts as she would expect the character to react—even though she (the player) may know it's not the best way to act. Once you have a character willing to walk into a trap because *she* would not realize

it's a trap, you have a player who has discovered roleplaying.

GMing role playing adventures can be a bit more difficult and requires the Gamemaster to develop an unbelievable amount of flexibility in thought and action. A GM needs to lead by example. He needs to speak for his own characters in the same way.

The Gamemaster also has to realize, and this is tough, that she does not have to win. It is not necessary to make characters die, it is only necessary to make them *think* they will die. Gamemasters must allow scenarios to wander off in whatever direction they will, and cannot threaten or club players into following out exactly the plan the GM had in mind. All too often a group of characters ends up dead because they work out a solution the GM could not imagine. Yet a good GM doesn't worry about "correct" solutions. She just deals with solutions.

Ultimately the game is the thing, and a game is meant for entertainment. Few people will tell you "My idea of fun is to sit around for six hours and have all my actions count for nothing." Players want to have their actions *mean* something, and they *do* have to mean something if the game is to be fun. Players are playing larger-than-life heroes, after all, and their actions should help shape the face of the world. If they fail, they must pay the consequences. If they succeed, they must be rewarded.

So, how can CityBook be used to encourage role playing? GMs should try to role play the Non-Player Characters (NPCs) in the book. Feel free to either give a player one of the NPCs to play out, or to weave the special circumstances concerning an NPC into the background of a player character. For example, if a character was orphaned by a raid several years back, she might have grown up near the character Phillip in this book. Linking and weaving their backgrounds together means the player has the beginning of a definition for her character. This type of background building obviously applies to any of the previous CityBooks as well, and really helps give players a sense of the world, and a sense of history to work with in role playing.

Secondly, the GM must let the NPCs and characters grow through their CityBook encounters. If, for example, characters enjoy Augustine's singing, and ask for a song at one performance, have the bard notice them at another performance and have him sing that song for them. Have shopkeepers remember what a character ordered last time. Have merchants send clerks to tell characters that they've obtained the character's favorite food/drink/treasure and will hold it if they are interested. By building these bridges between characters and the City, the characters will feel more comfortable in the City, and their players will find it easier to enter into imaginary conversations.

Let no one mistake what I'm saying here. Understand that the City and the characters in it are all *imaginary* as are the characters playing in the games. Reduced to the crudest level, adventure gaming presents social problem solving exercises that are graded and resolved through math, statistics, dice, quick thinking, and imagination. Imagination is a good thing, and can be alive. Playing scenario after scenario in the City is much like reading and rereading stories in a fiction series. In both cases you meet characters and enjoy interaction with them. Games just provide a more active form of interaction, allowing someone to imagine himself as the star in a TV series complete with a supporting cast.

Viewed in that light, games become a lot less diabolical, don't they?

GM Guidelines

Since *CityBook IV* is a generic role-playing aid, no game-specific statistics for NPC's or monsters have been given. However, as an aid to the GM who must convert our descriptions into game mechanics, we have provided the following guidelines to help you in adapting *CityBook IV* to your favorite game system. Keep in mind, however, that this is now *your* book; if you wish to change anything, go ahead!

General Attributes

It isn't necessary to give each non-player character (NPC) in *CityBook IV* complete attributes such as Power, Luck, Wisdom and so forth. However, should you choose to do so, you will note in the character descriptions such phrases as "very strong," "quick," "stupid," "beautiful," etc. By noting these phrases and reflecting them in the NPC's attributes, you should come out with a fairly accurate set of statistics for the person in question.

Fighting Prowess

At times, player adventurers will probably get into fights with non-player characters. We have provided a seven-level coding system to describe how well a particular *CityBook IV* NPC can fight. In some cases, the combat ability of an NPC is given in terms of a specific weapon or weapons (e.g., Augustine is Excellent with a thrown knife, and Very Good with a sword, but Poor otherwise). In other cases, the fighting prowess is overall (e.g., Dacia of *Vrigelian's Shrine* is Poor overall).

There are two ways to randomize for the fighting prowess of an NPC. You can roll 1d6 for the attribute (6 means the character is an Excellent fighter) or you can roll 1d100 and use the percentages given after the ratings to determine the NPC's skill level. Remember, the percentages refer to how well that NPC stacks up in relation to all other fighters in your average world. Therefore, a "poor" fighting prowess would account for about 40% of all fighters met, and an "excellent" prowess would only fit about 4% of the fighters. If you put a "poor" fighter into your campaign, we expect that 60% of the rest of the fighters in your world can soundly thrash him.

These are the codes for fighting prowess:

- Poor.** Unfamiliar with combat arts; can be easily wounded or killed. (01 - 40%)
- Average.** A run-of-the-mill type, but certainly no mistaking him for a hero. (41 - 59%)
- Fair.** Better than average and will acquit himself adequately. (60 - 74%)
- Good.** Can go one-on-one with seasoned veteran fighters. (75 - 84%)

- Very Good.** This person can cause a lot of trouble in combat. (85 - 95%)
- Excellent.** If blood is spilled, it's not likely to come from this character... (96 - 100%)
- Legendary.** This character's skill with weapons goes beyond mortal limits. Bards will sing tales of his or her fighting prowess for generations to come. (101%+)

Magic Ability

To determine the expertise with which an NPC uses magic power, *CityBook IV* employs a seven-level system similar to the one for fighting prowess. This is listed in the NPC descriptions as "Magic Ability," and will be followed by a listing of the particular areas the magic-user might be competent in (see "The Eight C's of Magic" below). If an NPC has no Magic Ability listed, then none exists.

The codes for Magic Ability are:

- Poor.** A hedge wizard or apprentice. Might very well turn himself into a frog. (01 - 40%)
- Average.** Competent, but hardly a world-shaker. Only a few spells at his command. (41 - 59%)
- Fair.** Possesses a wider range of spells. Effective, but not powerful. (60 - 74%)
- Good.** Knows numerous spells in many categories, and is versatile in their use. (75 - 84%)
- Very Good.** Knows powerful spells in most of the Eight C's. Formidable. (85 - 95%)
- Excellent.** Not a person to cross. Can easily command almost all the known spells, and might be able to turn the party into anchovy paste with a single gesture. (96 - 100%)
- Legendary.** Skills may exceed mortal limits. Found only in god-like beings or heroes out of Mythology. Spells, who needs mere spells with power like this? (101%+)

Given the diversity of magic systems in fantasy gaming, it is impossible to assign specific spells or powers to any magic-using NPC in *CityBook*. However, spells or powers can be broken down into categories of magic, regardless of what game system you use. Thanks to Mike Stackpole, *CityBook* has the "8C's System" to give some idea of what type of magic a particular NPC might wield.

- C1. Combat Magic.** Any spell used primarily in an offensive/defensive manner in combat.
- C2. Curative Magic.** Any spell used to heal wounds, cure diseases, stop poison damage, etc.
- C3. Clairvoyant Magic.** Any spell used to detect things:

secret doors, magic, hidden or trapped items, etc.

- ❑ **C4. Conveyance Magic.** Teleportation, levitation, flying, telekinesis spells, etc.
- ❑ **C5. Communication Magic.** Any spell used to communicate: telepathy, translation, hypnosis, magic reading spells, etc.
- ❑ **C6. Construction Magic.** Any spell which uses matter or energy to "build,": wall spells, protective fields, stone-shaping spells, etc.
- ❑ **C7. Concealment Magic.** Any spell which serves to hide or misdirect: invisibility, illusion, shape-shifting spells, etc.
- ❑ **C8. Conjunction Magic.** Any spell which produces a condition or entity: light spells, weather control, demon-summoning spells, etc.

Keep in mind that a character with Magic Ability need not always be a sorcerer. An NPC could possess certain magic abilities as a result of owning some device or from some form of supernatural intervention. You can also use the Magic Ability Chart randomly by rolling either 1d6 or 1d100 (as was suggested for the fighting prowess chart) to judge the level of a magic-using character, and 1d8 to determine what areas on the "Eight C's" list the character is competent in.

Locks

Light-fingered thieves and pilfering rogues are ever-present in the world of fantasy, and run rather thick in this *CityBook*. To help the GM deal with these types, *CityBook* uses a system to code the difficulty of any locks encountered. These codes appear in the text when a reference is made to a chest, door or similar locked item (e. g., "locked³," which means the lock is "fair"), and usually on the maps themselves in reference to doors.

The codes for locks are as follows:

- ❑ **1. Poor.** An orphan with a hat-pin could open this lock. (01 - 40%)
- ❑ **2. Average.** A little tougher to jimmy this open; just adequate. (41 - 59%)
- ❑ **3. Fair.** Takes some effort to open. (60 - 74%)
- ❑ **4. Good.** Particularly tough. Probably will require special tools to open. (75 - 84%)
- ❑ **5. Very Good.** Will take even a master thief a long time to open. (85 - 95%)
- ❑ **6. Excellent.** Could require magic or a howitzer to open easily—unless you have the key. (96 - 100%).
- ❑ **7. Legendary.** Assume that a god or someone with like powers wanted this thing locked up. Definitely has some kind of magical component or defenses built in. (101% +)

Again, the percentages here refer to what percentage of such locks exist in an average cross-section. Many locks fall into the "poor" category, and there are only a few truly "excellent" locks, and "legendary" locks are found only in legendary situations.

Indeed, most doors are not locked at all.

You could also use the percentages to indicate how many thieves could jimmy the lock. For example, at least 60% of all thieves could jimmy a "poor" lock, while 4% or less could undo an "excellent" lock. The GM will have to determine how well a particular thief character does when confronted with a certain level of lock (i. e., a very poor thief would have lots of trouble with even a "fair" lock). Once again, a GM can randomize on this lock system to learn the nature of any lock.

Monetary Guidelines

Prices in *CityBook* are usually given in overall terms (i. e., "low," "reasonable," and "expensive"). You should use common sense regarding these terms; a reasonable price for a broadsword would be outrageous when applied to a single arrow. Where prices are actually listed, *CityBook* assumes this standard: 10 copper pieces = 1 silver piece; 10 silver pieces = 1 gold piece; a gold piece represents approximately \$1 in U.S. Currency. This currency system obviously must be altered to fit your own economic system.

Time Frame

CityBook uses a standard 24-hour day as its time frame. If your world operates under a different system, alter the times given to fit it.

Non-Human Races

For color, we've included some non-humans and a few halfbreeds. If it doesn't fit into your campaign to have a hobbit wizard, simply make him a small human. Several of the characters in this *CityBook* have unusual looks because of magic but, as with anything else in here, you can adjust it to make it fit your world.

World History

Several of the establishments in this *CityBook* mention events that took place long ago, far away or some combination thereof. While most of the details are hazy enough to slip them into any campaign as rumors, some of the events might conflict with established campaign history. In this case the GM should change the historical events to something parallel in his own world or slowly let the players "discover" these new facts as needed.

Explanation of Maps

The multitude of symbols on this and the opposite page shouldn't panic you. You will find most to be self-explanatory in conjunction with the text.

The maps are intended to both show what the room would look like, and what the room contains. The views are taken as though you were looking down on the building with the roof removed; if there is more than one floor, each is provided on a separate map.

The key will provide you with the meanings for the various symbols used to indicate a room's contents and furnishings. Most objects are shown by reasonable facsimile of their actual shape. However, certain items have been stylized for easy recognition. For instance, a bed in a fantasy world does not necessarily look like the symbol used to represent a bed on the map—but when you look at the symbol, you *know* it's a bed.

In simplest terms: read the text and look at the map which accompanies it. You should find it reasonably clear and easy to understand. If you still have trouble figuring out part of it, check back here for the key.

Note that *most* of the maps in this book are oriented so that, when read normally, North is at the top of the page (exceptions to this are noted on the maps). An explanation of symbols unique to a particular establishment is provided with each map. Different scales have been used, and each map has its scale noted on it for easy reference.

Basics

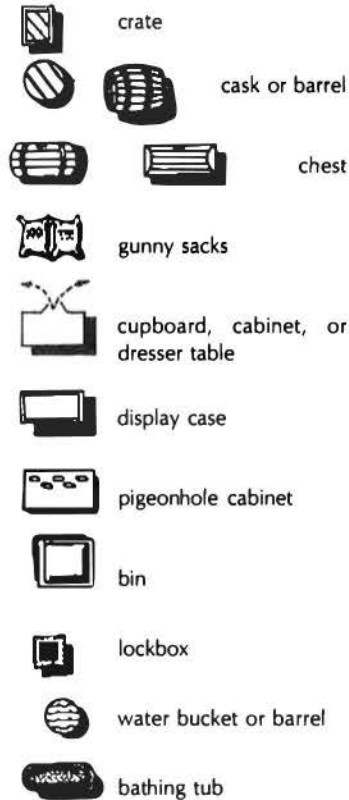
-  plain wall
-  barred wall
-  ruined stone wall
-  brick fence, unroofed wall
-  railing, rail fence
-  dirt path
-  single, plain door
-  double door
-  locked door
-  barred door
-  secret door
-  swinging door
-  trapdoor
-  stairs
-  spiral stairs
-  ramp
-  ladder
-  post, pole, support beam
-  counter
-  tree
-  garden
-  fireplace, hearth, or forge
-  baking oven
-  debris
-  hay and straw

Key to All Maps

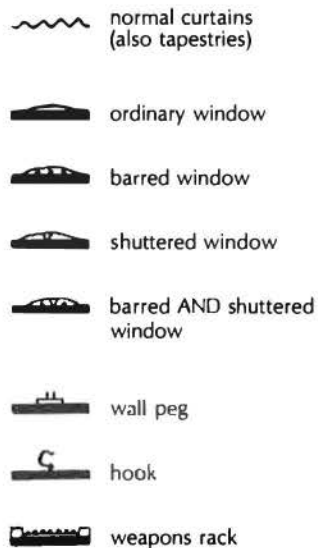
Other Common Objects



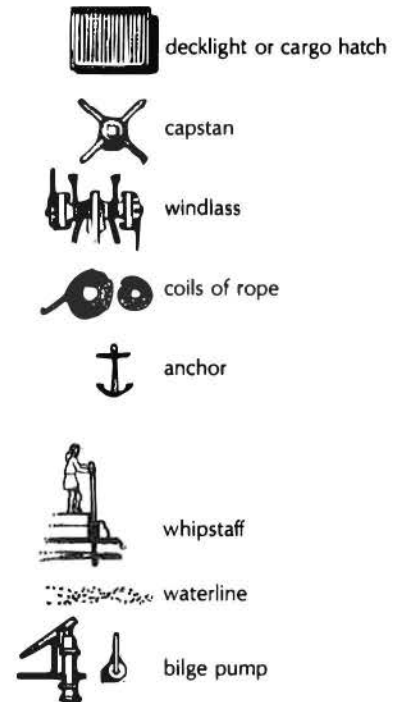
Containers



Wall Fixtures and Accessories



Ship Accessories



Travel

Which came first, travel ... or the travel agent? Seriously though, most of us take safe, comfortable travel for granted, whether it be a thousand-mile trip to visit relatives or a quick bus ride across town. Not until relatively recently has travel, any kind of travel, been something that can be even considered remotely safe or anywhere near comfortable. The automobile and the airplane, by which most of us now travel, are historically recent innovations. Even train travel is barely a century older. Before that, wind or muscle power commonly provided the motive force for travelers who chose not to walk. Considering that until the late middle ages, shock absorbers were unknown—riding in a jolting cart or wagon could be as tiring as walking.

Regardless of comfort or safety, mankind has been a traveler for as long as discernible history can show. Early men traveled to ensure that a ready source of food was always available, and to stay ahead of creatures who considered early men to be a ready source of food! Chances are, little thought was given to an ultimate destination, only that it must have more food or be freer from predators. There were no country inns to shelter these wanderers, no roads to guide their feet, and no bridges to cross the raging rivers and yawning chasms. What lay beyond the snow-capped mountains, or indeed, over the next hill was the stuff of campfire tales and legends.

As mankind developed, so too did the sophistication of his travel skills. People built roads (or at least made trails) to create fixed paths between places they often visited; they invented the wheel (and other machines) to make travel easier on themselves; they built bridges so that rivers, ravines and gorges no longer barred the way; they constructed permanent shelters along their roads, and as is the nature of men everywhere, they found a way to make money off travelers.

Money became a key reason for travel. Though travel was a dire necessity for early men, their descendents (for the most part) found it more convenient to stay in one place. With most relatives living nearby and vacation travel brochures still a thing of the far distant future, few common folk had a reason for travel. Many people rarely traveled as much as a day (on foot) from their home town (Some folk still may never leave the county of their birth). Only those with a need went forth.

Some few went to satisfy a need to know more of the world. Others traveled to spread the good news of a new faith, while even more sought the source of that faith as pilgrims. Some left behind old homes, either as refugees or colonists to find new homes in other lands. Many followed the dictates of wandering flocks, and still more carried the banner of war to distant realms. But by far, most folk who traveled both frequently and far, did so in search of the almighty gold piece.

Merchants and traders would travel great distances to sell a ware or a commodity at a suitable profit and buy that which they deemed would fetch a better price elsewhere in the world. Even in ancient days, international commerce was commonplace. Of course, the predators that kept early mankind on the move were still around, but the wild lion, the wolf and the tiger were replaced by two-legged creatures. Bandits, thieves, angered primitives and ruthless pirates preyed upon those unable to resist their attacks.

Yet despite the risks involved, men and women throughout

history have continued to travel, moving from place to place in the world as their interests or needs have dictated.

In a nutshell, the preceding was the history of travel in our world. Now consider, if you will, the history, the means, and the problems of travel in your own fantasy world. If you can answer, in your own mind (better write your answers down) the questions that follow, you will be on your way to an exciting roleplay travel experience for you and your players.

❑ What motivates people in your world need to go from one locale to another? Are there religions that require pilgrimages? Is major international commerce commonplace? Are any major wars being fought that would create refugees or cause large movements of troops?

❑ What forms of conveyance will be available to take them there? Examples: passenger ships, merchant ships, river boats, rafts, coaches, riding animals, their own feet, or something magical and exotic?

❑ How sophisticated will those forms of conveyance be? A passenger ship might be a luxury liner or little more than a cramped cargo hold. Will the adventurers be able to stay at inns along the way or are campsites the norm?

❑ What will travel cost the adventurers? Is it relatively expensive or a real bargain? The establishments in this CityBook suggest prices, but a GM should feel free to set his own.

❑ What restrictions does local government place on travel? (example: serfs in the middle ages were counted as property by their lords and were not allowed to move about). Set up restrictions only if they can be used to complicate the adventurers' lives in a fun and interesting manner.

❑ What kind of risks might the adventurers encounter. Bandits and highwaymen constantly sought to redistribute the wealth of travelers. Wild animals can create a threat, as will anyone who dislikes travelers crossing their lands.

❑ On the other side of the coin. What precautions are taken to ensure travelers' safety? Do guardsmen accompany every passenger coach or will a contingent of Marines sail with every ship? Are patrol stations and border garrisons frequent sights?

❑ What kind of weather might make travel challenging in your fantasy world. Snowstorms, heavy rain and fog each provide a unique obstacle to travel.

❑ Finally, what services exist to aid the traveler in her journey? That's where CityBook can really come into play. Consider which of the establishments found herein will work in your world and use them where it seems best to you.

Yet with all these considerations in mind, consider one more: If you, as the Game Master can't make travel an *adventure* for your players, then don't force them to play out every mile of a journey. In terms of game play, it's far better to have a short, uneventful journey, than a long, drawn out boring one.

So before your players plan that grand tour of your world, think about ways to use the travel experience to enrich your roleplaying environment. How will you make fantasy game travel interesting, believable, and (hopefully) fun?

Travel Services

To leave the City on a journey of any length can be a wearying, even dangerous proposition. For the traveler, it's nice to know that even on the road, even in the farthest reaches of the known world, there is someone there who is interested in making their journey a little safer, a bit more comfortable, or a trifle more convenient—and all at reasonable prices!

Whether an adventurer is leaving the City on a journey, or just making a stopover for the night, there are basic needs that must be met. *The Fellowship of the Blessed Companions* provides the “lucky” adventurer with literally all his needs for a while. At *Halfling House*, those of shorter stature will find another, healthier sort of fellowship (while their taller friends may find only a stiff neck). *Dimensions Unlimited* can make travel arrangements half way around the world and beyond! For those with money to spend on coach travel, *ForgeWay* has a better idea. *Drakkonstar Express* is there for when a message or package absolutely, positively has to be there the next day (or so). *The Freehold Municipal Caravanserai* provides a place for those endless caravans to bed for the night and exchange wares. The infamous *Dr. Gopp* can cure what ails you. *The River Drake* paddles the mighty river with its unusual source of propulsion. At *Vrigelian's Shrine* a traveler can buy a bit of luck (and safety!). *The Houndsteeth Border Garrison* makes it a point to keep travelers safe in a more mundane manner. Farther out, the weary traveler can find rest at the bridge crossing the *Rapids at Crumbling Skull Rock* and *Tsalini's Stopover Station*. Finally, for those who go a bit too far, they are likely to encounter the *Great Dragon*, a ship that sails a darksome sea.

The Fellowship of the Blessed Companions



All around the City, religious pilgrims travel the roads, seeking blessings at shrines devoted to their gods, hoping to find or earn the secret that allows them passage into eternal bliss. In the black nights following a long day's journey, adventurers are often prepared for the occasional roving band of dark-robed cultists. Armed with daggers, and steeled to action by arcane chants and even stranger rituals, these cultists slither through moon-lit shadows and seek victims to offer their obscene gods. And well it is for these oddlings that to die in their god's service is a direct route to Paradise for, devout as they are, swordsmen they are not, and adventurers often dispatch them without a second thought. But second thought will be required when the Fellowship appears. The adventurer they select, and shower with anonymous kindness, will certainly feel his luck has changed. And with the Fellowship, at some point, it will change—for the worse...

Cults arise, flourish and die for various reasons, but none is quite as unique as the Fellowship of the Blessed Companions. Due to the short-sightedness of a rather careless god, the Fellowship has sprung up in secrecy, and provides members with a

guarantee of Eternal Paradise in terms they can readily understand: they *buy* it. Popular with the rich, for only they can afford it, it touches the unsuspecting and makes life for them heaven on earth in a very strange manner.

History

In ages long past, the gods gathered to wage war on one of their own. Before the battle Ben-Kneha, a minor god, came down to the earth to find the 12 greatest warriors to fight at his side. He promised wealth, riches and eternal happiness in the next world if they would join him and survived the battle. The mortals agreed and the god conveyed them to the battle.

The fighting was fearsome but good prevailed and the evil god—identified in some legends as Ysrai, in others as Vrigelian—was expelled from heaven. Much to Ben-Kneha's surprise, all 12 of the warriors survived the war. Ben-Kneha, much pleased with his heroes, granted them all he'd promised, then added another gift. Each of the warriors, and any of their descendants, would *automatically* go to heaven upon death.

On the surface this would not seem like much of a problem, but it did develop into one. The heroes, being heroes after all, were somewhat prolific and eventually their descendants numbered in the hundreds of thousands. Unfortunately not all of them are as vital or virtuous as their progenitors. Consequently a large number of individuals, regardless of piety or innocence, go immediately to Paradise upon death.

This blessing lay forgotten until Sandoren, the Fellowship's founder and leader, was motivated to research old gods' pronouncements to find a solution to his personal problem. What he discovered suggested that while Ben-Kneha had intended the heroes and their kin to pass into heaven, the Gatekeeper gods

Richard Shaltstail originally wrote the Fellowship for inclusion in *CityBook 3, Deadly Nightshade* back when he was an FBlter ("B" for "Buffalo") himself. When last heard from, Richard was working for a Phoenix area play-by-mail game company.

As well as being a proficient artist in the gaming industry, Bob Gladrosich's work has also appeared in L. Ron Hubbard's *Writers of the Future*; vol. 5, and *When the Black Lotus Blooms*. Other publications include *Critical Mass*, *Pulsar*, and *Easyriders*. His work is also published through Sharayah Press in the form of prints, cards, and calendars.

apparently misheard his directive and had allowed the heroes' *Companions* to pass into heaven with their leader! All of a sudden Sandoren found a way to guarantee salvation, and he engineered the Fellowship to make salvation available—at a price.

Rites, Memberships & Meetings

The Fellowship's rites are simple, if somewhat odd. Once a Blessed Soul is identified, a link is forged between him and up to a dozen Fellowship members. The Fellowship member, as covertly as possible, must become the Blessed Soul's benefactor. If the Blessed Soul owes money, the debt gets paid off. If the Blessed Soul has something to sell, it is purchased at a generous price. Anonymous gifts arrive for the Blessed One, and any need the Blessed One has is filled. The Blessed One's life becomes a paradise on earth, indebting the Blessed One to his benefactor as much as possible. All "contact" between Blessed One and Companion takes place through an agent designated by Sandoren or hired by Graft.

The Companion must also contrive to obtain a lock of hair, or fingernail parings, or some other personal item from the Blessed Soul. Sandoren then performs a ritual that links Companion and Blessed Soul, and uses a medallion or coin to represent the link. That item is split in two and one half is given to the Blessed Soul. The Companion keeps the other half.

The trickiest part of the Fellowship rites comes upon the death of either the Blessed Soul, or the Companion. Within 48 hours of one or the other's death, the living half of the link must die in a manner similar to that of their other half. No special rites are performed, but the style of death must be similar. If one dies by a heart attack, the other must die from heart failure—be it poison induced or simply done by a knife through the heart. If the Blessed One is trampled to death by a horse, the Companion must die beneath an animal's hooves. If the living half does not die within the 48 hours the opportunity to "tag-along" to heaven and, in the case of a dead Companion, that chance at salvation is lost.

Of course if a Blessed Soul dies and his death is not learned of within those 48 hours, the Companion can become another Blessed Soul's benefactor, and start the process all over again.

Sandoren, in his guise as an astrologer and philosopher, is popular with the upper crust in the City and identifies potential Fellowship members through the questions they ask him when they visit in the normal course of business. The cult is expensive, so only the rich and powerful really can afford to belong. The cult's current membership runs about 10 to 15, though only Sandoren would know for certain, and has only linked one Companion per Blessed Soul. Still, Sandoren has several prospective members in mind, and will bring them in when another Blessed Soul presents himself.

The Fellowship has monthly meetings in the basement of Sandoren's building. Because secrecy is desired the Fellowship members all wear robes, gloves and hoods that hide their faces and disguise their voices (Their hoods are of the best fabric, hence there is little chance of Fellowship members being mistaken for Sackers). The monthly meetings take place on different days to aid in secrecy. The meetings are not really ceremonies. If not for the prayers to Ben-Kneha thanking him for his gift, and beseeching him not to take it away, they would resemble business meetings because the members discuss the different things they've done for their Blessed Soul over the past month. (These prayers are the only worship Ben-Kneha gets these days.)

Sandoren runs the ceremonies and oversees the theological part of the Fellowship, but the information and operational part of the cult is run by Graft Torin. Graft runs an intelligence network through the City's bartenders, and does some work with the beggars, though he does not realize how much information the beggars actually have. The thrust of Graft's operation is to locate new Blessed Souls and, luckily, most of the heroes' kin are adventurers and easy to spot. Once Graft has located one, Sandoren selects a member of the Fellowship (often for similar physical traits or other resemblances) to be linked with the Blessed Soul.

Graft is also the person who organizes the "departure" of a Blessed Soul when his Companion has died. Luckily, so far, arranging "heart failure" for a Blessed Soul or two has not been difficult. Graft dreads the day, though, when a wine merchant is crushed by a wine cask falling from a warehouse's loft or a Companion is overrun by a wagon in the streets.

Layout

The Fellowship is based in a one story, plaster walled building that, in its first incarnation, was a wine and cheese shop. It has a very large and thick-walled basement that served as the shop's wine cellar. The flat-roofed building measures 45' x 24', is bordered on the east by an alleyway, and has a narrow side yard on the west. The building looks generally rundown and decrepit, the back yard is wildly overgrown and, because of the multitude of owners the building has had, very few people remember about the wine cellar.

Sandoren has splashed some paint around the front door in a vain attempt to make the place more pleasant, but the building's condition actually makes some of his clientele feel as though Sandoren and his cult have more antiquity than they really do. Beside the gated door a small sign reads: "Sandoren, Philosopher of Astrology. The Stars lead the Way. By Appointment Only."

First Floor

A. Storefront and entryway (23' x 15') The old storefront has a large, ornate door in the mouth of a small alcove. The door has a large lock that, on closer examination, will be found to be broken. Two large gates generally stand open, but can be swung to bar the alcove and are locked, at night, with a chain and padlock³.

The storefront has been converted into a shabbily appointed waiting room. It has a couch, some chairs and a moth-eaten carpet that does little to cover the wooden floor. In fact, through the holes in the carpet, the deep scars in the floor, left by previous residents, can be easily seen. Some patrons believe the scars are really runes, and that the carpet shields the uninitiated from learning the incomprehensible, but these rumors are patently untrue.

A1. Consultation Room (8' x 9') A flimsy black curtain covers the opening to Sandoren's consulting room. The room is paneled with thin, and well weathered, wooden siding, and covered with astrological symbols. The candle holders look like gargoyles and the black candles they hold provide the only light in the room. The table is covered with green felt and Sandoren puts enough chairs around the table to seat those he has an appointment with. Anyone else has to wait outside, and the condition of the waiting room reduces the number of people who come unannounced.

B. Storage room (10' x 13') This room served as the wine shop's

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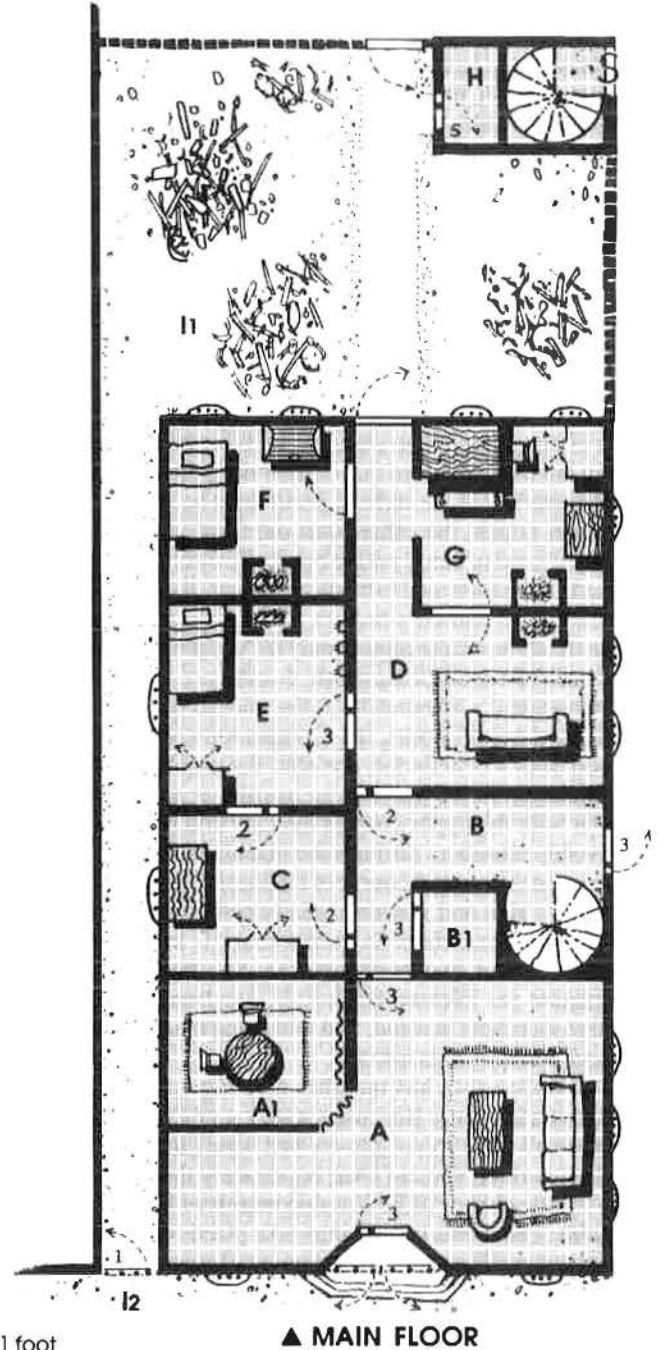
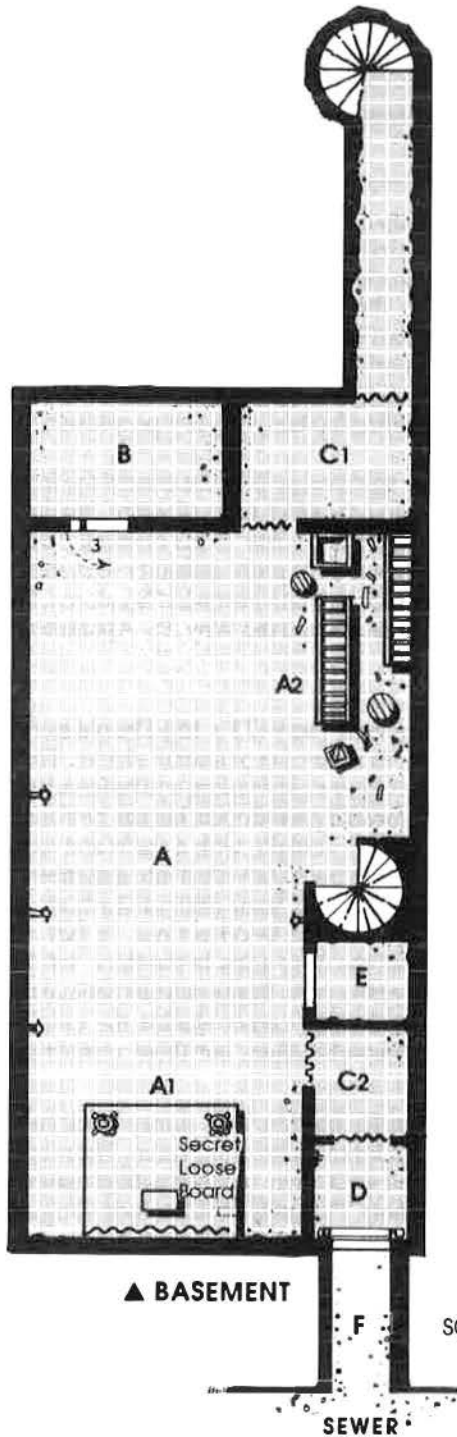
delivery area and the spiral stairway in the southeast corner leads down to the wine cellar. It is extra-wide to aid moving cases of wine. The 4' wide door in the east wall opens onto the alley. It is well oiled and locked³. The door in the north wall can be locked² but seldom is fastened. The small, dry storage area, (B1), is empty but can be locked³ if Sandoren needs to confine a prisoner. The door in the south wall is kept locked³ at all times, and only Sandoren has a key.

This room usually contains nothing more than spare chairs for the consulting room.

C. Sandoren's Office (8' x 9') This neat and somewhat bare room is where Sandoren does most of his reading and research. Both

doors have locks², but only the door in the east wall is kept locked consistently. The desk, chair and cabinet are the only furnishings in the room. The desk is well worn (inherited from a previous tenant who refused to move it) and clear of all debris. The cabinet is stocked full of books on history and magic. None are really valuable or magical, but they are of good quality. In the bottom of the cabinet Sandoren keeps a ledger which contains the names of all the cult's members, the names of the Blessed Souls, and a description of all cult actions, rites and methods.

To safeguard the ledger he has written it in a little known monastery dialect of the common tongue. It will look familiar to most, but agonizingly unintelligible. Written in the same language are two volumes about the great gods' war that Sandoren



“borrowed” from the monastery where he was educated.

D. Living Room (13' x 9') An old, musty couch is the only furnishing in this room. The room itself sees little use except when Graft or Sandoren hold a meeting for individuals in Graft's intelligence network.

E. Sandoren's Bedroom (9' x 10') Like his office, Sandoren's bedroom is sparsely furnished and neatly kept. The door into the living room (D.) is kept locked³. Except for the small chest beneath the bed, there is little of interest in this room. The chest, locked², contains Sandoren's old monastic robes and a few mementoes of his early life. Most valuable is a prayer book with a notation about Sandoren's piety by a monk who is currently revered as a saint.

F. Graft Torin's Bedroom (9' x 9') Although this room is given over to Graft, he seldom sleeps here and keeps nothing of value here. The bed is little more than a decaying mattress and litter fills the room.

G. Kitchen (9' x 9') The kitchen was built to serve up enough food for the wine merchant's family, but it little used these days. The shelves lining the walls are mostly bare and food storage cabinet stands all but empty. A large wooden dining table has been shoved into the northwest corner, so people can only sit at the southern edge of it, but it little matters since only Sandoren takes meals here. He fixes the food himself and freely indulges in taste for bland food—a holdover from his monastic days.

H. Storage Shed (7' x 7') The brick walled structure was added to the property after the wine merchant had moved on. A spiral staircase has been secretly installed in it to conduct Fellowship members down to the basement. The obvious door in the west wall is locked³ with a chain and padlock. The secret door opens into the alley and can be opened by pressure on three bricks in a sequence known only to the cult members.

I. Back yard (27' x 20') The back yard is a maze of rotting furniture, weeds, and old boards. The yard is walled on the north and east sides with a 6' tall wooden fence that ends at the Storage shed (H.) and bordered on the west by the neighboring buildings. The wooden gate in the north wall is kept unlocked and is used mostly by the unsavory types Graft employs as informers and lookouts. The west side yard is barred by an iron gate, locked¹, between the building and its neighbor.

Basement

A. Main Room (37' x 20') The main room's ceiling is 12' high and is plastered over, though the plaster is cracked in some places and stained with mildew. This room served as the old wine cellar, but has been nearly cleared of debris. This room is always chilly and dank thanks to the link (at F.) to the sewers. The room is dark and though there are places for torches against the west wall, they do little dispel the blackness or warm the room.

Against the south wall (at A1) is the altar area. It sits on a 7' x 8' x 6" dais formed by planking laid on top of two wine racks set on their faces. Covering the water stained south wall is a tapestry that depicts the Great Gods' war and Ben-Kneha bestowing his gifts onto the great twelve human heroes. Although made of very fine material, it is rather gaudy and poorly done.

On the two northern dais corners stand brass braziers that are only lit during services. Centered behind them, allowing for a foot and a half between it and the wall, stands the altar. It is made of two pieces: a stone block and a pristine slab of oak laying

across the top of the stone. The altar is plain and some followers believe the stone was the original altar where the heroes gave thanks to Ben-Kneha for his gifts.

At the southeast corner of the dais there is a loose board beneath which Sandoren keeps a locked⁴ box. He keeps all the cult's funds in the box and at any one time there should be 3 to 4,000 gold pieces present.

Back at A2 some of the original wine racks still stand. A later owner had cleared the floor of all the racks except those he needed to keep his own wine stock in. This area is generally a tangle of crates, barrels, debris and dusty racks. While there is nothing of value here, this area would serve as an excellent hiding place.

B. Cheese Room (6' x 10') Originally this room was meant to hold cheese or other perishable goods. The floor is crisscrossed with channels to carry the runoff from melting blocks of ice to a 6" square grate in the north wall. Even without the ice the room remains cold. The cult uses the room as a prison to hold Blessed ones whose benefactor has died in a manner so odd that special preparations must be taken, or any benefactors who are having second thoughts about dying... The door is stout but only locked³.

C. Changing Rooms (C1 7' x 9', C2 5' x 6') Masks and robes are kept in these rooms in case members arrive without their own. The clothing is all identical, one size drapes over everyone, and the rooms are kept dark so even chance glimpses are unlikely to reveal a member's identity. Members knock on the walls to warn others to cover their faces and look away before they enter. Everyone's first act is to pull a hood on, and so far this system has kept everyone's identities a secret.

D. Entry way to the Sewers (5' x 5') The thick iron door in here bars the way to the sewer tunnel (F.) but cannot be locked. It opens inward and a heavy bar prevents unwanted visitors from just wandering in. Each worshiper knows a secret knock and someone on the other side will open the door in response to it. Few members use this entrance but, from time to time, some find it convenient.

E. Storage room (5' x 9') Sandoren keeps various ritual materials in this room. Aside from several different colored linen tablecloths, torches and candles there is little of value in here.

F. Tunnel to Sewers The tunnel is narrow and unlit. The trickling of sludge can be heard in the distance, but the ledge on the main sewer line is slender and scum-slicked, so running characters stand a better than average chance of slipping right into the sewers if trying to outrun pursuit here.

Personalities

Sandoren. □ *Human, Ht. 5'10", Wt. 170 lbs., Age: 40.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Poor.* □ *Magic Ability: Good, C3, C5, C8.*

Sandoren is a tall, gaunt man with salt and pepper hair. Sandoren is a very charismatic man with a sparkling wit. He can be very persuasive. He could talk a tiger out of its skin if so inclined, yet in situations where he is not required to be social he remains withdrawn and quiet. He is often invited to parties in the richer section of town (his patrons provide him with suitable clothing so he'll fit in) and here he makes his contacts. Many people he meets come to him for readings and some of them are later recruited into the cult.

A very young Sandoren was sent to a local monastery for an education. He worked hard and it looked as if he'd have a



— Sandoren —

promising career as a holy brother. Then, just before he formally became an acolyte, the monastery's priests summoned him from prayers and changed his life forever: he must leave the monastery! Reeling from this news the shattered youth barely heard the explanation: divination revealed that his soul was tainted—due to some monstrous crime committed by an ancestor. He would never be allowed to reach the paradise his religion promised.

Overcoming deep depression, he vowed he'd discover a way into heaven just to spite both his superiors and the gods who had cursed his family with eternal damnation. He spent years studying religious texts of a hundred gods both false and true and finally located mention of Ben-Kneha's gift. He cross-checked the legend with others and slowly discovered there was a way to circumvent the gods and get into heaven, but it had to be in the company of a hero. Sandoren developed rituals to forge a link between strangers, the core of the cult's being.

Oddly, as Sandoren studied and developed the rituals, he came to accept his own damnation and will refrain from linking himself with any Blessed Souls. He views his work as righting wrongs done to others, and is willing to accept the responsibility for killing the Companions. In this, he compounds his own sins, but prevents a blemish from hamper one of the benefactors who trusts Sandoren. Ultimately, Sandoren feels, the Companion is only going to a better life, so his actions are not really murder.

Sandoren relies heavily on Graft Torin and trusts him almost implicitly. He often turns funds given to him by a cult member directly over to Graft to be passed on to the Blessed Soul. Sandoren uses Graft Torin to kill the Blessed Souls who need to

die, but Sandoren himself will personally slay any benefactor who needs to die. His flock is very loyal to him, and shares nothing of the cult with outsiders.

As a final note, Sandoren carries a key ring with an incredible number of vastly varying keys (one for every lock in the building and at least one that lets him into the homes of members of the Fellowship).

Graft Torin. □ Human, Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 155 lbs., Age: 26. □ Fighting Prowess: Good with dagger, short sword, and garotte, Poor with all others.

Graft is a short, olive skinned man who wears a moustache and has a scar over his right eyebrow. He prefers dark clothes and always carries a dagger in his boot and a shortsword at his waist. Although he is rather unkempt, he does manage to keep unoffensively clean (Sandoren insists he bathe at least three times a week). He is addicted to sweetmeats and always has one in his mouth, or his hand in a bag of them in the process of transferring one to his mouth.

At least that's how *she* appears to be to the public. Graft Torin's real name is Tarina, and she was once one of the Steel Man's entourage (the all-female assassin guild from CBIII). When shed of the baggy clothes, false moustache and skin coloring agent she is a 5' 5", 110 lbs., handsome woman with a scar over her right eyebrow. Her short black hair looks stylish when properly combed and while her looks are not enough to break hearts in passing, she is remarkably good looking. Still, she never is seen without some sort of disguise on because she fears for her life.

Tarina had the misfortune of guessing who really killed Salome's mother (the former top assassin), and she tried to shake Salome down because murdering a Mistress is not a crime among the assassins—provided the murderess becomes Mistress after the deed is done. Salome made one payment to Tarina, then set her up for execution. Salome herself finally shot Tarina with a crossbow bolt and knocked her into a nearby river. Luckily the bolt struck a glancing blow, producing the scar, and the river carried Tarina away before Salome could make sure her shot had been true (Salome thinks Tarina is dead).

As Graft Torin, she runs the cult's information network and transfer department. All the agents report to her, and she pays all of them. In addition, she makes sure (by herself or through agents) that the Blessed Ones are taken care of: she gets them out of trouble or kills them when their time comes. Sandoren gives Graft 100 gp a week to maintain her network, with bonuses when very good information comes in. Tarina does not take part in any of the rituals and, indeed, cares nothing about the cult's workings.

The only thing that interests Tarina is that the cult is a gold mine. She regularly skims 10% of all monies for her own pocket, and often insinuates herself (in a disguise other than Graft Torin) with a Blessed Soul so she benefits from the Blessed One's good fortune. As long as things continue to run smoothly "Graft" will be set up for life and with a network of spies loyal to her alone, she can see no problems on the horizon.

Eventually Tarina wants to set up a number of fake Companions, then split the money from the cult with them. She's thought of blackmailing some of the cult members, but she's not hit on a good plan for discovering their identities and applying the squeeze without killing the cult off. She has found the ledger and if she can decipher the information therein she figures she could murder Sandoren at one of the monthly ceremonies, then black-

mail all the members and threaten to reveal their ties to the cult if they don't give her money.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Blessed is the Receiver. One of the adventurers is singled out as a Blessed Soul, a clear-cut descendant of one of Ben-Kneha's holy twelve. Unasked-for blessings shower down upon the adventurer. Then, one day, the character feels a sharp pain inside that passes quickly. Overnight the City goes into mourning, a rich merchant, a friend of many powerful people has died. Normally, such an event would be of little consequence to adventurers in the City, but his particular merchant was a Fellow of the Blessed Companions and now his own special "Companion" must die to ensure his own passage into Paradise. Graft Torin now seeks the adventurer's demise. Somehow Graft must contrive to kill the adventurer in the same manner that his grossly fat "Companion" died—by overeating.

Scenario 2: Companions in Doom. Andre Forge is an extremely rich, extremely old and extremely unhappy man. He is the brother of Jedediah Forge, the founder of the powerful Forge Company. Though ownership of the Company has passed to his nephew Hiram, a century of involvement in the company has left Andre with vast wealth. Andre has made no pretense of being a philanthropist. Most of his money has been spent on his own selfish interests. Years ago, Andre traded his soul to a being called Two-Scratch Dickens (see *Domdaniel's Gate* in *CityBook 3*) for wealth and power. Two-Scratch never came to collect and so Andre's life has gone on and on. Andre is no blind fool. He knows very well what Sandoren does to Companions. Yet he also believes in the legend of Ben-Kneha and desperately wants to get to Paradise—for only there will his soul be safe from Two-Scratch Dickens.

Using his vast resources, Andre learned the identity of his own "Companion," one of the adventurers of course. Not willing to risk the anger of Ben-Kneha by having the adventurer killed outright, Andre Forge arranges to become a patron of the adventurers, hiring them to perform incredibly risky missions—each time hoping that the next one will be his Companion's last. Then will come pathetic Sandoren with his clumsy assassination attempt—which of course, Andre will allow to succeed. However, the surviving adventurers should probably arrive just in time to save their "benefactor" and give chase to his assassin—which eventually leads them to the temple.

Scenario 3: My Husband is Dead ... A rich widow arranges to meet the adventurers, she learned their names from a friend of her daughter who had heard ... never mind. The important thing is that her husband has died quite suddenly and in a mysterious manner, run down by freight wagon while walking about their estate. She suspects foul play and wants the adventurers to investigate. The facts: A very rich gentleman is dead. Unusual for men of his station, he has no known enemies. Even those who worked for him loved him. He belongs to several private clubs that cater to the rich. All but one, the Fellowship, are easy to locate—though difficult to get answers from (a red herring to throw suspicion on close-mouthed club members, many of whom may also be members of the Fellowship). The rich husband had an adventurer "Companion" who was run down by a beer wagon as he staggered out of a tavern. Sandoren, in turn, trampled the rich man under a hay wagon. Sandoren quickly learns of the investigation and

sends Graft Torin to confound and complicate the task.

Many religions provide a reason for the faithful to travel. There are pilgrimages to make, holy quests to undertake and persecutions to escape. Then, there's the Fellowship—a real stay-at-home group of worshippers. Nevertheless, the Fellowship provides a warm and friendly place for specially selected adventurers to "come home to" after a hard journey. GMs, select one of the adventurers in your campaign to unknowingly become a Blessed Companion. Lavish gifts on that character (and no one else) until somebody decides to investigate (either out of curiosity or jealousy). For some reason, people have a burning desire to "kill the goose that lays the golden eggs."

Other things to consider: How do other religions view the cult's "hitch-hike to heaven" philosophy. Would, or could the cult survive the death of Sandoren? Could Ben-Kneha intervene to save Sandoren, his one true follower?



The Halfling House



Situated on the inexact boundary between the legitimate and illicit districts of the City lies The Halfling House. Quaint, pastoral, it seems strangely out of place in these environs, as it does not truly belong in any quarter of town. In fact, some have declared that yestereve the lot on which the establishment stands was vacant! Whence came the inn, no one knows. There are those who say that it materialized out of thin air... but then, they had been drinking. Others tell that it seeped up from the ground... after all, the roof is made of sod! In any case, it seemed to come overnight from nowhere, and if that's true then some darktide soon or late it just as well may vanish! Whether it did or did not materialize in the wee witching hours, the fact is, here the Halfling House, in the City, it is, for now, present and welcoming travelers.

A pint-sized building, The Halfling House is just what it proclaims to be: a house for halflings. Although it is nearly three stories tall, the peak of the sod room is a scant fifteen feet above the ground, for the ceilings inside are but a bare four to five feet high. Oddly shaped windows adorn the white stuccoed walls, yet the view through the glass is strangely distorted, as if the panes were utterly muddled, yet each seems clear and smooth to the touch.

Beyond the iron bands of the four-foot-high, stout oaken front door lies an inn, built to fit halflings and halflings only. Owned and operated by Dando and Molly Thistledown, and assisted by a staff of six dammen, these jewel-eyed Warrows* from the Boskydells of Mithgar make any halfling feel welcomed, no matter what stock of wee folk they be from, including non-halfling wee folk (such as leprechauns).

Bill of Fare

The Halfling House offers a full variety of services at modest prices. The ale and hard cider are both excellent and Dando will,

To those readers who are familiar with his Iron Tower trilogy or the Silver Call duology (one needs Citybook 3, *Deadly Nightside*), the author of *Halfling House*, Dennis L. McKiernan needs no introduction. If not, then be aware that his latest novel, *Dragon Doom* is out in paperback from Bantam Spectra Books and that it tells further heroic tales of the diminutive buccoes and dammen like those found here in Halfling House.

Elizabeth T. Danforth should need little, if any introduction for long time Citybook aficionados, since she did a lion's share of the illustration tasks for the previous three Citybooks. When she is not illustrating game books, she's editing them. When she's not working on books, she's designing computer games. When she's not designing computer games, she's illustrating them too. Somewhere in the midst of all this, Elizabeth found the time to write and illustrate for this Citybook too. It's nice to have talented friends one can rely on.

from time to time, top a patron's drink off with no charge. The food is prepared lovingly by Molly, and each meal includes fresh bread and a mug of cider (ale comes with a meal for half the price of a flagon). Many patrons try to place the flavor of the spices, but Molly refuses to reveal her secrets.

Rooms are available by night, week or month, but the price escalates sharply with length of stay. The prices, while reasonable, vary according to the degree of privacy the patrons demand. The sole exception to this rule is the "couples" room, featuring a double bed, which the innkeepers try to reserve for a married couple or family group.

The dammen working as serving girls are not available for tumbles upstairs. Anyone with poor enough manners to insist upon a liaison is likely to find himself out on his ear. Likewise, when a halfling bard or leprechaun storyteller is working in the common room, rude patrons will be asked to quiet down or will be ejected (often Dando will give a bard room and board in return for a display of the bard's skills).

Layout

The Ground Floor

A. Front and Back Stoops (10' x 4' and 8' x 4' respectively) Each stoop stands before a four-foot-high, iron-banded oaken door. Sod roofed, the stoops shield wayfaring halflings from the elements as the travelers enter and exit the house.

B. The Common Room (30' x 30' x 5') The low ceiling and diminutive furniture immediately proclaim this as a place truly fit for halflings. During the day, curtains are drawn back from the muddled windows to let sunlight brighten the interior, while, at night, the warm amber glow of the lamp and candle (and, in winter, the ruddy cast of a crackling fire) illumines the room. Sitting before the east fireplace is a commodious long table, and to the center of the room is another smaller one; when occupied, they give the place the genial atmosphere of a happily rowdy pub. For the quieter times, before the west fireplace is a soft couch flanked by cozy chairs, yielding a sense of comfort only encountered in small private clubs. Other tables and chairs are found within, as well as a cheery bar with excellent ale.

In the southeast corner, a spiral staircase twines upward to the second floor. An iron-banded door leads to the front stoop (a stout wooden beam bars⁴ the door at night), and a double door leads to

* Warrows come from Dennis L. McKiernan's Iron Tower trilogy, Silver Call duology, and *Dragondoom* and are used herein with his permission.

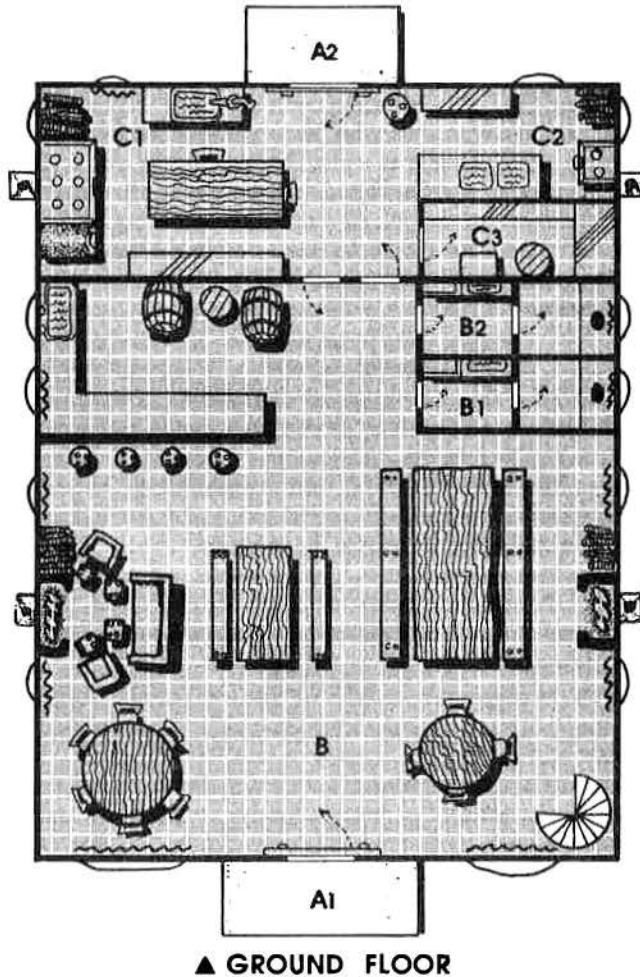
the kitchen. Two plain doors with simple latches lead to two washrooms/privies (B1, male; B2, female), each equipped with a pitcher of water and a wash basin sitting on a low set of open shelves containing towels, cloths, and spat. There is also a hamper for discarding used cloths and towels. One remarkable thing about the privies: Although there is no plumbing, *they never need to be emptied!*

C. Kitchen, Scullery, Pantry (30' x 10' x 5') The spotlessly clean, spacious kitchen (C1) contains a large woodstove with baking cover, firewood, worktable, sink, cabinets, shelves, pots, pans, dishes, cutlery, etc. Four times a day, and sometimes five, remarkably delicious meals are prepared here. A peculiar thing within the kitchen is that at the sink there is a seemingly ordinary hand-operated pump from which water flows freely, *but there is no well!*

The scullery (C2) holds a smaller woodstove (for heating wash water), firewood, two sinks, worktable, storage for pots and pans, brushes, soap, cloths, etc.

The pantry (C3) contains a crate of tea, a barrel of dill pickles, and a wide variety of consumables upon shelves, though much food is procured from the market daily.

In addition to the pantry door, an iron-banded portal leads to the back stoop (at night this door is barred⁴ by a stout wooden beam), and the kitchen is connected to the common room via a double door.



Second Floor

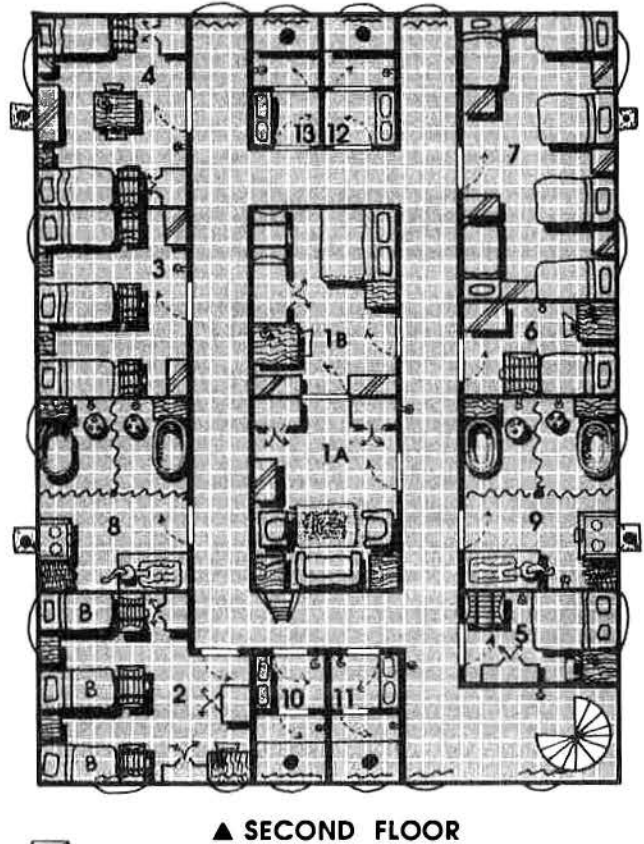
Here are the living quarters for the halfling guests, as well as quarters for the owner and staff. If there was ever any questions as to whether these were halfling quarters, they would be settled once and for all by the evidence here, for the ceiling is only 4'4" high, and the beds and tables and chairs and stools and tubs and privies and chest and cabinets and shelves and everything else upon this floor are only fit for someone who can walk upright along these hallways with plenty of headroom to spare.

1A. and 1B. Proprietor's Quarters (10' x 20' x 4' 4" collectively) Dando and Molly Thistledown's quarters consist of a parlor (1A) and a bedroom (1B) each 10' x 10' x 4' 4".

The parlor contains a couch, two comfortable sitting chairs, end tables for lamps, a small central table on the carpet (Dando and Molly sometimes use the table for meals), shelves, and two cabinets. A door with a simple latch leads out into the hallway, and a second door connects to the bedrooms. The landscapes on the walls, signed by Molly, are beautiful, and of no places even the most experienced of travelers can identify.

Their bedroom contains a double bed, a chest, a bedside lamp table, two clothes closets, and a small writing table with chair. A door with a simple latch leads out into the hallway, and a second door connects to the parlor.

2. Staff's Quarters (approx. 11' x 10') Six dammen, who serve as the staff, live here. Their bedroom contains three bunk beds, three chests, three free-standing clothes closets, a writing table



SCALE: one square = 1 foot

with chair, and two bedside lamp tables.

3-7. Guest Bedrooms There are but five guest bedrooms, but they contain 14 beds; hence, unless there is a halfling convention in town, there is usually enough room for all.

Room 3 (8' x 10') contains three beds, three chests, two sets of shelves and two lamp tables.

Room 4 (8' x 10') contains two beds, two chests, a set of shelves, two cabinets, two lamp tables and one central table with two chairs.

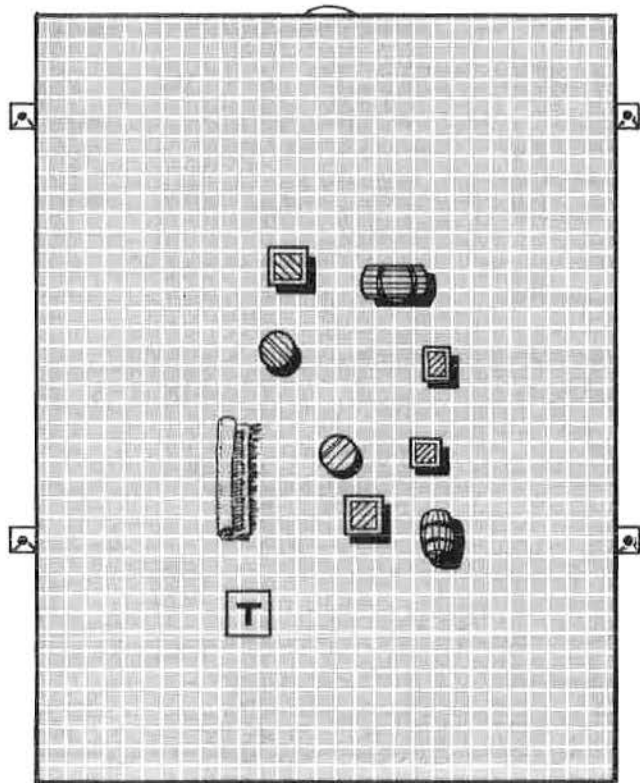
Room 5 (8' x 5') contains a double bed, a chest, a cabinet and a small end table with chair.

Room 6 (8' x 5') contains a bed, a chest, a set of shelves, and a small table with chair.

Room 7 (8' x 15') contains six beds and give sets of shelves that also serve as lamp holders.

8-9. Bathing Rooms (female/male) (8' x 10' each) Each bathing room contains a small woodstove (for heating bath water), firewood, two large metal buckets, a sink, two bathing tubes (equipped with drains and stoppers), two small tables, two stools, and two sets of shelves containing towels, cloths, brushes, and sweet-scented soaps, etc.

During the day, when the rooms are not being used by patrons, one or both of the rooms is used as a laundry. Just as in the downstairs kitchen, each sink is equipped with a hand-operated water pump from which water flows freely, *despite the lack of a well.*



▲ ATTIC

SCALE: one square = 1 foot

10-13. Washrooms/Privies (even, female; odd, male) (7' x 4' each) There are four washrooms/privies, two at each end of the building. The doors are fitted with simple latches. Each is equipped with a pitcher of water and a wash basin sitting on a low set of open shelves containing towels, cloths and soap. As below, the room contains a hamper for soiled towels and cloths. Here, too, the privies do not need to be emptied despite the lack of plumbing.

Stairs In the southwest corner of the building a spiral staircase leads down to the common room. A ladder in the hall at the southwest corner of room 1A leads up through a trapdoor to the attic.

The Attic (30' x 40' x 4'4" at the peak) The attic is used for storage. It contains trunks, a carpet, crates, barrels, boxes and other odds and ends. Overhead, the sloping wooden ceiling supports the sod roof. Two small, muddled windows (one at each end) permit sunlight, moonlight and starlight to illumine the interior. A trapdoor leads down to the second-floor parlor (1A).

Personalities

Dando Thistledown □Warrow. Ht. 3'5". Wt. 68#, Age: 72. □ *Fighting Prowess: Excellent with a bow; Very good with martial arts sweeps and throws.* □ *Magic Ability: Very good C1, C4, C6, C7, C8.*

Although he appears to be a simple innkeeper, Dando is anything but. Instead, underneath that red hair and behind those emeraldine eyes and within that compact figure is a exceptional mage... a mage with a mission. In preparation for a prophesied apocalyptic war, Dando is using the Halfling House (a potent magic artifact) to search cross dimensionally for halflings with inherent magical potential. As well, he is searching for his lost buccoos, Pippen and Tipperton (both mages in their own right) and Tip's comrade, Peregrin Rushlock (a warrior-warlock). All three vanished mysteriously in the night not too distant in the past. (Note: Tip and Perry appeared in *The Yellow Poppy*—see *Citybook 3*. Heaven alone knows where Pip has ended up).

To most halflings, however, as well as folk of different races, Dando appears to be nothing more than a simple innkeeper of a bright and cheery nature. Difficult to anger, Dando never displays his power in public. From time to time, though, he has been known to sober an obnoxious drunk with a dollop of a potion he keeps in a crusty bottle back in the kitchen.

Molly Thistledown □Warrow. Ht. 3'0", Wt. 59#, Age: 68. □ *Fighting Prowess: Fair with a bow, otherwise poor.* □ *Magic Ability: Good, C2, C3, C5.*

Molly is a slim, amber-eyed damman. Married to Dando for 34 years, she accompanied him on many adventures in their younger days, and was a seasoned veteran of the road ere she left her maiden days behind. It was on the road that she came into the fullness of her arcane arts, tapping her magic potential to acquire curative, clairvoyant and communicative skills. However, after her marriage to Dando, and with the arrival of Pippen, and then Tipperton, she gave up questing to rear her buccoos. Yet, when Dando began his cross-dimensional search, Molly gladly rejoined him, eager to be back in the harness again.

To most of the patrons of the Halfling House, Molly appears to be nought more than the cook, yet some who have arrived injured at this haven know better. But even the knowing patrons,



— Molly Thistledown —

as well as the unknowing, sense that something is amiss with this black-haired damman, for she is given to moments of quiet weeping, especially when others speak of their children: her buccoes are missing, and she knows not why and she knows not where.

The Staff

Six dammen Warrows comprise the staff of the Halfling House. Maidens all, they range in height from 2'10" to 3'2", weight from 57 to 62 lbs, and age from 15 to 19 years old. Two are golden-haired with sapphirine eyes, three are chestnut maned with amber eyes, and one is black-haired with emerald eyes.

They appear to be nothing more than six cheery maidens, yet they are each a talented find. Upon a time past, Molly, using her clairvoyance, following a wispy trail of tenuous power, located each of them. Then Dando and Molly together convinced their dams and sires, as well as the maidens themselves, that their talents would be needed in the coming conflict.

Apprenticed to both Dando and Molly, each of their skills are growing. At this point in time, they are but average in their magic abilities, though the eldest, and strangely enough the youngest, are verging on becoming fair. Because Dando and Molly between them cover all of the categories (but not all of the spells) of magic, the dammen apprentices are gaining a wide range of knowledge among them, though each tends to specialize along certain lines.

Their fighting prowess is poor, except they are average with a bow, for here, too, Dando is training them.

Special: The Halfling House itself is a powerful magic artifact, able to travel between dimensions at the behest of the wearer of the controlling ring. The ring's current wearer is Dando. Actually made of starsilver, the ring appears to be a piece of cheap copper jewelry, with Twyllish runes inscribed upon it and a small diamond chipset in it. (It is quite possible the diamond chip is a portion of a godtear.)

Additionally, because it comes and goes unexpectedly, The Halfling House has no plumbing and no wells. Even so, three magic pumps provide an everlasting source of water for the residents. The sink drains, tub drains, and privies are magical too—but beware: do not drop into them anything you would wish to retrieve (They empty into a desolate waste—no pun intended—or a landfill in New Jersey). The journey to the Halfling House's outlet is both perilous and very difficult.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: In a Dungeon Deep. Molly, for several minutes, receives a strong impression that Tipperton is in the City, and in danger. Still, as suddenly as it came, the contact is abruptly broken. Dando suspects that Tipperton is being held somewhere in a magic-dampening room. He hires a party to locate and free his bucco from **The Yellow Poppy** (See Citybook 3) or some other hideous prison.

Scenario 2: Ringloser. Using an extremely strong sleeping potion, a master thief has stolen Dando's ring of power, and without it, Dando's mission will come to an end. Not only is this bad for Tip and Perry, but it leaves worlds in peril to the evil Dando's mission was designed to fight. Since Molly cannot locate it via her scrying powers, either it is no longer in this dimension, or it is somehow magically shielded. Dando cannot now leave the Halfling House, for if he does, the thief can just as well return and whisk the magical inn away. It is up to adventurers to restore the ring to Dando.

If the diamond set in the ring is a piece of a godtear, and the thief was Pergessia (see the *Wanderers* chapter), recovering the ring could be very difficult indeed.

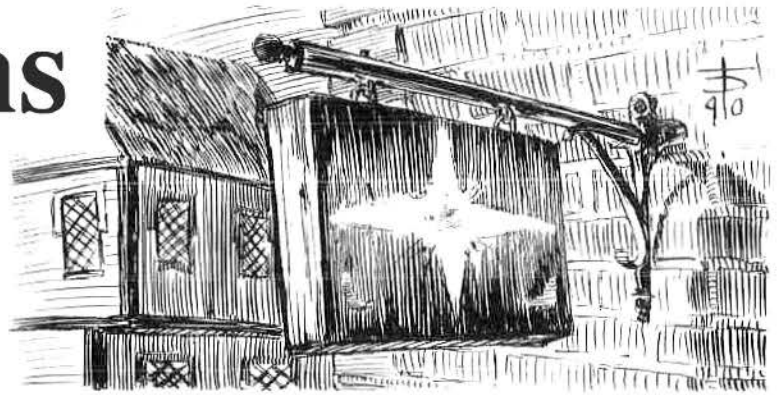
Scenario 3: Love's Labours Lost. The eldest apprentice is an incredibly beautiful creature. This willowy, black-haired damman, with her tilted emerald-green eyes and her elven-pointed ears, has caused many a halfling heart to flutter. Yet her own heart appears to belong to another (whether it be Pip, Tip or Perry, only she can say). Regardless, the thought has crossed some halflings' mind to kidnap her, and bear her away to a love nest. Will your party, lead by a halfling equally smitten by her beauty, recover her before the Halfling House again vanishes?

Clearly, the role-playing possibilities for the Halfling House are legion. After all, it houses magicians, and it travels between dimensions. It can pop up practically anywhere! Along a caravan route, in the middle of a forest, on a mountain top, on an island... anywhere you need it, the Halfling House will be there (Just having it leapfrog ahead of a party will be an interesting application of its power.)

The Halfling House can serve as a place where the wee folk of your party can be with folks of their own kind... The Halfling House welcomes all types: gnomes, hobbits, Warrows, sprites, gnolls, sylphs, leprechauns, and all the rest. None are turned away unless they make a nuisance of themselves. And remember, the proprietor is able to deal with just about anyone, or anything; and if not him, then the mistress can handle it... And if your party is made up entirely of wee folk, well then, the Halfling House makes a perfect base from which to foray.

But beware: The Halfling House may whisk you to somewhere you were not planning to go. For such a wee little place, it's got great enormous potential!

Dimensions Unlimited



Even in a fantasy world, the details involved in securing reliable transportation for long-distance travel can be mind-numbing. There are schedules to be checked, appointments made and reservations secured. Luckily there are some who excel at such. To the casual observer, Dimensions Unlimited seems just another specialty shop filling a necessary niche in a fantasy society. However, this seemingly harmless little ticket agency with the fancy name hides a very powerful secret ... or maybe even two.

Adventurers should find this establishment very quickly on their arrival in the City, as it is situated near one of the busier market squares. The red, yellow and orange glowing star on the placard hanging over the door is a magical wonder to behold. Young children often throw stones at the star as mischievous pranks, while older boys continue the tradition in order to draw out the agency's lone, luscious employee, Miss Julie (none know her surname).

Travel Services

The store appears to be quite normal, and its rates reasonable. Booking passage on any normal means of transportation (such as a caravan, Forgeway coach, or the River Drake) costs about 10% over and above of the usual fare (that is, fare + 10%). The advantage to buying here is that often times a percentage of this fee is "kicked back" to the proprietor of the transportation service, making it worth his or her while for prospective travellers to buy through such agents. At the GM's discretion, some travel services might only allow bookings through the agency for just this reason.

Also, bribery is, of course, required to get special privileges for the traveler (also known as "first class" service) and inexperienced bargainers might save quite a few pieces of gold letting the agency negotiate for them. However, clever characters who role-play the encounter with the prospective travel service them-

Dimensions Unlimited's author, Grant Boucher, has been a busy free-lance author and game designer. Recent published works include the AD&D game adventure "Ancient Blood" for DUNGEON magazine, the Paranoia game adventure "Gamma-LOI," the Ghostbusters International game adventure "Pumpkin Patch Panic," and numerous sections in the AD&D game Monstrous Compendiums.

Tom Dow spends his time hunting down hunting illustration assignments, reading science fiction and photographing various aspects of mundania. As a hobby, he collects high artistic ideals, which he keeps in a shoebox in his closet. Luckily, Tom was also in attendance at a small SF convention for which I was one of the guests. Lucky for me that is. Though I didn't sell a thing, I came away with a superb contributor for CityBook.

selves should be able to get a slightly better deal than those who buy through the agency. After all, good role-playing should be rewarded and encouraged. However, action-oriented groups might not want to wait around too long for such a simple task. Naturally, the group is trying to get to somewhere for a reason!

The characters can get information on everything from tour guides of the city (if it has famous sites of note, or ones that have been made to sound noteworthy by the local chamber of commerce) to ships across the seas (if anywhere near a major port or river). In most cases the fees have to be set by the GM, depending on the currency used and availability of travel and relative competition in the area. A stagecoach service in a small town probably owns the local stables as well, and any ill-prepared newcomer can expect to pay a hefty price for transit. While someone trying to book a ship in the port capital of the land is probably inundated with discount fare offers, and might be able to travel across the known world for next to nothing.

Business Hours

The business is open for normal operations from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. every day. However, since Miss Julie lives in the building, impatient people who bang loudly on the glass door can get tickets at any hour, but shouldn't expect courteous service or a discount fare.

Small Freight

Miss Julie has also found that the agency's services can be put to use to book passage for small freight orders, acting as a booking and sales agent for merchants or citizens who need to ship a small amount of items from here to there. In this capacity, she can arrange the details with a caravan master, a ship's captain, or with special services like Drakkonstar Express.

Just about anyone who travels knows all this, but of course, there are things that are not made public.

Secrets

The front business for Dimensions Unlimited is a simple, local travel agency, serving typical people with their day-to-day needs. However, if the adventurers chose to do a little investigative digging, they can discover that the owner of the business is not Miss Julie as the deed is held by someone anonymous. In

reality, the store is owned and operated by Miss Julie's father, an old man known only as the Master. Miss Julie manages the agency's day-to-day operation, but the Master runs his own transportation businesses on the side.

Known only to a select few, the Master is a powerful sorcerer, specializing in dimensional travel and lore. His amassed information regarding other planes of existence and alternate dimensions is simply staggering, and those who can pay may can tap this source of knowledge for a hefty price. Furthermore, the Master has been known to send "undesirables" to realms of no return, like the planes of fire. "Undesirables" can mean political opponents, foiled plotters, unsuccessful assassins, or just about anyone else who needs to be removed privately. Expenses are the deciding factor in such decisions, as the Master's fees start at 50,000 gold pieces, and escalate rapidly as his own personal risk increases. If the victim has too many powerful friends (priests are especially risky), no amount of money can buy his services.

However, the Master does not discriminate. He might bring someone back (if they were sent someplace nonlethal) if the price were to be right, and his personal safety was assured. Such an occurrence would be highly rare, as most of his customers insist of guaranteed extermination, and pay the extra gold to insure it. The Master has never broken a contract or deal of any kind, whether verbal or in writing. Needless to say, few are stupid enough to double-cross the Master.

Adventures who flash great amounts of wealth and ask Miss Julie about being transported to far-off lands or dimensions get nothing but a mystified chuckle from the young secretary. However, later that evening, the Master might deliver a summons for a rendezvous, usually some nearby public tavern—though he also favors establishments like Domdaniel's Gate (see CB3), offering the characters "any transportation you require, for the right price." Under no circumstances will the Master allude to Dimensions Unlimited or Miss Julie. It is up to the players to figure that one out.

The Master does not offer advice about surviving, travelling, or adventuring in the chosen locale. If anyone asks for such information, the Master sarcastically replies either "Maybe you're not quite ready for such a voyage" or "Why don't you look it up at the library?" The Master does require one personal belonging from each traveller "as part of the requirements for the spell." In fact, he doesn't need these items all, but sometimes the Master likes to observe his clients, especially if they've been sent to someplace "interesting" or dangerous. Naturally, pleasant characters who get in very serious trouble during their journey might get an illusory offer for a "return home special," for at least twice the sending price! The Master is in it for the money, pure and simple. He does take magical items in trade, at half value "for the inconvenience of having to sell them again." All dealings with the Master are "cash in advance only, no exceptions."

Naturally, characters who bargained unfairly or were belligerent in their dealings with the Master (especially if they refused to call him "the Master") don't get any chance at a return ticket.

Rumors

Rumor: Miss Julie is a succubus who lures handsome young men into the back room where they meet their doom in her *loving arms*.

Fact: Naturally, this is completely false and more likely the product of a lot of wishful thinking and admiration from afar.

Bruised male egos have all sorts of defenses.

Rumor: Miss Julie is a very vain woman. She has been caught more than once blowing kisses at herself in the mirror.

Fact: We all know she's blowing kisses at her dear old father (via the viewing mirror).

Rumor: Dimensions Unlimited is a front for the thieves guild.

Fact: No, not really, but there are definite ties to it be found here, if you're brave enough to find out about it.

Rumor: People who visit there have been known to disappear afterwards.

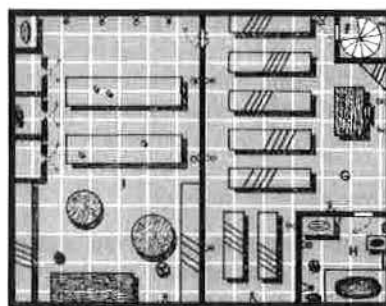
Fact: Anyone who can get free mead for telling a tale learns to tell a lot of good ones. It's a travel agency! Lots of people leave real soon after going there, right? Well, people who offend the lady do seem to disappear against their own free will and leave no records behind of purchasing a ticket.

Layout

A. The Front Parlor (30'x20') This is the main business area for the store. Tables with local brochures and advertisements are against the north and south walls, and a long counter sections off the room's east end.

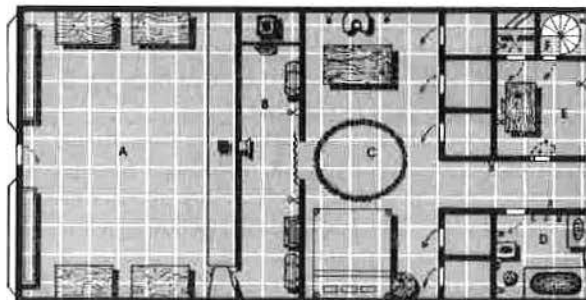
Two large windows are set in the western wall and are always covered in displays of major tourist traps and legendary destinations. Most of the ads are for local inns, taverns, and famous sites, but the GM should populate the area with appropriate paintings and sketches of areas throughout the known campaign world. After all, it is very likely that any characters who grew up in this town may have gained their urge to travel and adventure by hanging around places just like this.

Any special deals (GM's discretion) are posted on the door and on the counter. Miss Julie always mentions these specials



▲ BASEMENT

▼ MAIN FLOOR



SCALE: one square = 3 feet

whether or not she thinks the customer might be interested.

B. Behind the Counter (30' x 10') Behind the counter sits Miss Julie, who spends most of her day painting pictures of far off places she's only heard about from her father. Depending on the size of the City and the nature of your campaign, this may be a thriving place, busy from dawn to dusk, or it might be a rather quiet place where any customer is an unexpected surprise.

Against the north wall is a wooden enclosure with the safe mounted within. The combination lock is a fake as the safe is magically secured. Only the words "*I love my papa*" will open it. Every night, the day's money is stored in here, and once each month representatives from a local bank come to claim any deposits.

A strong box with 50 gp worth of miscellaneous coins is on hand beneath the counter, for day-to-day transactions. Besides a few chests full of pamphlets, blank receipts, etc., and a curtain leading to the back room (C) the only other object of interest back here is a large, ornate mirror against the north wall. Far from being just simple ornamentation, or a device to make the room look larger, the mirror is the Master's way of keeping an eye on his daughter. Miss Julie welcomes her father's protective streak, as some rather seedy-looking characters come in from time to time. Woe to man or monster who enters the store with a bad attitude. Some trips to the plane of fire the Master does free of charge.

Note that Miss Julie gets to keep all of the money she makes with this business, as she is essentially working for herself. She's accumulated a fair bit of wealth and should become quite an influential business woman in few years. She's already gaining a reputation as a shrewd bargainer and a wise business partner, so she might go far in local politics as well.

C. The Back Room (30' x 20') A mahogany desk and soft chair to the north and a bigger than king-sized bed, laced in pink to the south dominate this combination office and bedroom. Five closets are against the east wall, separated by a corridor going east. The two closets to the south of the corridor are for the clothing and personal affects of Miss Julie, while the remaining three to the north are filled with business files, tax records, and travel routes.

This is Julie's private little home, and no one is ever allowed back here, except her father when he's passing through. Importantly, the Master has no mirrors to watch her in here, at Julie's insistence.

There is nothing of great value in this room.

D. Upper Lavatory (10' x 10') This is Julie's private bathroom. It has a porcelain bathtub with water warmed magically from below (see the Master's Lavatory below) and all the accessories of a noble woman's lavatory. It is decorated in white marble with gold accessories.

E. Private Records Room (15' x 10') The sign on this door is labelled "Do Not Enter," as if anyone who had gotten this far would heed such a warning. It is normally found closed and locked³ and can be locked/unlocked from either side. Both Julie and the Master have keys to the door.

The room contains two file closets. The western one is filled with Miss Julie's most private files, including "who gets bribed for how much," and "things the Forgeaway company would prefer people not to know." The information contained within is only politically valuable to someone who knows what to do with it. See the secret stairs (F) for details on the what is contained within the eastern closet.

F. The Secret Stairs (5' diameter) The other closet in the private records room (E) appears to contain nothing but blank paper, but that is simply a minor illusion. For the closet conceals a secret staircase down to the building's basement level (for which is there is no record of construction), where the Master lives. Only Miss Julie is allowed down there, and no one else has ever, ever made it to the basement (or left it by the stairway again).

G. The Master's Study (30' x 20') This room is filled with shelves of books on arcane lore, modern fiction, and philosophy (many of these works are magically trapped—at the GM's discretion). However, most are very general, as the Master's private library is located at his private mage's tower (whereabouts unknown).

This is a fine place to drop adventure clues, as every page of every book just oozes ancient lore. Maps conveniently fall out of such dusty texts as they fall open. The secret door to the northeast is dangerously magically trapped and should cause violent death to anyone not knowing the correct passwords.

H. The Master's Lavatory (10' x 10') This room is identical to the upper lavatory (D), except that the magically heated water originates here in a golden basin beneath an open-ended pipe. The water appears to originate from nowhere.

I. The Master's Laboratory (30' x 20') Filled with minor treasures useful to low-level wizards, this laboratory is the play room of the Master. Any significantly dangerous experiments are carried out in his private laboratory in his secret tower (not here).

A magical mirror against the western wall matches the one in the front parlor (A) exactly, and is permanently set to view this room for security reasons.

If Master is at the store (GM's discretion), he is most likely found putting away in here. Trespassers are sent to the plane fire for "disposal," no questions asked, unless accompanied by a pleasantly disposed Miss Julie.

Personalities

The Master. *Human male. Ht: 6'. Wt: 170#. Age: 50 (really 276).* *Fighting prowess: Fair.* *Magic Ability: Legendary, C4. Good C1 (throws a wicked fireball).*

The Master is a greedy, paranoid old man. The traits seem to run in his family, since he is aware that he is the grandson of the conniving wizard Delgarth (who disappeared some five and a half centuries ago). He has an incredible knowledge of all known planes of existence and legendary dimensions—much of it from first-hand experience. Yet for the most part, he hoards such knowledge, as if it were his personal possession.

It should not seem strange then, that he has few acquaintances, and even fewer friends in the world. Nor does he have many enemies, since he rarely has face to face meetings with the wealthy clients he serves and often offends.

The Master has been many different men during his long life. Nearly a century ago, working for his friend Jedidiah Forge, he was the founder of the Forgeaway Company's Blacksmoke research laboratories. Forty years ago he enchanted Derek Valknar's bridge over the Great River to make it shift between dimensions upon command.

He is extremely protective of his daughter, Miss Julie, and this includes his refusal to teach her any of the dangerous and unpredictable arts of magic. At first, he believed her to have no

natural magical talent, but he has now realized that his own unfamiliarity with concealment powers was to blame for this mistaken impression. Eventually, he will take up tutoring the girl himself, even though he is grossly unqualified in her particular magical gifts. If she flees, he will follow.

Naturally, anyone threatening to split up their relationship has a lot to fear from the Master.

Miss Julie. □ *Human female. Ht: 5'6". Wt: 120# Age: 19.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Poor.* □ *Magic Ability: untapped as of yet, but natural gift for concealment magic can develop with training.*

Miss Julie is a very lovely, bouncy brunette with soft brown eyes and an ample figure. If it wasn't for the many rumors floating around town involving Dimensions Unlimited, she'd be hounded by suitors day and night. Fortunately for the GM, newcomers to the town are likely to propose first, check rumors later.

Miss Julie is also a natural business woman, being very attractive, intelligent, and shrewd. She has been sheltered by her father's over-protectiveness for many years. Now she's growing into quite a fine woman and developing an interest in things other than her job. This spells trouble for charismatic and romantic adventurers, especially if they practice magic.

Through the course of daily business, she has come to know and often befriend many of the masters of the various shipping and transportation companies. She is one of the few humans whom Ristya Darkbrow, captain of the River Drake names as friend and probably the only human who can have a free ride on Jip Stonedock's dragon whenever she wants. Others she knows by reputation and if asked, can give a fair appraisal of their skill and honesty.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Forced Vacation. The adventurers are hired to deliver a "package" to an old man at an inn. Naturally, the old man is the Master, and the "package" is someone to be disposed of. However, making the package an innocent, like a deposed prince or the bastard heir to the throne (possibly Augustine from the Wanderers section), should give the heroes a guilty conscience. If they don't deliver the package, the Master knows he will be blamed and his professional reputation is on the line here. He launches a private search to find the adventurers and only serious negotiations can save the unwilling thieves.

Scenario 2: Is this Piece of Dogmeat Annoying You Ma'am? A disrespectful customer annoys Miss Julie in the presence of the adventurers. Their help (or lack of) in rescuing her will be noticed. Perhaps a simple reward from a mystery admirer will suffice for now, and lead to more prosperous dealings the future. After all, even well-travelled mages need help now and then.

Scenario 3: Lean on 'em a Bit. The Forgeway Company makes it quite clear that should the agency recommend forms of travel other than its own coaches and ships, life could become quite "unpleasant." Miss Julie, who knows about Forgeway, is worried. The Master, who generally ignores business details, is not. The situation changes for the worse when a pair of Company goons hanging around the storefront disappear after making crude comments to Miss Julie. She convinces her father to hire the adventurers as guards, rather than having him take on the entire Forgeway company single-handedly.



— Miss Julie —

Scenario 4: Dream a Little Dream. The Master, through his research, has learned of Tholl, the lord of dreams and his own little dimension of dreams. Knowing that some risk is involved, he hires the adventurers to visit the Houndsteeth Border Garrison and, somehow, spend a night in Tholl's favorite prison cell.

This establishment can serve as a focal point of travel within a world. Folk from various lands (and even other dimensions) travel through its doors every day. This might be an unusual source of information for curious adventurers—a good change of pace from getting informants drunk at Ye' Old Generic Inn and Tavern. Of course, the nature of travel changes as adventurers gain power and wealth, and this business has been specifically designed to grow with the adventurers. Even greater challenges are possible if the Master is brought into the picture, one spell at a time.

Forgeway Inn #46



Truth: Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The Forgeway Company strives for absolute power. From international politics to shipping cargo, the name of Forge brings instant recognition. And in the world of transportation, there are few names that bring a stronger emotional response. The Forge brothers are the acknowledged bad boys of the City's shipping industry.

There are few businesses in the City as large or as powerful as the Forgeway Company, an overland passenger and freight operation with major terminals in 12 large citystates and numerous "inns" scattered along the major roads linking those cities. No other shipping concern is as reliable as Forgeway. Few passenger coaches are as elegant. Their standardized inns are always reliably comfortable. Yet those who compete too enthusiastically against Forgeway, or pry into things that the Forge brothers would rather keep secret, may find that their business fail without explanation or that they themselves disappear without a trace.

History

"Reliable Service for Over a Century"

Company Motto

The Forgeway Company was founded about 100 years ago by Jedediah and Andre Forge, honest, reputable and ambitious men, who started with but a single wagon and a team of horses. From this humble beginning, Forge's operation expanded to include 50 passenger coaches, 65 shippers (overland cargo carriers), 12 main stations (based in large cities), 211 "inns," a metal foundry and research station at Blacksmoke, 5,000 employees, 1,200 horses, and investment interests in dozens of other industries and ventures. Company assets total in the millions of gold pieces.

During the time of Jedediah's son, Oliver, the Company began to shape up into its current form. It was also the time when working conditions for employees took a turn for the worse. Each employee was made to sign a five year contract to work for the Company. During this time, they could neither marry nor live anywhere but in Company housing. They were required to purchase necessities from Company stores with the scrip the

Shawn Moore is one of CityBook's "Freshman" contributors. With the publication of Forgeway Inn #46, he claims to have fulfilled one of his lifelong dreams. Hopefully he has a back-up dream or too to keep him going until the next book.

Christopher Appel and I occupied adjacent artist tables at a recent game convention in which neither of us sold much. Though a newcomer to the adventure game industry, Chris has been making the rounds of science fiction conventions for several years. When last heard from, he was doing some computer game animations. I think you will find that his work makes a strong contribution to CityBook.

Company issued instead of currency. Some balked at first, but the excellent pay at higher positions and the benefits received at retirement more than made up for the sacrifice.

Oliver's sons, Hiram and Terrence, run the vast transport and shipping business of today. A third, younger son, Hakan, chose to remove himself from the Company's management and operations. The older Forge siblings' greed has also increased the worker's plight by adding an additional five years to their work contract and cutting retirement benefits by 50%. They have increased the prices in the Company stores as well, so that an employee must frequently add another year just to pay off his debt to the Company.

The late Jedediah's younger brother Andre (an unusually well-preserved old man), oversees the investments of the Company's Credit Division, but does not wield any of the real power within the Company itself—though he could make life truly uncomfortable for his avaricious nephews should he so chose.

The elder Forge brothers have also been busy in the realm of international politics, both within and without the city. Using stations as bases of power, Hiram has spun a web of financial and political influence in many cities. The Company has arranged to have many friends in high places, as well as supporting popular programs like food subsidies and housing programs for the poor. Anyone who wishes to bring an accusation about any Company misconduct must have solid evidence or the officials will simply look the other way. Workers who cause trouble are placed under Terrence's care at the advanced research and development department (ARD) at Blacksmoke. Others who rock the Company boat have been known to meet with unfortunate "accidents."

Company Services

The Forgeway Company deals primarily in the efficient overland movement of customers and cargo between the twelve major terminals.

Passenger Service

The Forgeway coach is the epitome of ultra-modern comfort, having room for six passengers with plenty of head and legroom. There is a built in wet bar and plenty of reading material with enough variety to please any taste. Required overnight stops are included in the ticket purchase price, all food and drink are complimentary. The cost to ride this scientific miracle of the modern age is a mere 1 silver piece per mile (or 1 gold piece each 10 miles). Each customer is allowed 50 pounds of carryon baggage.

Freight Hauling Service

The shipper is a low-walled cargo carrier able to carry up to

4,500 pounds. The cost to ship goods from one destination to another is 2 copper pieces per pound (1 gp/ 100 lbs.), depending on the cargo carried (a load of feathers would cost more than a load of coal). Rates are negotiable with the Station Manager. Insurance can be purchased at 1 copper piece per five pounds. Coaches alone travel at about five miles per hour, while the coach and shipper does an easy two miles per hour. A four-horse team can pull the coach, a six-horse team can pull a fully loaded shipper, and a 10-horse team can pull both.

The crew consists of a driver and usually one or two guards (sometimes more) depending on the importance of the cargo and/ or the passengers and the relative risk of the run. Passengers serve themselves in the coach.

Other Services

Customers can buy custom made coaches or wagons, even designing custom equipment themselves, if so desired. The Road Department does road repair, road building, builds fortifications, and housing. The Credit Division often funds merchant ventures (with a modest interest rate, of course). Customers can have custom leather work such as saddles, barding, or leather armor done at major terminals. The rarely discussed Research Division develops and sells weapons and alchemical wonders produced at its Blacksmoke Research Station.

Company Employment

People who have no spouses will be hired for one gold piece per week. Promotions usually add another gold piece per week for the first five years. New workers are always sent to work the Company's "Forgeway Inns" the first year.

If someone works for the Company for more than 10 years, his or her wages are increased to 20 gold pieces per week and at retirement (after 40 years of service!), they are guaranteed an income of 10 gold pieces per week.

Blacksmoke

Although the Company makes big money in the transportation business, even bigger money comes from the work done at Blacksmoke. Blacksmoke is situated in the mountains to the north, several days travel from anywhere. Here, brother Terrence Forge reigns supreme and a word from him could mean one's "unfortunate" death. The workers fear him and would try to escape, if not for the many patrols that monitor the polluted landscape. No one, unless he or she be a manager (with connections!), ever leaves Blacksmoke. Ever. A cemetery is located to the east.

As the mountains contain large deposits of iron and other metals, the foundry provides all of the Company's metal needs and is able to make sizable exports of processed metals to those able and willing to buy. Credit is often extended to noble houses in exchange for present and future favors.

Along with the foundry, a huge warehouse-type structure shelters the Advanced Research & Development (ARD) alchemical factory and weapons development operations. Compounds, both magical and mundane, are produced by ARD alchemists to meet the needs of many clients. Coldust, one of the alchemical factory's most recent products, cools the interiors of small spaces. It is mostly used for food preparation and storage. When exposed to salt, Coldust can produce temperatures near 30

degrees Fahrenheit (about -1 Celsius), though this uses up both the salt and the Coldust at phenomenal rates.

Unfortunately, for the workers, the alchemical factory accounts for most of the deaths that occur at the plant. Monthly totals can be anywhere from one to as many as 100 (such as when an entire laboratory blows up).

Of all the things developed here, the weapons make the most money for the Company. This helps the Company maintain its political power by working for many people with different "interests." They build many kinds of large, yet portable weapons, often to customer specifications.

The true evil of the Company manifests itself when it comes time to test a new product. A remote village will be chosen, the equipment will be brought over and set up, and in a surprise attack, the village and all of its inhabitants will be wiped out. Once again, mounted patrols make sure no one escapes. After the job is done, a rumor about rampaging dragons is circulated.

Layout

Stations are always built along side of a road if possible. Coaches enter the courtyard in front of the building, to allow passengers to embark or disembark. From this point, the coach is taken to the barn to care for or replace the horses.

A well tended green and garden with a small fountain nearly fills the front courtyard. Benches and lanterns are placed at intervals. A large sign welcomes customers in the name of the Company. To the south of the courtyard is the main building, to the east is the two-storied barn, both are built of timber and brick.

The Barn

This structure measures 50' x 50' and is 20' high. In the west and east walls are sets of lockable³ double doors, 10' wide and 10' high. Above the east door there is a smaller "hay" door which is used to take in grain and hay into the loft. A pulley helps with this. It too, is capable of being locked³.

1. Stalls (7' x 4') There are 16 stalls, each with its own feeding trough. Eight spare horses are kept here at all times. When not eating or locked up at night, the horses are allowed to exercise in the corral. The stalls are always kept clean.

2. Coach Storage and Repair (19' x 22') There is room here for two coaches or shippers. Coaches staying overnight are cleaned, restocked, repaired if necessary, and made ready for the next day's trip. There is usually a spare coach here, but not a spare shipper.

3. Loft (48' x 19'-'U'-shaped) The loft is used to store hay, grain, tackle and other items needed for the coaches and horses. Ladders to the loft are located near the east door.

Main Building

Measuring 70' x 80', the main building is one story tall. All the windows and doors are protected by sliding metal shutters which can be dropped into place in case of trouble.

A. Dining Room (28' x 29') Scattered about the room are several elegant, round wooden tables, each with four chairs. A wet bar is located in the southeast corner of the room and is always manned by a male attendant. A cocked (but not loaded) crossbow is always kept under the bar counter. The west wall has a built in performing stage where traveling minstrels can sing for their

supper. The floor is tiled with hard wood squares, kept polished by much hard work. Glass lanterns hang from the ceiling. Three pretty, young girls (often imported from nearby cities) wait on tables, serve food, clean and shine as time allows. Total seating capacity for the room is 40. The front door can be locked³ which it always is after 10 o'clock.

Services: First drink is compliments of the Company (and usually watered). A simple meal is provided for all travelers who stay the night, as is a simple breakfast. Better, or richer food may be purchased, usually for an additional two gold pieces per customer.

B. Kitchen (28' x 19') From the kitchen comes common food but exceptional in taste and many people come to the station just for dinner. Meals cost anywhere from 5 copper pieces to 5 silver pieces. Employees eat their meals in the kitchen. The numbers represent the locations of: (1) oven; (2) coldroom (powered by Coldust when ice is not readily available); (3) pantry; (4) liquor cabinet; (5) work table.

C. Lounge (17' x 28') Overnight guests are encouraged to unwind in this comfortable room. Since the dining room closes at eight o'clock, another wet bar is kept manned and ready. On the east wall is a dart board, there is a pool table and for those who can

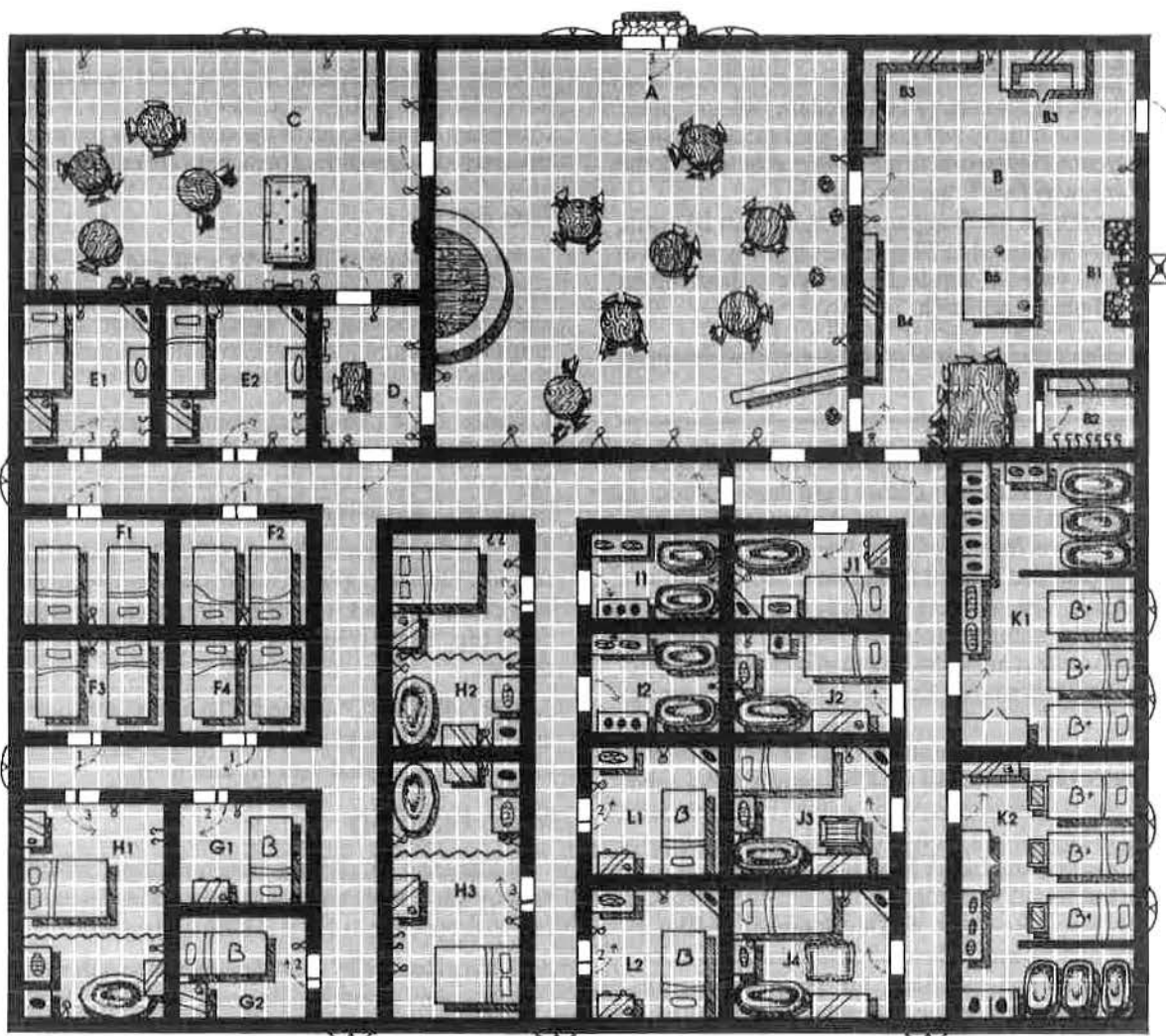
read, there is a sizable collection of nearly 1,000 volumes, though most are less than scholarly. The floor is covered in a thick carpet and the wall is paneled in pine planks. Only those who have paid for a room can use the lounge.

D. Check-in Room (10' x 7') A female worker takes the names of those who will be staying the night. She will also take money if they have not already paid. Passengers who are required to spend the night always are given the cheapest room available, though "buying up" to a higher quality room is politely offered to every guest. Room prices vary, costing anywhere from one to 20 gold pieces per night. Guests are encouraged to leave their weapons in the room.

E. Ten Gold Piece Rooms (10' x 9') The rooms contain a single comfortable bed with blankets, a thunderjug (chamberpot), a drysink and a dresser. Hooks on the walls provide places to hang armor and weapons. Three oil lamps provide light. The room is cozy and the door can be locked³.

F. One Gold Piece Rooms (8' x 9') This is as close to cheap as a Forgeaway Inn gets. There are two beds with blankets, one oil lamp and hooks for weapons or armor. The door can be locked¹.

G. Two Gold Piece Rooms (7' x 9') These are similar to the one



SCALE: one square = 2 feet

▲ INN/STATION HOUSE

gold piece rooms except there are a set of bunk beds and a dresser in each one. The rooms are lit by two oil lamps. The doors can be locked².

H. Twenty Gold Piece Rooms (15' x 10') These are the very nicest rooms available, fit for the wealthiest travelling gentry. They are furnished with every possible amenity and include a private tub and toilet arrangement. A tapestry separates the sleeping portion from the bathing section, and the doors can be locked³.

I. Bathing and Toilet Rooms (6 1/2' x 9') Each contain two tubs, a three-seater toilet bench, a double drysink, and oil lamps for light. Hooks for clothing line the wall and curtains can be closed to provide privacy.

1. **Men's room** a male attendant is always on duty and tipping is expected when water is required.
2. **Women's room** a female attendant is always on duty and tipping is expected when water is required.

J. Management Quarters

1. **Stable Manager's Room (6' x 11')** The room contains a bed, a drysink, a dresser, a thunderjug (chamber pot) and a ceramic tub. Although small and Spartan, the room contains

pictures of family and friends and books on horses and smithing.

2. **Cook's Room (7' x 11')** The cook's room contains much the same furniture as the others except that instead of a dresser he has bookshelves. On the shelves are several volumes of cook-books. Many are written by City chefs and instruct the reader in cooking techniques as well as including some recipes.

3. **Assistant Manager's Room (9' x 11')** The assistant manager has only been at Inn #46 for a few days. His gear is still packed away in the shipping crates and stowed under the bed. The room lacks any kind of "personality," and is furnished like the others.

The duties of the assistant manager include making out a work roster for the other workers, and ordering supplies for the Inn's company store and day to day operations.

4. **Manager's Room (9' x 11')** This room is decorated with many valuable items. Silk blankets cover the bed, rare books line the shelves, and an eastern made rug covers the floor. The manager is responsible for the Inn's overall hospitality and seeing that the cook, the stable manager and the assistant manager do their jobs. She (in this case) takes care of discipline and can send people up to Blacksmoke if she decides to (she does not know what goes on up there.)

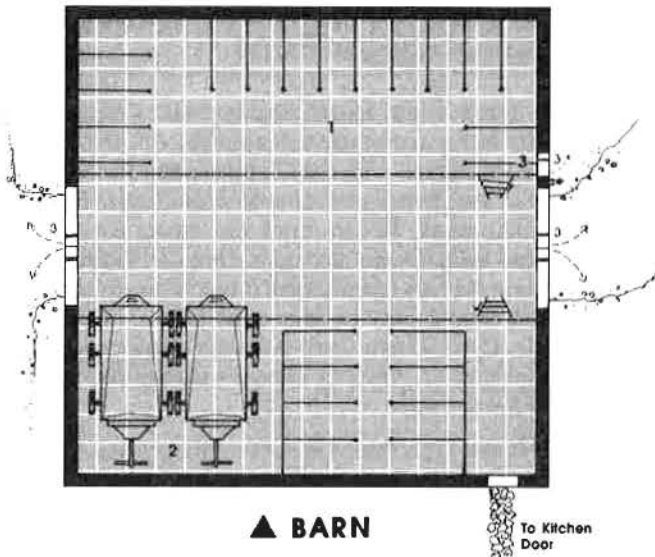
K. Employee Barracks

1. **Men's Dormitory (20' x 12')** The dormitory is actually split into two sections, the sleeping section and the bathing section. There are three sets of triple bunk beds, a large wardrobe, two double drysinks, a five seater potty bench, and three ceramic tubs. There is not much room for privacy or personal possessions. Two windows and six oil lamps provide illumination. Cleanliness is very important to the Company image, therefore each employee is required to bathe at least five days out of seven.

2. **Women's Dormitory (18' x 12')** Similar in description to the men's room, this room has the woman's touch. Lockers for personal use are placed at the end of every bed. Female employees are required to take baths every day and to wear perfume to cover body odors.

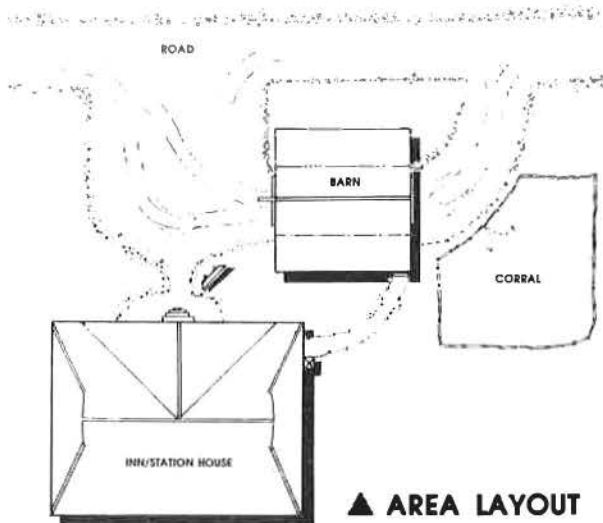
L. Four Gold Piece Rooms (9' x 9') The rooms are similar to the 10 gold piece rooms except that they have bunk beds for two people instead of one. The door can be locked².

SCALE: one square = 4 feet



▲ BARN

To Kitchen Door



▲ AREA LAYOUT

Personalities

Hiram Forge. □ Human, Ht. 5'8", Wt. 180 #, Age 39. □ Fighting Prowess: Fair with a rapier. Otherwise poor.

Hiram is good looking in a rugged way, with large ice-blue eyes, curly black hair, just going to gray at the temples, and a strawberry birthmark on his neck, about as big as a quarter. His marriage to his second wife, Locratia is strong (though she was once his brother Hakan's lover). His son, Jedediah Forge II, by his first wife, is now 17 and already showing a keen wit for business and intrigue. His daughters, both by Locratia, are small children only 4 and 5 years old.

Hiram is the driving force behind the commercial success of the Company. He is the one who searches out new areas of operation and deals with government leaders, as well as bribing nobles who favor Company projects. Hiram is ruthless, stopping at nothing to bring down a rival. Fortunately, there are few who can actually match the Forgeway Company, gold piece for gold piece.

Anyone who is seen as a threat to Company interests is eliminated and Hiram has several connections within the Nightside



— Terrence Forge —

of the City to see that such jobs get done. Hiram's main goal is to deliver to his own son, Jedediah II, a united financial empire. Since brother Terrence owns half of the Company, something must "happen" to Terrence before too long. Brother Hakan Forge (q.v. *Wanderers*) has no interest in the Company or its operation, and probably for this reason, is actually trusted, and even possibly loved by Hiram.

Terrence Forge. □ Human, Ht. 6'4", Wt. 220#, Age: 37. □ Fighting Prowess: Excellent with knives, Good otherwise.

Terrence is a strikingly handsome, dark-skinned man, even though he is Hiram's brother by the same woman. He is strong and athletic, keeping in shape by "hunting" escaped employees.

Terrence's soul is dark; dark and malignant. He rules Black-smoke with an iron hand. He believes brother Hiram to be a weak fool, but keeps him around because of his natural talent to corrupt others. Terrence is not aware that brother Hakan has returned from his self-imposed exile, otherwise he might have cause to fear. Terrence has his eye on a small kingdom, one in which a corrupt government was recently overthrown by some vagabond named Ultan Steeltalon, then left in the hands of others. He is building an army of loyal followers and as soon as he feels strong enough, he will kill his brother, take over the Company, and conquer his kingdom.

Cyril Rivenstave. □ Human, Ht. 5'9", Wt. 150#, Age 45. □ Fighting Prowess: Poor. □ Magic Ability: Good in all C's except C5 and C6.

Short and balding, Cyril is an important figure in the government of a nearby citystate (not *The City*, though). He is respon-

sible for imports and exports and answers only to his citystate's ruler. He has found a great deal of amusement in playing the various shipping companies against each other, with his citystate coming out the richer. He has turned down several offers of "friendship" from Hiram not realizing the implied danger. However, he has too many friends just for him to meet with an accident. Cyril's nephew Bbob is the new assistant manager at Forgeway Inn #46.

Bbob Rivenstave. □ Human male, Ht. 6'1", Wt. 170#, Age 24. □ Fighting Prowess: Average with throwing knives.

Bbob is the kind of person that can't find his niche in life. Using his uncle's influence, he tried the Wizards' Guild college in the City, but lacked the stamina and concentration necessary to study. He tried adventuring but kept getting lost, and finally ended up in the Company. It was as much a shock to him as to anybody else when he got his promotion. He arrived at his new post at Inn #46 a few days ago.

Employees. The employees that work at the Inn are young, healthy, clean, and nice looking (think of the workers at a major amusement park). The last qualification is not set in concrete. On the average there are anywhere from 14-20 workers at the Inn on any given day.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: It's a Trap! Hiram decides that to remove Cyril Rivenstave for being an obstacle to his plans. Learning that Cyril has a nephew employed with the Company and that Cyril was embarking on a long journey which would take him to Forgeway Inn #46 for one night, Hiram sends the orders for the boy's promotion and transfer the next day. One of Hiram's agents meets the boy at the City terminal and infects him with a magical disease which would only be infectious to one other person, Bbob's uncle, Cyril. Either Cyril hires the characters to act as bodyguards or they are hired by Hiram's men to see that Cyril never leaves the Inn alive.

Scenario 2: It was Horrible!. One of the villages that is used for target practice is the hometown of one of the characters. He and his friends go north to hunt down a dragon. They find a survivor.

Scenario 3: Ground Zero. The Company is about to test a new weapon. The characters happen to be in the village they are going to test it on.

Influencing political power through economic clout is not a new idea and neither are corrupt business barons. If the point has not been made by now, be informed that Forgeway Company and the elder Forge brothers are the bad guys. They will stop at nothing to gain the power they crave, whether it involves crushing a competing business or pulverizing little old ladies in sandals. Should you need to make things difficult for an adventurer-owned business, remember—"Forge has badder idea!"

Drakkonstar Express



There's an old maxim that goes "When life deals you a quoron-fruit, make quoron juice." Easy to say, but easy to do? Not always. You have to be clever, you have to be talented, but mostly you have to be desperate! The courier service, Drakkonstar Express, was born out of such desperation.

Drakkonstar Express is the catchy name for one of the City's more unusual courier services. Specializing in rapid delivery of small packages and individuals to locations outside the City, the little business is starting to make a name for itself. Faster than a mounted rider and cheaper than sorcerous travel, Drakkonstar Express serves a small, but dedicated and slowly growing clientele.

The modest offices of Drakkonstar Express are, at best, difficult to find. In fact, one usually needs directions to even find someone who *knows* where to find Jiaperrinan (call him "Jip") Stonedock and his business associates. Of course, the task would be altogether easier if Drakkonstar Express actually had "offices." An unmarked, run-down stable in the City's seedier warehouse district currently serves that need.

History

The tale, as the folk of Westquarry tell it, goes something like this: "The egg Jiaperrinan Stonedock found in the Stonedock lime quarry were a fake. Everyone said so. Well, when old Barnapus said it were real (and he was a most learned halfling), well then they all said it were nothing but an old lizardy-type egg. When grandad Bufo, the hocus-pocus guy, said it were a dragony-type egg, well then they all said it be a dead curiosity, like to be found in a mathom house. When it got real warm 'cause it sat on the mantle over the fire at Jip's old mum's house and started to throb and jump a bit, they all said it were accursed. When it hatched into a real dragon critter, they all said that Jip should sell it to a wizardy fellow up Eastcliff way. When the wizard fellow found that the wee dragon had taken to Jip like it were his own mum and weren't no good to him a 'tall, they all suggested that maybe Jip might be tryin' his luck somewheres else—in fact, anywhere else outside the village ..."

Jip and his dragon (named Tiam) left the predominantly halfling village of Westquarry nearly seven years back. Jip worked at odd jobs to keep both his and Tiam's rapidly growing

appetite sated and to keep moving on ahead of folk who treated Tiam like some monster. Eventually, they came to the City (where Tiam was merely a curiosity, not a thing of horror). While sweeping out the offices of Dimensions Unlimited, a desperate client rushed in. He pleaded with Miss Julie, the young woman who ran the travel agency. He absotively, possolutely ... no that's possotimely ... well, he had to have something, someplace TOMORROW (otherwise he was doomed, or cursed, or some such other bit of terribleness). Jip, as sharp as his father ever was, put two and two together and said "I can do it." And with Miss Julie's permission, He and Tiam did it, and earned more in a day than he had earned in the previous sixth months.

Thus was Drakkonstar Express born. Miss Julie provided money for Jip to rent a suitable stable and for a small cut of Jip's fee (which she often foregoes), books clients for Drakkonstar and arranges any travel accommodations. She also enjoys the added perk of free dragonback rides whenever business is slow.

Stiv, the third member of the Drakkonstar team, came along soon after. Jip awakened one morning to find the boy curled up next to Tiam (along with an assortment of mice, cats, rabbits and puppies). The human boy had obviously been abused and Jip decided to let Stiv stay so long as he didn't make a nuisance of himself. Far the opposite, Stiv keeps the place clean, keeps the dragon fed, and somehow manages to keep curiosity seekers away.

Services

For those who can find the stables (usually upon referral), Drakkonstar Express provides the following services:

Parcels & other Freight

Half day's flight to destination:	50 gold
One day's flight to destination:	100 gold
Each extra day needed to reach destination:	35 gold

Passengers (up to 250 lbs. total weight)

100 gold piece surcharge for each full or partial day of travel. Travel accommodations are an additional fee and are booked through Miss Julie at the Dimensions Unlimited travel agency.

All fees are paid in advance to Miss Julie at Dimensions Unlimited, who in turn issues a travel voucher to the client (good as cash at any Drakkonstar Express office).

Layout

Despite a recent whitewashing, the old stable still looks like the decrepit dump that it is. The ground floor is stone, the loft above it is half-timbered construction (wood and stucco). Out-

Author Paul Jaquays makes his second CityBook appearance here. Though often remembered for his early design work for Judges Guild in the late '70s (*Dark Tower & Caverns of Thracia*), Paul now works as a freelance designer and editor, though most of his recent design efforts involve the computer game industry. Paul has recently completed design work for the first book in the *Lord of the Rings* computer role playing game series. He also illustrates game products, including this one ... but that is another tale.

side, a small, inconspicuous signboard shows a dragon silhouetted against an eight-pointed star. Below that, the message "Jiaperrinan Stonedock, proprietor. By Appointment only."

Ground Floor

Ages ago (well maybe a century or so), the barn once housed a small freight hauling operation.

A. Loading area. (12' x 23') The double-wide doors to the street (to the east) and the corral (to the south) are locked² at night. Stiv keeps the stone-flagged floor well-swept. A ladder leads to the loft and the door into Tiam's stable is latched, but not locked. An old bronze plaque, leans against the west wall, partly hidden by dangling rope and straw debris. The plaque reads "Forge Shipping, Jedidiah Forge, proprietor."

B. Tiam's Stall. (15' x 15') The dragon's quarters are roomy with plenty of space to stretch out and roll around. Stiv keeps the dragon and his bedding clean and fresh. The recently installed wooden slat partition gives the dragon a bit of privacy, but would do little to actually keep him restrained.

C. Corral. (27' x 27') The yard here is fairly overgrown with grass and weeds. Tiam uses the yard as a takeoff and landing site, but not enough to even wear a path in the grass. After a steady rain, a depression in the southeast corner fills with water.

Loft

The original purpose of the loft was to store hay, straw and spare wagon tack. Jip and Stiv have made it into an almost-comfortable apartment.

D. Common Area. (irregular, 27' x 23'). Jip and Stiv use this area of the loft to eat, play board games (similar to chess and go), cook meals, entertain an occasional guest, and do the paperwork

part of their business. An old potbellied wood stove in the northwest corner provides the loft with heat and is used to prepare meals. Most of the outer walls are lined with a mismatched collection of fine draperies, old sails, canvas tarpaulins, and a discarded tapestry or two—anything to keep chill winter winds out.

E. Jip's Room. (13' x 11') The furnishings in here are sized to fit a halfling. The south wall slopes inward (it is formed by the sloping roof). The heavy canvas tarpaulin here serves to keep out both wind and water from the leaking roof. Jip keeps his personal belongings in a cabinet and a selection of books on shelves. He has been attempting with minimal success to teach Stiv to read and write.

F. Privy. (5' x 5') The room is served by a regularly emptied thunderjug (chamberpot), and a small washbasin.

G. Stiv's Quarters. Using discarded lumber (so he said) and with the help of Jip, Miss Julie and a fellow named Hakan, Stiv built a second level in the loft. Here, Stiv and his assorted animal friends can rest with a level of comfort he never knew until joining up with the odd little halfling.

Personalities

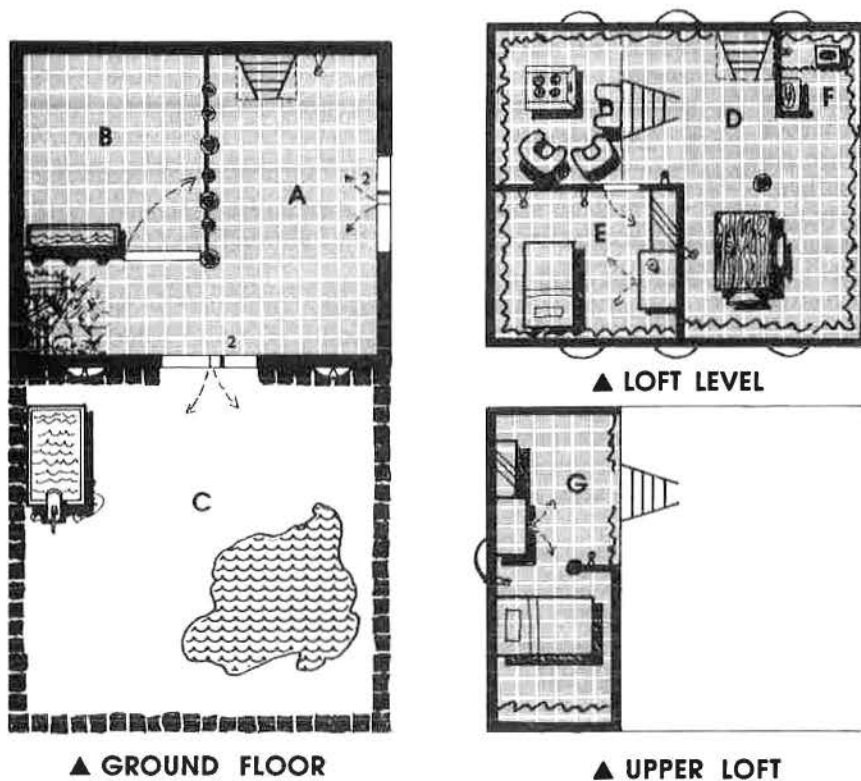
Jiaperrinan (Jip) Stonedock. □ Halfling, Ht. 3' 8", Wt. 45#, Age: 30. □ *Fighting Prowess: Fair with Sling, Average with everything else.*

Jip, as he prefers to be called, is a just barely-adult halfling. Good looking in a rustic sort of way. His every action is filled with vibrant energy—to the point where he rushes everywhere and talks rapid-fire, cramming three or four sentences into one. He is not an adventurer, has no magic skills, and possesses luck that runs in cycles (sometimes good, sometimes hideously bad). Before finding the egg, he was a junior assistant apprentice stonecutter in his uncle's limestone quarries, destined to be, at best, an assistant stonecutter. His dad had disappeared long ago and his uncle already had ten kids, most of whom worked in the business. Jip was just another poor relation to look after.

Despite all that has happened to him, Jip remains trusting and somewhat naive. He wants to believe that other folk are as honest and trustworthy as he.

Jip always wondered whatever happened to his dad, Jordadoc (Jordy) Stonedock. Most folk thought that he would take over running the quarry. Yet, when old Grandad Jiaperrinan ("The Old Gyp" they called him) up and died, something happened and Jip's father disappeared, leaving behind a lovely wife and a young bucco. The youngest Stonedock brother, Ardonac (Arty) went into the wide world to look for Jordy. Neither was seen again. In the meantime, Radadoc Stonedock took over the operations of the family stone quarry—which never again thrived as it had under The Old Gyp or Jordy.

Jip consults regularly with Dando Thistle-down, the proprietor of the Halfling House. Each seeks lost members of his family and they



SCALE: one square = 1 1/2 feet

exchange what information they learn in their travels and seekings. Jip knows that should he seek in the right place, his father and uncle will turn up.

Tiam. □ *Dragon. Ht. 8' 9", Wt. 3,100#, Age 8. □ Fighting Prowess: Good.*

Tiam is not a real dragon, but some kind of dragonish flying beast—though few have attempted to discern the difference. Neither Jip nor Stiv can determine whether Tiam is male or female, though they usually refer to the dragon as “him.” The great creature cannot breathe fire, but assume that it can whip its claws and fangs around at an incredible rate.

The dragon is bonded to Jip in much the same way that a young cat or dog attaches itself to a special master. Jip is Tiam’s substitute mother.

Tiam can carry Jip and up to 200-250 pounds of baggage or passenger.

He is semi-intelligent (at least for now), and can communicate quite readily with Stiv.

Though he prefers uncooked meat, Tiam is an omnivore (meaning that much like a human or bear, he requires a varied diet). Much to Jip’s dismay, the dragon likes to eat giant slugs (which affect the dragon much like a combination of beans and onions would affect a human—making Tiam unpleasant to be around to say the least).

Stiv. □ *Human, Ht. 4' 8", Wt. 60#, Age 11. □ Fighting Prowess: Average with fists and a cudgel, Poor otherwise. □ Magical Ability: Poor, C5. Has an empathic communication link with animals.*

Sharper than average (but not “wise beyond his years”), Stiv keeps things moving at the office. He runs errands for Jip and Miss Julie at Dimensions Unlimited, buys stale bread and fresh meat for Tiam (no live animals though) and does what he can to make the stables look like “a real place of business” when Jip is off on a courier run.

Unlike Jip, Stiv trusts no one outside his immediate “family.” Stiv is an orphan. He never knew his birth parents. His guardians, a particularly cruel married couple, used him to generate money to support their alcohol and narcotics habits. Usually it was a different scam every few days. When they decided to cripple him for a begging career, Stiv disappeared, aided by his animal friends.

Had his cruel guardians known his true talent, they would never have lacked for money. Stiv can “talk” (actually he communicates by unspoken means) with animals of all sorts. Stiv prefers to keep this talent secret. Not even Jip suspects (Tiam knows though!). A small portion of Tiam’s feed goes to feed the mice, rats, raccoons, birds and bats who share the stables with Drakkonstar Express.

Stiv has a hopeless crush on Miss Julie, the woman who runs Dimensions Unlimited.



— Jip —

turers may need the aid of the Houndsteeth Garrison.

Scenario 2: Lifestyles of the Poor and Downtrodden. One of the adventurers receives a travel-stained note that he is due to inherit a large estate from a distant relative. The only problem, the message comes late and he or she must be at the distant will reading the next day! This can be a one player scenario acted out for the benefit of the rest of the players. Think up all the things that could possibly prevent Jip and the adventurer from getting to the will reading (ever take a taxi to a metropolitan airport when you were already pressed for time?). Make it a comedy of errors and near misses. However, make sure they get there with minutes to spare. Their reward? Make it a rambling old mansion with a mysterious past, a lost fortune and maybe a few ghosts for good measure.

Scenario 3: An Offer You Shouldn’t Refuse. An agent for the Forgeway Shipping Company informs Jip and Stiv that they are about to be purchased by Forge, implying they have no choice in the manner. Upon Miss Julie’s recommendation, Jip hires the adventurers to both defend him and to find and encourage an odd character named Ultan Steeltalon (a.k.a., Hakan Forge) to come to the aid of Drakkonstar Express. The scenario should include a tense confrontation between Hakan Forge and his power hungry older brother, Hiram Forge.

One of the attractive aspects about living in the past was that life was generally slower paced. In such a setting, Drakkonstar Express would be an anomaly, providing a service few people could ever imagine needing. Yet, as business competition between companies intensifies, information and its rapid, safe passage will become of paramount important. Jip and Stiv are as likeable a pair of fellows as you could hope to find in the City. Yet, they are not cutthroat competitors. Should real competition be raised against their delivery service, they will need all the help their friends can muster in order to compete and survive.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Father’s Day. Word comes to Dando Thistledown at Halfling House that a halfling resembling either Jip’s dad or his uncle has been taken captive by bandits along the Great Road to the north. Jip hires the adventurers to rescue this poor unfortunate, but then flies ahead only to be captured himself (unknown to the adventurers). Make the bandits powerful (possibly Barnaby of Vrigelian’s Shrine has expanded his group). The adven-

Freehold Municipal Caravanserai

The City depends on trade, not only through its port, but overland as well. Yet when bandits crouch on canyon walls, when storms besiege the land, when the miles stretch empty and dry between trading stops, Merchants and travellers often must resort to one of the oldest transportation systems in the world.

Residents of the City sigh wistfully when a caravan leaves the gates. Though no more than a dozen caravans cross the wilderness each year, they travel regularly on the landscape of folktales. Storytellers in market squares enthral listeners with accounts of long journeys, foreign lands, terrible perils, exotic cargos, and the mysterious travellers that tag along.

These stories have a certain minimal truth. But successful caravan leaders say, "On the best journey, nothing happens."

Caravan Sizes and Cargoes

Caravans are typically sized according to their numbers of mount animals, or beasts of burden. The type of beast varies according to the terrain—camels in a desert, for instance, or horses and oxen on a journey across prairies. In a fantasy world the mounts can be giant lizards, wyverns, or flying carpets! For one unusual supplier of mounts, see below.

Caravans are always large, because their luxury goods are in great demand . . . and because there is safety in numbers. A relatively small caravan might contain 600 mounts of the appropriate type; a caravan of average size, 1,200 to 1,500. Huge caravans of 2,500 to 3,000 mounts are not unknown. All told, an average caravan carries as much cargo as a typical trading ship.

Along with a dozen leaders, guides, and support staff, the caravan employs one "driver" per mount, or per two mounts in large caravans, and up to 300 guards. And, of course, all these people and mounts need to eat. In hostile terrain, the caravan must carry its own provisions—perhaps half the mounts haul food and



water for the trip.

Dozens of passengers may tag along. Often refugees, pilgrims, travelling entertainers, or spies, these folk pay a handsome fare. But they ride, rather than walk, and they live well on the trip—so well that, for each passenger, the caravan adds three mounts just for baggage and provisions. These may account for 20% of all the mounts.

The remaining mounts, of course, carry cargo. A horse or mule can carry 150-200 pounds; a camel, 500-600. Cargo includes the most valuable luxury goods available: precious metals, ceramics, glass, textiles, silk, perfumes, spices, sandalwood, resins, ivory, tortoise shell, aphrodisiacs, wax and honey, furs and leathers, and salt. Sometimes caravans carry food, such as sugar, coffee, and dates. And sometimes the cargo needs provisions itself. Noblemen pay well for exotic animals like falcons, lemurs, and basilisks.

In a fantasy world, the mounts can be cargo themselves. Just ask Torren Gadge . . .

"When You Want a Mount, You Want a Golem!"

Freelance mage Torren Gadge (see "Personalities"), who devised this catchy slogan, specializes in used constructs. Golems, gargoyles, and animate statues see high turnover in a world full of heroic adventurers. When the heroes defeat them, but don't smash them to pieces, Torren Gadge salvages or purchases the remains and puts them to productive work—hauling cargo in caravans.

Gadge offers upwards of a dozen golems in stone, flesh, and iron, all in major disrepair. This golem is missing an arm; that gargoyle's head is half gone; a hulking stone humanoid hops on one foot; the whole upper half of one iron statue has been melted away, so its two massive legs carry nothing but a loincloth-covered torso. Cargo bales rest on this torso, as on a tabletop.

Gadge's automatons make excellent, though expensive, mounts. They need neither food nor water, carry gigantic loads, never complain or question orders, and work in any extreme of climate. However, each golem requires its own driver, who bears the talisman of command that Gadge provides; each golem obeys only the holder of its talisman. Drivers ride on their automatons' shoulders . . . when those shoulders are intact.

Commanding the constructs can be tough work. A simple "Walk forward" may do the job, but if the trail twists, drivers must make course corrections at every step. Otherwise the constructs walk into rocks or over cliffs.

A competent writer researches his subject and then tells his tale. A good writer makes his establishment come alive. An outstanding writer gives his establishment that twist of the unexpected that makes it truly memorable. I think you'll find Allen Varney in that last category. Allen's recent projects include *Wildspace* for TSR's new *Spelljammer*™ game, the *Willow Sourcebook*, and *Gammaraiders*.

Richard Thomas says of himself, that he holds a couple of degrees at Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, where he also teaches Illustration and Design; that he has a full time job at a TV station doing design and computer graphics for promotion and news; and that somehow, he also manages to be the art director for *White Wolf* magazine.

On desert trips the flesh golems wear clothes to avoid damage from sunburn. And stone and iron golems can't travel well over desert sands. They tend to sink down to their knees.

Gadge sometimes travels with the caravan, to ensure that his precious constructs are treated properly. He makes a nice sideline selling them at his destination, then scavenging nearby dungeons and ruins to find replacements.

A Typical Journey

Caravans set out from the City at about monthly intervals, weather permitting. No single destination lures more than four caravans a year, but most rate an annual trip. The closer the destination, the smaller and more frequent the caravans to it.

Journeys cover 500-800 miles. Moving at a breakneck 2.5 miles per hour, a caravan can cover short distances in about a month; longer trips or enormous caravans can take up to 70 days.

No particular ceremony marks a caravan's departure from the City, mainly because it leaves at dawn. Still, there is plenty of noise: the leaders shout orders; drivers and their mounts grunt, squawk, or howl; guards sharpen their weapons; and nearby residents scream for quiet. No one bids *bon voyage* except the gate guards and the nervous investors who own the cargo.

Once underway, the caravan keeps to a rigid routine. Beginning at dawn, they march in a straggling line throughout the day, pausing at noon for refreshment. The leader, guide, and an advance guard ride in front, scouting routes. Three miles behind (an hour's travel), the rest of the caravan follows in a ragged procession. In insecure lands, they travel close together, flanked by guards. In fact, the tightness of a caravan's formation gives a

good index of danger.

As night falls, the leaders scout out a good campsite and pull the caravan into a circle. Drivers pile bales of merchandise into a 4-5 foot tall wall around the perimeter; mounts sleep just outside it, or inside when danger threatens (The caravan also uses this formation when under attack).

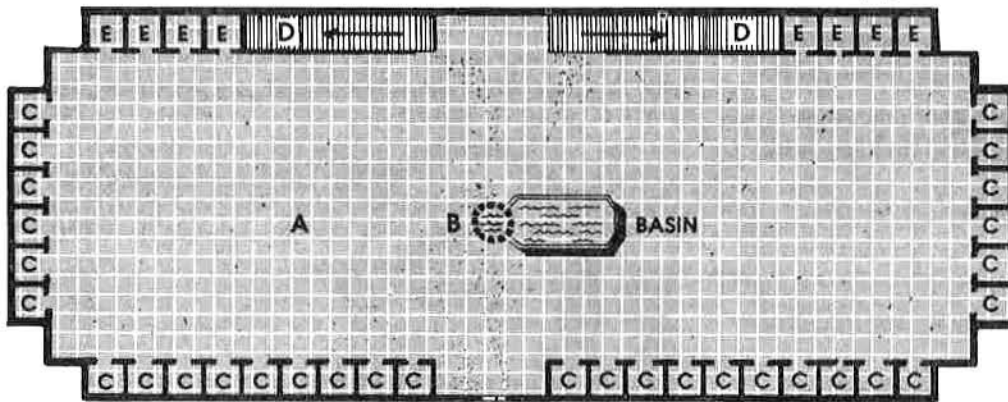
Guards and drivers pitch tents inside the wall in order of relative status; the further in you pitch your tent, the higher you are in the organization. The leader's tent stands in the exact center, surrounded by those of his lieutenants. Bodyguards and mercenaries pitch camp just beyond those.

Several mountain-bound caravans gladly change their routine layout at Tsalini's Stopover Station (q.v.). Here caravan leaders and their bodyguards adjourn to the comfortable indoor berths, leaving other travellers outside to cluster behind their wall of cargo bales.

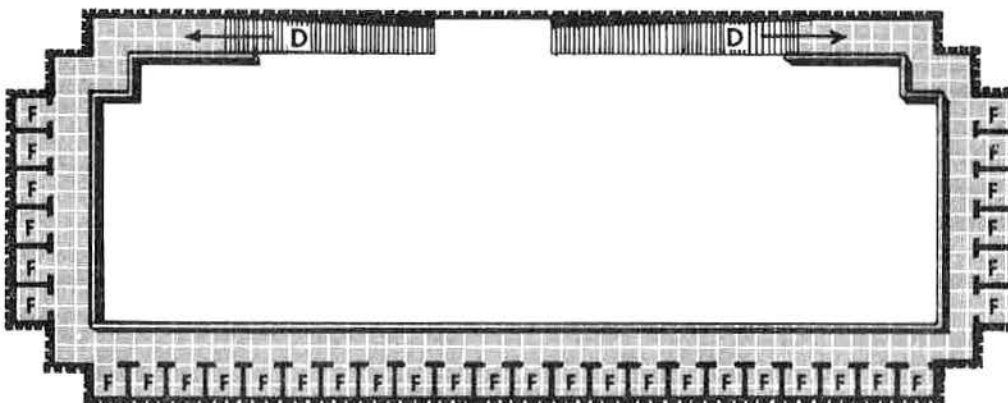
With the mounts turned loose to graze, the travellers prepare their one hot meal of the day. To dine, they split into groups, according to occupation. After supper, the leaders hold council, decide the next day's route, and judge disputes that have arisen. The council has full judicial power on the road.

Unless an itinerant wizard is along, the caravan stays in communication with home and destination cities via homing pigeons. At regular intervals or in emergencies, couriers ride ahead to the destination on the fastest mounts. Guards along the battlements know how to read the signs: If the courier brings good news, he rides normally; for bad news, his saddle is mounted backwards.

Unlike its departure, a caravan's arrival is a major event. With sufficient notice, bands and city officials await to offer a warm welcome—though not so warm as that of the merchants, who eagerly wait to buy their merchandise. The ceremonies occur outside the city gates, at a fortified building called the caravanserai.



▲ FIRST STORY



▲ SECOND STORY

SCALE: one square = 5 feet

Layout

Caravans are good for any city's business, so rulers try to attract them by building fortified structures designed for them. The City's two caravanserais, collectively known as the "Freehold," are large rectangular forts that hold 400 mounts each, along with drivers and cargo. The buildings, both in sight of the City gates, lie a few hundred feet apart.

The buildings usually stand empty. But when a caravan moves in for a day or a week, the city sends out porters, municipal employees supervised by "Magpie" Magill (see "Personalities," below), to serve the leaders—and, after the caravan departs, to clean the floors. These porters, and supervisor Magill, cultivate an attitude of calm in their duties—to the point of total inertia. They joke, "Our service is worth what they pay," and in fact the City charges nothing for the Freehold's use.

Each caravanserai is enclosed in crenelated stone walls, 40 feet tall and two to three feet thick. Each has only one entrance: a door of heavy oak, just wide enough to admit one loaded mount, and locked². Both buildings are open to the sky.

First Story

A few narrow air holes on each wall provide ventilation and serve as arrow-slits in emergencies.

A. Central Courtyard (240' x 80') This court looks none too clean and stinks of animal dung, but at least it's paved.

B. Well (10' diameter x 30' deep) A stone wall 4' high surrounds this well. Atop the well are a rope drum and crank of heavy wood. The fountain basin next to it, of smooth granite, serves as a watering trough for the mounts.

C. Storerooms (10' x 10') The caravan uses these to store cargo bales. Storerooms have arched doorways 8' high, but no doors.

D. Staircases (7' wide, 20' high) These broad, shallow stone stairs have no rails. One staircase in the center of each wall leads to the second story.

E. Privies (4' x 10')

Second Story

Small windows spaced along each wall serve the same purpose as the air holes on the lower level.

F. Lodging Rooms (10' x 10') Indistinguishable from the storerooms below, these too have no doors. This is not much bother; by the end of a long journey, caravan members seldom have secrets from one another.

Personalities

Every caravan is different. No established organization conducts caravans regularly. However, individuals can make whole careers hiring out to caravans. Here are a few of these, ranked in approximate order of status within the caravan.

The Honorable Mikal Del Brionfal Tobrannon.

□ Human, Ht. 5'8", Wt. 210#, Age: 44. □ Fighting Prowess: Average.

Not just anybody can lead a caravan. The leader needs

courage, leadership, common sense, and most of all, money. Merchants can't insure their valuable cargo as it travels the trackless wilderness; their only insurance is to elect a leader who becomes solely responsible for the safe arrival of the goods. If he loses the caravan, the leader reimburses the merchant syndicate out of his own pocket.

Given this, only one who commands immense prestige, trust, and finances can lead a caravan. Mikal Tobrannon qualifies on all counts, and has done so since his glorious military career staving off invasion on the desert frontier. Now retired, Tobrannon gains dignity and eminence with every pound he puts on; by now he appears virtually majestic. His eyebrows and cheeks bulge with brown hair, and his fine (though dusty) clothes bulge with—well, with him.

Though Tobrannon's weight taxes the backs of three horses in steady rotation, no more level head rides the land. His self-confidence and impassive composure reassure everyone around him. Fortunately, he also shows a keen grasp of psychology (to keep encounters peaceful) and tactics (when psychology fails).

If only he weren't such a lowbrow, and so hard on the caravan's musicians and entertainers! The refined, *nouveauriche* merchants who deal with him at both ends of the journey often shake their heads at his mistreatment of bards, wandering jesters, and fortunetellers. One might almost think he bears a grudge, as though over some past mistreatment.

Den Lant. □ Human, Ht. 6'2", Wt. 155#, Age: 36. □ Fighting Prowess: Fair with staff, otherwise Average.

Lean and sturdy as an oak pole and about as talkative, Lant guides the caravan with sure knowledge of the land, knowledge born of 20 years' experience.

The caravan's leader, Tobrannon, has good cause to spend much time with Lant. As it happens, they also enjoy one another's company above all others... though eavesdroppers would never know it. Often they pass whole evenings together in silence,



— Mikal Del Brionfal Tobrannon —

studying maps, staring at the sky, or poring over the account books (Tobrannon) or whittling (Lant). Neither talks much, if he can help it.

Lant knows the territory around the City for as far as any caravan ever travels in any direction. Like Tobrannon, he's seen everything and doesn't let it rouse him—though against enemies Lant occasionally shows a ruthless streak alien to Tobrannon. Now, Lant has no taste for murder. But he doesn't hesitate to kill anyone that endangers those under his protection, whether the lowest caravan driver or his own daughter, Nilia.

Nilia Lant. □ *Human, Ht. 5'3 or 5'6", Wt. 160# or 130, Age: 18.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Average with dagger, otherwise Poor.*

This grotesquely ugly, malformed young woman arouses pity in all who see her. Nilia's gawky, distorted body trembles at each step, and her mouth never quite closes all the way. Her eyes stare in different direction, and one eye always seems to be staring right at the subject most disturbed by it.

Nilia studies under her own father and has acquired a serviceable education. Those who can bear to be around her speak of her unusual intelligence and knowledge of the land. But only a few ever linger long enough to notice her ugly gray goblin pendant.

This enchanted pendant, which hangs from a chain around her neck, conceals Nilia's true identity: a tanned, black-haired charmer with thin eyebrows, large green eyes, and a diminutive nose. Early in her life, her astonishing beauty provoked Den Lant's guardian instincts to this paranoid excess. He has forced her to wear this magical talisman to prevent untoward attentions from the caravan's men.

Submissive to her father's stern authority, Nilia consents to wear the pendant by day. On the darkest nights she creeps out beyond the caravan walls to wander the desert in her true form. Out there, no one overhears her crying.

Slatter. □ *Human, Ht. 5'11", Wt. 160#, Age: 24.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Fair with sword, otherwise Average.*

Slatter, Tobrannon's aide-de-camp, runs messages among the senior staff, oversees the mount drivers, and screens those who want to see Tobrannon. He isn't especially good at any of this, but he's not bad enough to be a real problem. Yet.

Though he'd threaten anyone who accused him of being ordinary, Slatter really is a typical hotheaded youth. He joined the caravan when his lady friend announced an unexpected arrival in a few months' time. Slatter's mind swings like a pendulum between the idea of earning a fortune in the caravan and returning home to his new family, or of earning a fortune and heading for the most distant hills around.

Not yet corrupt, but corruptible, Slatter is disturbed at how easily criminal opportunities present themselves. Take one little jewel from a mount's pack in the night—who would know? Leave a gap in the night-wall for an enemy force—he'd make a fortune, and all the witnesses would be gone!

These ideas haunt Slatter. He hasn't yet persuaded himself to try them. But their very presence in his mind causes him to act guilty. Slatter provides an aromatic red herring for any mystery scenario.

Torren Gadge. □ *Human, Ht. 5'7", Wt. 130#, Age: 49.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Average with staff and dagger, otherwise Poor.* □ *Magic Prowess: Average C6 (constructs only), Poor C1, C5, C8.*



— Torren Gadge —

What this wizard lacks in power, he makes up in business sense. In his youth, Gadge failed as an apprentice, survived a very brief career as an adventurer, and decided that the ones who earned real treasure stayed outside underground ruins and sold supplies to dungeon-crawling fools. This proved true.

Gadge realized the transport potential of golems not long after one chased a party of his customers out of a dungeon and into his store. Taking the loss of the establishment in stride, Gadge invested his savings in talismans that could be attuned to control any given construct. Commissioning the aforementioned dungeon-crawling fools to bring him a few still-mobile samples, he went into business and has maintained a precarious living since.

Gadge's harried nature shows in his wild eyes, jumpy movements, and unruly yellow-white hair that juts from beneath his grimy skullcap. Countless chicken skulls, onyx pebbles, boa scales, and other talismans dot his robes. Years of association with constructs have whittled away his composure, so that now he feels uneasy around all inanimate objects.

Support Staff

A well-staffed caravan always includes a priest or cleric, who conducts prayers and sacraments and often metes out justice in matters "too trivial to bother the council with"—that is, any matters in which the priest takes a personal interest.

By tradition, caravans have an official coffee-maker. This esteemed officer, called the kahweji in foreign lands, brews and serves this valuable beverage to everyone on the expedition.

A standard-bearer, usually a teenager on his first trip outside the City, rides ahead of the caravan bearing a colored banner. He marks the path for those behind, and draws missile fire from ambushes. In dangerous lands, a caravan can go through one or two standard-bearers per trip.

Two or three couriers fill out the senior staff. These ride with

the advance guard on the fastest mounts available.

Travellers

Caravan passengers are typically either very rich and able to afford a leisurely journey, or extremely poor and willing to work as mount drivers to pay their passage.

The Wanderers chapter provides an ample selection of NPCs who might be found accompanying a caravan as a traveler between here and there. Here are a few others:

The Wolmunds, a large refugee family with an unusually high complement of infants. They say they're fleeing political, legal, or religious repression; perhaps they alert the characters to injustice being perpetrated back in the City. Or perhaps they're really fleeing because the mendicant father stole a bracelet from the wrong noble's home.

Barregart, a travelling jongleur—juggler, acrobat, jester, minstrel—who rehearses far too much for his own (or Tobranon's) good. His patter and music sound so mediocre because his occupation is a cover. Barregart, a swaggering womanizer and tale-teller, is actually a spy sent from or to the City to deliver scouting reports on foreign armies. Adjust the morality of his mission according to whether he's on the same side as the characters.

And finally, Hokan Delacree "the Trustworthy," an itinerant barber-dentist-circumciser. One need look no further than his shaking hands to discover why this bibulous medic is itinerant.

Guards. These are mercenaries or wayfarers hired for individual trips. Their Fighting Prowess seldom rises above Average, but they're not green and they keep their heads during (non-supernatural) crises. Player characters are usually ideal candidates for caravan guards. The pay is not good, but the benefits of safe travel make up for the low wage.

Drivers. On the lowest rung of the caravan's social ladder, these poorly-paid and ignorant starvelings work so hard by day that by night they are ready to sleep, or to get drunk and kill something.

"Magpie" Magill □ Human, Ht. 5'8", Wt. 135#, Age: 54.
□ Fighting Prowess: Poor.

"I'm a collector," says this minor bureaucrat. One might assume he collected plenty of favors to secure this post, some 25 years ago. In the interval Magill has earned his nickname by "collecting" trinkets, small gems, rare foods and perfumes, and other items from the caravans that use "his" Freehold.

Magpie (no one ever uses his real name, Borry) collects his fees openly—at least a token item from every third or fourth mount's cargo. "Service charge," he says with a twinkling eye. He also speaks plausibly of the need for "honest graft" among public servants (to prevent greater corruption). Along that line, he steadfastly refuses to take cash bribes; he just "collects."

Experienced caravan travellers shrug off this minor larceny, especially since Magpie shows charm and can tell great stories. A first-time guest at Freehold sometimes protests when Magpie lifts a precious kiwi fruit or ostrich feather from his bales. In this case, Magpie returns the item; but the outspoken guest soon notices that porters are sweeping other travellers' trash into his area and accidentally spilling well water in his storerooms.

After one overnight stay, the repentant guest humbly presents Magill with a new item for his collection.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: The Dead of the Night. The characters hire on as caravan drivers or guards. A mysterious cargo provokes interest, and possibly attacks by supernatural agents. But the major trouble strikes during the first full moon on the journey, when the cargo—a burial urn holding the ashes of a powerful mage—causes the golem mounts to go berserk.

Gadge cannot control the golems, for the mage's spirit has possessed all the constructs. The characters must defeat the mutilated golems before they can break a gap in the caravan wall and allow outside enemies to invade. The key may lie in opening the burial urn, allowing the ashes to reform, and confronting the undead wizard at the height of his power.

Scenario 2: Forge has a Badder Idea. The caravan beds down for the night at the Freehold Caravanserai. The Forge Company (q.v.), in another attempt to monopolize the trade routes, has bribed the porters to open the gates at midnight. Forge's thugs will steal in, "deal" everyone (perhaps with a poison gas or by magical means), and steal the cargo (and possibly kidnap a few folk for use at the Blacksmoke labs). This works especially well if the caravan is transporting an especially valuable item or product, such as the urn in Scenario 1, or if the attack also endangers Nilia Lant on her midnight wanderings.

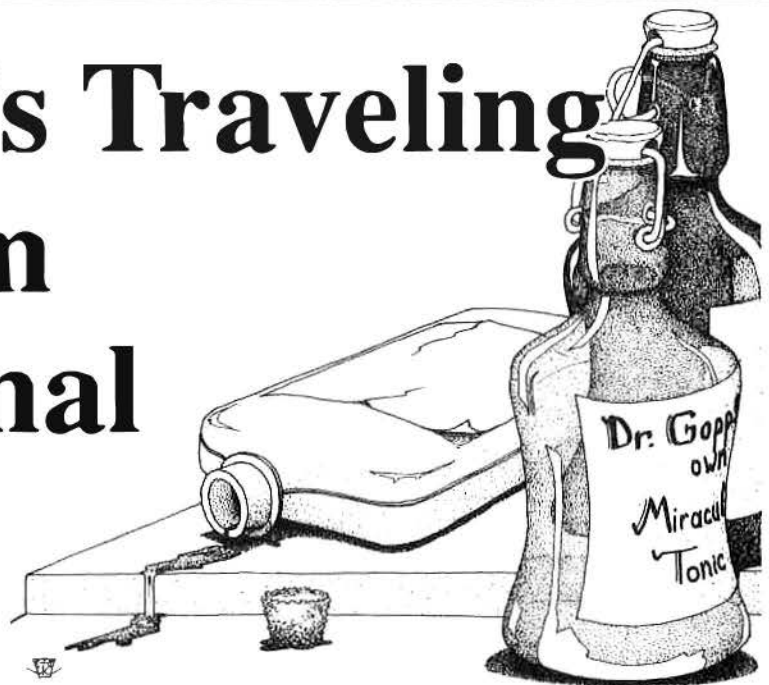
If the open gate would be noticed before the surprise attack could commence, the thugs might use a secret passage instead—perhaps a concealed tunnel opening into the well's shaft.

Scenario 3: His Guilt Shall Find Him Out. Slatter returns to the Caravanserai from a night on the City with an unusually guilty look on his face and avoids all contact with the senior staff. The next morning, an unusually large group of men and women buy passage on the caravan. Slatter arranged their passage for an amazingly large "finders fee." Because of this, he believes them to be bandits who will attack and commandeer the caravan. He has finally committed his first crime! Confused, upset, and extremely guilty, he convinces Tobranon to hire more guards claiming he has heard rumors of an attack on the caravan. Slatter personally hires the adventurers and tells them of his suspicions, even arranging for the adventurers to eliminate the bandit leader. Of course, the "bandits" are a diplomatic mission from the City travelling incognito (consider using Daub from the Wanderers chapter). Among the other guards hired to "protect" the caravan are real bandits and a fairly large contingent of assassins who seek to kill the ambassador before he can complete his mission. Consider staging the adventurers' attack at one of the other establishments along the caravan route, such as Tsalini's Station in Green Ice Pass or the Bridge at Crumbling Skull Rapids. As they strike, both the bandits and the assassins strike for their own purposes.

A storyteller in the City begins his caravan tales as follows: "Caravans bring diverse persons into dangerous situations, and, like flint and steel, these elements always produce sparks wherever they meet. Those sparks may conjure the heat of the desert, or perhaps the flash of light on an invading swordsman's blade! And now I shall fan those sparks into scenes of flaming action that will scorch your memories. All for a mere copper piece. In advance, please."

A touch florid, of course, but still accurate.

Dr. Gopp's Traveling Emporium of Medicinal Wonders



Every day and age has had its charlatans, mountebanks and quacks, all professing eagerness to rid their brethren of physical ailments, when in reality the only discomfort they are capable of relieving is the burden of their victims' money.

Dr. Gopp is just such a swindler. Some 25 years ago, however, he was a less-than-promising student of magic at the City's Wizards' Guild. He lacked the patience and diligence that usually marked those destined for great wizardry. He desired knowledge not for itself, but for what it could bring him—particularly material comforts.

What magic he learned, he usually put to immediate, deviously clever use, setting up simple swindles and cons among his acquaintances (even then he had few friends). His ability to apply his skills creatively made up for those skills' limits.

Of course his luck ran out soon enough: He was caught cheating on an exam. It was also revealed that he had been swindling both classmates and instructors. At age 21, Gopp was officially expelled from the Guild School and asked to find employment that would dishonor some other profession. Finding himself outcast and friendless, he thought it best to hit the road.

Since that day, Gopp has pretty much stayed on the road. Without a degree and the recommendation of the City's Wizards' Guild, Gopp could never hope to land a cushy job as a court magician or other sorcerous public servant. As he wandered from place to place, he learned or invented various confidence games to pay his way.

By the time he was in his mid-twenties, Gopp decided that

quackery was the most profitable pursuit for a swindler of his skills—especially given his magical abilities. He was amazingly effective at making himself seem legitimate. Through his meager knowledge of alchemy, he has been able to concoct an occasional true cure. And in any case, he had a decent repertoire of petty magicks that could give a placebo an illusory effect. After a particularly successful scam, Gopp bought himself a cart of phony supplies, added the title, "Doctor," before his name, and was in business!

As he gained success and even modest fame, Dr. Gopp was able to hire "sturdy assistants" (bodyguards). He wisely foresaw that some ... um ... dissatisfied customer could return to harass him—especially as his name and elixirs became known (though, thankfully, his reputation was largely positive). His "sturdy assistants" proved valuable when one of his customers was, in fact, dissatisfied with his phony "cure."

Morégo the Leech was this customer's name, a crippled beggar of the *Undercity* (see *CityBook III*). Morégo loitered about Gopp's Traveling Emporium for a month, following IT around the City, pleading with the Doctor's customers for their spare coppers. With his meager savings he hoped to purchase a true cure for his withered condition. Gopp gladly took the cripple's money, in exchange for a worthless assortment of "cures."

In so doing, the Doctor made a mistake—a near deadly mistake. Deformed from birth, Morégo is one of the *Ysraiget*—the highest caste of beggars—with considerable connections in the *Undercity*. Morégo secured aid from a group of *Wardregs* (maimed warriors or adventurers who are now beggars) to help him avenge the wrong. Two bodyguards paid the ultimate price for the Doctor's sins and the *Wardregs* spared his life on the condition that he permit Morégo to tag along indefinitely and beg from his customers. Gopp, of course, agreed.

Over the years the relationship has improved, developing into a sort of symbiosis. Gopp often pays Morégo to pose as the recipient of various cures, using illusions to make the poor beggar seem whole again. It has proven to be an effective marketing ploy.

Gopp has continued to prosper, taking on a lovely assistant, Javanna and hiring her brother, Serago, to serve as bodyguard.

Though author John Nephew is making his debut appearance in *CityBook*, he has done a fair share of work for other publishers, including TSR and Lion Rampant. When we first discussed this project, John informed me that his own experiences with a players troupe gave him the kind of experience he needed to write about a medicine show. As of this writing, he has embarked on a new challenge, starting his own adventure game publishing company.

Randy Kuipers makes his first professional appearance here in *CityBook 4*. Randy's work came to my attention while critiquing senior art portfolios of my Alma Mater. He reminded me of another young artist, who, about 15 years ago was seeking that first assignment in the adventure game industry.

Javanna's pretty face has sold as many fake cures as the Doctor's illusions.

Daily Activities

Dr. Gopp's Traveling Emporium travels all over civilization, wherever the good doctor knows the local language (and he is fluent in many). The best place to find it is at a fair or market day, among many similar transient establishments. Otherwise the troupe will set up camp outside a town or village. They spend a few days posting notices, hiring criers, or otherwise using the local media to announce their arrival and the time of the medicine show. Meanwhile, Morégo goes begging about the town, making his face known and gathering a few coins; while Serago sees to the upkeep of the draft animals and supplies of the Emporium.

After adequately hyping their presence, Gopp and Javanna have their show day—and a show it is! Javanna coyly holds up the wares and flirts with the audience, while Gopp (in his best medicine show man voice) explains the miraculous wonders of each.

Someone in the crowd is inevitably skeptical—if no one else, this will be Morégo himself—and cries out that the doctor must be a *fake*. Usually other crowd people turn to heckling as well, laughing at the doctor's outlandish claims. "Oh, but I assure you," exclaims Gopp, "that my wares are good! I will prove it to you all! I need a volunteer—" Here the various afflictions of the spectators are brought forth, but each, says Dr. Gopp, is "far too simple, too *mundane*"—until at last Morégo comes forth (If Morégo was "denouncing" Gopp as a sham, he is more immediately available for demonstration.). "Here, do you not agree, is a truly pitiful case—quite suitable for the demonstration of my considerable powers!"

With Javanna's scintillating assistance, Gopp goes down off the wagon with some patent medicine or other fake potion, applies it to the beggar (while subtly creating an illusion), and behold! The afflicted man become well before their very eyes!

In seconds the wagon is massed by feverish customers, all eager to line the Emporium's coffers with their silver and gold.

And the next morning the Emporium is long gone, never again to grace that locale with its presence ...

Medicinal Wonders

What follows is a sampling of the good "Doctor's" wares, noting properties real and fake. The GM is encouraged to expand these with ideas of his own, or from other sources, before using the Traveling Emporium.

• *Doctor Gopp's Own Miraculous Tonic*. The classic cure-all! Nutritious, maybe even delicious to some, but of no therapeutic value.

• *Assorted Aphrodisiacs*: These are some of the most popular items sold by quacks, particularly since there is no genuine substance to serve the purpose (excepting magical possibilities). Some items Gopp keeps on hand to sell as aphrodisiacs are *powdered rhinoceros horn* (harmless and useless), *spanish fly* (which does produce certain results, but is very dangerous to its user; its vicious side effects are certain to ruin anyone's romantic mood), and *magical love philtres* (one might even be real!—but it would certainly be expensive, and Dr. Gopp may have it reserved for Javanna...).

• *Herbs*: Some of these actually do have beneficial qualities, but Gopp and Javanna are not experts in identifying or dispensing them. If you buy an herb from Dr. Gopp for some specific purpose—say, counteracting a poison—roll 1d8 to see what you actually get:

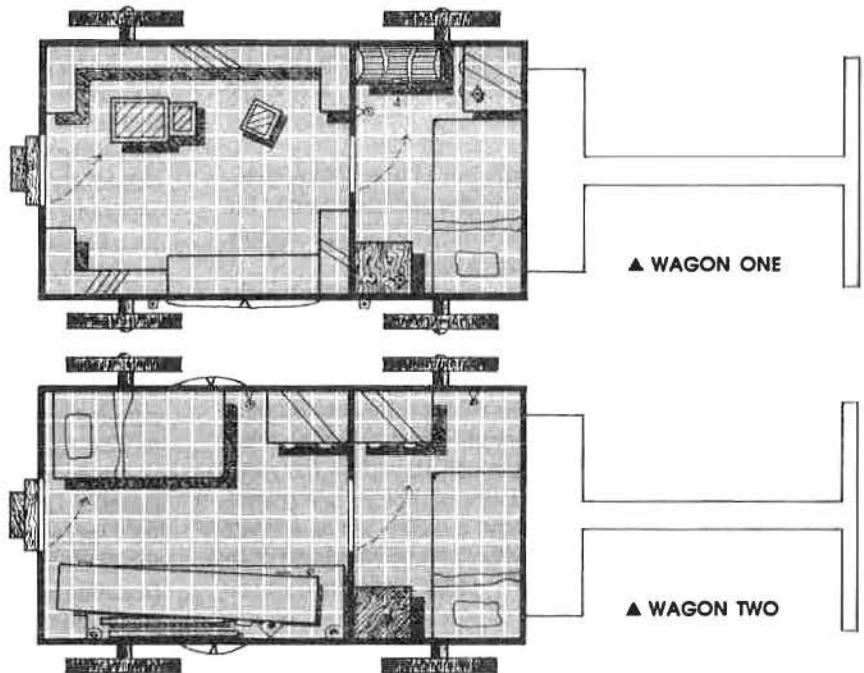
Roll Result

1-4 You get what you wanted.

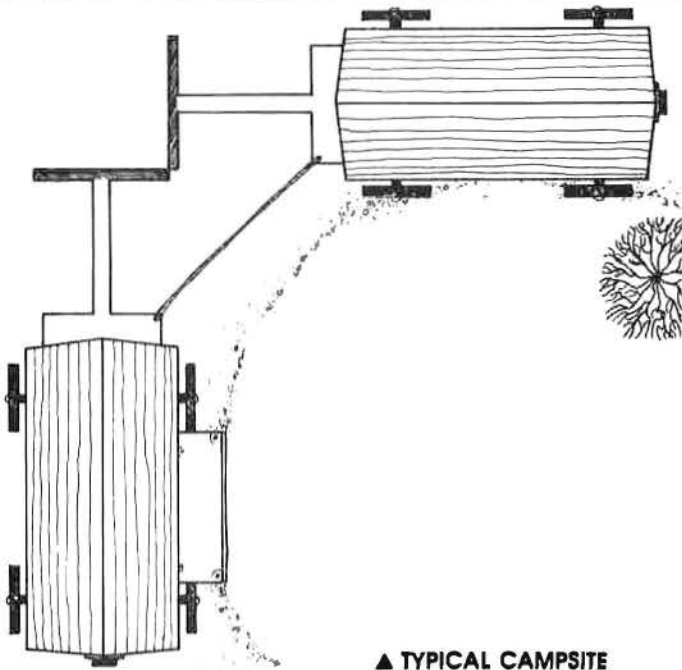
5-7 It has no effect (either it's the wrong plant, or just a worthless weed);

8 This particular plant, used the way the you plan to use it, is harmful.*

* Only 1 toxic plant in 100 is actually deadly. Most just cause nausea, dizziness, headaches and so forth, if swallowed; or produce an irritating rash if applied externally.



SCALE: one square = 1 foot



▲ TYPICAL CAMPSITE

• *Nose Cream*: This purportedly magical substance is supposed to have the ability to shrink and shape ungainly noses (or other cartilaginous parts, like ears). It is in fact worthless for this purpose. It is, however, a scent that trolls find unbearably attractive (read, "appetizing"), and the smell might easily attract their attention from even a mile away.

• *Healing Potions*: True magical potions, but diluted to half strength and sold at full price (or more, if Gopp thinks his customer is desperate enough).

• *Essence of the Ram*: By distilling the vital fluids of a virulent ram, plus some secret ingredients, claims Dr. Gopp, you can produce a fluid that will grant great (but temporary) strength to someone who drinks it. The ram has little to do with it; Gopp just discovered by accident the chemical recipe of a powerful stimulant. Users become jittery and hyperactive for about six hours, after which they find themselves very tired and desirous of sleep. The user may feel stronger, but it's just wasted, nervous energy.

• *Colored and/or Flavored Water*: Dr. Gopp usually reserves this stuff for the most credulous customers, and otherwise keeps it on hand (in attractive jars and vials) to make himself look well-stocked.

Layout

Dr. Gopp's entourage consists of two wagons. Wagon One contains Gopp's own private room, plus his wares. It serves as sales booth, shelter and means of transportation. Wagon Two houses Javanna and Serago. Morégo sleeps on the ground or a wagon seat. During inclement weather, he may crawl under a wagon, or someone in a generous mood may offer him a bit of floor inside a wagon.

The configuration of the wagons depends on where the Emporium makes camp. Usually they are placed head-to-head, with a 90° angle between them, defining a space where customers can gather in a crowd to hear the doctor's sales pitch.

The maps of the wagons are for the most part self-explanatory. The beds, dressers and other furniture are all bolted to the wagon, so they will not shift or spill when the Emporium is

traveling. Most things to be found are obvious and predictable (e.g., clothes and personal effects in dressers), and the game master can specify as it suits him or her. The chest in Gopp's room contains his savings; it is iron-bound oak, locked⁴ and protected with mundane and magical traps (nothing spectacular, but simple and serviceable).

The shelves and boxes shown in Gopp's wagon contain the Doctor's many "medicinal wonders."

Personalities

Dr. Gopp. □ *Human male, Ht. 5' 10", Wt. 146#, Age 44.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Average with knife and dagger, otherwise Poor.* □ *Magic Ability: Average C2 and C5, Good C7; otherwise Poor.*

A distinguished-looking, middle-aged man, Dr. Gopp has dark hair and a neatly-trimmed beard and moustache. His hair is graying ever so slightly (this permits him to use himself in demonstrating a hair-coloring formula). His gentle, brown eyes peer through gold-rimmed spectacles—eyes filled with fatherly concern for his customers. He speaks like a preacher—at one moment loud and triumphant, at the next soothingly warm.

Belying his fatherly exterior, Gopp is anything but a gentle, caring, or honest sort. He is a practitioner of magic, specializing in alchemy and illusions, a skilled swindler with more than two decades of well-oiled experience under his belt. He is an extraordinary judge of character, specializing in finding people's soft spots, which he can then exploit. Above all, he is a showman who can mold a crowd to his will, pulling at the strings of their emotions.

While he could probably make more money selling real cures, or hiring out his magical skills, deceiving people gives Gopp a thrill, a vital sense of living. Never a happy-go-lucky trickster, mind you; he remains thoroughly ruthless, as willing to gyp a beggar as he would a rich merchant (as the case of Morégo demonstrated). Anyone who falls for his sales pitch deserves what he gets, Gopp reasons.

Dr. Gopp values people only inasmuch as they can prove useful to him, either in furthering his scams or in protecting him from harm. Morégo the Leech, interestingly, fits both of these categories: He helps Dr. Gopp sell his spurious medicine, and Gopp doesn't want to do the beggar too much wrong, lest he again face Morégo's friends from the Undercity. Serago, on the other hand, is an expendable mercenary.

Javanna perhaps is a category all her own. Gopp himself is puzzled by his feelings for his assistant. His initial intentions were strictly business oriented: As a pickpocket, she gave the doctor a cut of her take. Then, as an assistant, she helped snare customers. With knowledge, she could do this even better, so Gopp has taken time to teach her much of what he knows.

This closer contact has made Gopp realize the attraction he feels for the young woman, and his benevolence has become in part a seduction. The obstacle that Gopp sees between himself and Javanna is her brother, Serago, who is very protective. He would happily see Serago meet an unfortunate demise, provided there was no connection that would lead Javanna to hold him to blame! Otherwise he bides his time, hoping that Javanna will fall in love with him—of her own will or because of one of his real magical potions.

If the RPG system in use provides the means, give Gopp special abilities relating to persuasion, apothecary, alchemy,

sleight-of-hand, and so forth.

Javanna. □ *Human female, Ht. 5'8", Wt. 122#, Age 20.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Fair with stiletto, otherwise Poor.* □ *Magic Ability: Poor C7; otherwise none.*

Dr. Gopp's lovely assistant, Javanna, won her position three years ago, not by demonstrating knowledge of medicines, but for being an accomplished pickpocket. When the Traveling Emporium came to her town, she recognized a chance to lighten the loads of oogling spectators. Gopp recognized what she was up to, and confronted her soon after—as she was coming to confront him, having recognized his con game. With each ready to blackmail the other, they were off to a good start. Gopp offered to hire her as an assistant; he would share some of his profits with her, and she would give him a cut of anything she lifted from the *marks* ... that is ... the audience. Javanna agreed on the condition that her brother Serago would be hired too, as a bodyguard.

As time has passed, Javanna has as good as given up pickpocketing. She has been more useful in making the quackery itself more lucrative. Furthermore, she prefers to devote time to practicing magic. Gopp has been teaching her a smattering of spellcasting, starting with petty illusions, and has shared his books and mundane knowledge as well. Javanna is a dedicated student, like Gopp never was, and will undoubtedly outmatch her mentor in just a few years. Unknown to Gopp or Serago, she has applied to the Wizards' Guild for further training.

Javanna suspects the romantic intentions that are directed at her from Gopp and Morégo. She deftly deflects Gopp's advances—she is not the least attracted to him, but does not wish to hurt his feelings or jeopardize her education. Morégo is just a poor little shell of a human, in her eyes; she does not know about his Undercity connections. She treats him nicely enough, but otherwise hardly recognizes that he's alive.

Javanna's round face is framed by dark brown, curly locks of hair that contrast with her fair skin, and enhance the deep brown of her eyes and full redness of her lips. While she prefers practical, plain, sturdy clothes, she wears a red silk dress and paste jewels when the Emporium is doing business.

Serago. □ *Human male, Ht. 6'1", Wt. 186#, Age 25.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Good with cudgel, Fair with knife, otherwise Average.*

The "sturdy assistant" who accompanies Dr. Gopp's Emporium, Serago is also Javanna's older brother. He makes sure Gopp keeps his hands well away from his unblemished (at least in his eyes) sister. Consequently he is not well liked by his employer, but his presence is tolerated because of Javanna's sisterly affection for him. If it weren't for Javanna, Serago would not have gotten this job in the first place, he'd be back tossing flour sacks at the grain mill.

Serago is large, muscular, and fairly handsome. He isn't stupid, but certainly naive (he hasn't deduced that Dr. Gopp is a quack, for instance—not for lack of evidence, but from unwillingness to piece together an unpleasant truth). Furthermore, he trusts his sister absolutely and without question. While the younger Javanna is far more worldly than her brother, she does not abuse his faith in her.

Morégo the Leech. □ *Human; Ht. 5'3", Wt. 106#, Age 38.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Poor.*

Morégo is a wretched beggar and pickpocket attached to Dr.

Gopp's Traveling Emporium. Among beggars Morégo is highly regarded; he is a member of the Ysraiget, the highest tribe. Deformed from birth, with a twisted face, particularly the mouth, it is difficult for him to speak clearly and eat solid foods. Despite his status among his peers, Morégo has never been happy. He longs to have a normal body. Still, he feels guilty about this longing, fearing that it would displease the beggars' misshapen god, Ysrai, whose image his own deformities reflect.

Dr. Gopp originally seemed a beacon of hope for the cripple. Morégo nearly starved himself saving to buy a "cure," only to find that it was fake. He returned to the Undercity and, in rage, gathered friends to avenge the wrong. His beggar allies slew Gopp's guards and would have slain the quack himself (beggars have no love for wizards), had not Morégo interceded at the last minute, plagued by guilt and uncertainty, wondering if Gopp had only been fulfilling the will of Ysrai.

An infatuation with Javanna is the latest bit of (presumably) false hope blinding Morégo's eyes. Every time she gives even a kind word to him, his heart beats faster, and his world seems—only for a moment—tolerable. Then it turns worse, as he realizes the impossibility of his desire, and the fact this his benefactor, Dr. Gopp, also has designs on the young woman. Morégo would do anything humanly possible if somehow, or some way it would announce and prove his love for Javanna.

None of the Emporium's staff can make any sense of Morégo, even if they can make out his words. But then, Morégo can hardly



—Doctor Gopp—



— Morégo —

make sense of himself; he is indecisive, constantly torn between choices, fearing to offend again whatever powers cursed him with his body. He just gets by from day to day at a level of bare subsistence, begging or stealing a coin or meal and serving as a guinea pig for Dr. Gopp's "demonstrations" for a measly fee.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: "Would I Lie?" Doctor Gopp offers to sell the adventurers magical potions (you name it, he has it) from his private stock. The price is right, maybe a bit high, but the Doctor always has just what his customers need. Of course, the potion is a fraud. Maybe it's a watered-down potion that causes some other effect, but chances are that it's only colored and flavored water with a few secret ingredients to give it a "magical" tingle. When they go back to look for the good Doctor, he's gone on to fresher pastures.

Scenario 2: "Speak for Yourself Morégo." If the characters are brought into closer involvement with the Emporium, they may get tied into the Gopp-Javanna-Morégo love triangle. Perhaps Morégo is befriended by a PC, and begs him to plead his case before Javanna, as he is too shy. By one mishap or another, a real love potion becomes involved—Gopp slipped it into Javanna's dinner, expecting himself to be the next person she sees, and falls in love with. When the PC representing Morégo goes to her first, Javanna falls passionately in love with the adventurer, making the triangle a quadrangle, and creating no end of confusion. Morégo is deeply hurt, Gopp is angry—or even vengeful. The whole should be played out in the style of a romantic comedy,

with mistaken identities, misunderstandings, and hopefully, a happy ending.

Scenario 3: No Deal! During a long caravan journey the Doctor took a fancy to one of Torren Gadge's (q.v. *Freehold Municipal Caravanserai*) more intact golems, a well-endowed brass statue of a forest nymph. Gadge refused the Doctor's less-than-generous offer of a lifetime supply of *Tonic* ("I'm certain I could not live long enough to make the trade worth my while." Gadge was heard to say). In true form, the Doctor offers the adventurers an attractive deal (GM's discretion) to *acquire* the golem and its control amulet and deliver it to him in another town. This should lead the adventurers into a frenzied cross-country chase as they flee tumbling, stumbling and lumbering partial golems and an enraged sorcerer.

Scenario 4: Did Someone Call for a Miracle? Gopp is summoned by Hiram Forge to perform a miracle cure on his youngest daughter. He realizes that his shams won't get him through this one and he desperately needs the adventurers to help him produce the real thing—or else face the wrath of both Hiram Forge *and* Hakan Forge, the girl's uncle.

Scenario 5: Strange Bedfellows. Gopp and Javanna are taken hostage by a powerful mage (one of Gopp's former friends) Serago survives but just barely. He asks the adventurers to rescue his sister. Morégo goes too (waging an internal war between his feelings of worthlessness, his hopeless love for Javanna and his loyalty-fear-hatred for Gopp). Gopp turns out to be the one in need. Javanna has become the mage's protégé and mistress. The fellow is not evil, but Serago, Gopp and Morégo are all going to feel the need to rescue the poor woman without revealing the true nature or depth of their feelings to each other.

Scenario 6: I'm an Apothecary, not a Detective! One of the adventurers develops a slow, lingering sickness from a Gopp potion. The local apothecary says he must know what was in the "cure" before he can counteract it. Gopp and company have disappeared ("Say didn't the River Drake just put out last night headed for gods only know where?").

By its own nature, Dr. Gopp's can and will be found just about anywhere, one step ahead of any "disappointed" customers from the previous town. Rather than travelling alone, his little company will usually be found accompanied by a larger group (though only temporarily), such as a caravan, a band of pilgrims, or even on board a river boat.

Our friend, Dr. Gopp, is no common quack. He has discovered a trick known to the best con men and propagandists: Tell first a little truth, and your listeners will believe the big lie you speak next. In this spirit, Dr. Gopp sells just enough true medicines and potions that he establishes a degree of credibility. And then with worthless wares he deftly wins his customers' wealth.

The River Drake



By necessity, rivers are the roads of the wilderness. Even after civilization extends its grasp, much cargo continues to move on the rivers. The River Drake is a paddle-wheel riverboat that has traveled the Great River for many years, serving commerce amidst persistent rumors of darker motives.

The River Drake is a large riverboat that works the ports of the Great River from the sea coast as far inland as Crumbling Skull Rapids, easily moving bulky cargo that is otherwise inconvenient to move by mule, camel, or wagon. Most boatmen avoid cruising the river at night, due to the risks of shifting sandbars, drifting logs, and the possibility of bandits. The River Drake, in contrast, moves at night and stops at the river ports during the days. Many a farmer has been startled to see its large silhouette quietly moving through the river mists in the dark of night.

For the few who know what propels the River Drake, its nocturnal habits are more easily explained. Most people have seen the glistening slime trails of garden slugs shining as dawn breaks. Just as those slugs search for food in the cool, moist night, so also do the rare giant slugs of the Darkmist Forest. Eight to 10 feet long, these slimy monsters have never been domesticated; at least not until now. For in fact, they are the living motors of the River Drake. Controlled by old Furth, the slugdrover, they creep along their treadmills for hours each night, powerfully turning the stern paddle-wheel. The slugs are never seen by the residents of the ports, who nonetheless comment on the offensive smells when the River Drake happens to be upwind.

The other Dennis in this book has never written a major novel series, yet his work has probably made a larger contribution to adventure gaming as a whole than many contributors to this book series, past and present. Back when the corners still chipped off most polydice, B. Dennis Sustare created the druid class for the original D&D® game, then went on to design the *Bunnies & Burrows™* and *Swordbeare™* roleplay games. I hope you are as impressed (disgusted?) by the River Drake's rather unique means of propulsion as I was (special thanks to National Geographic magazine for the more "mundane" inspiration of treadmills on riverboats.).

Several of Christopher Appel's illustration samples dealt with nautical themes, making him a natural to illustrate Dennis's riverboat.

Curiously, the boat is not owned by humans (as is most of the river traffic), but by *riverfolk*, a furry, water-loving, nonhuman race. Though both their features and figures have a faintly human cast to them, their appearance reminds many of otters. Riverfolk usually avoid dealings with humans, due largely to the prejudice shown towards them. In the past, it was not uncommon for rivermen (male riverfolk) and rivergyne (female riverfolk) to be robbed, beaten, and even enslaved by humans. Such incidents are fewer now, since most riverfolk wisely stay near their settlements in the marshes and distant reaches of the rivers and lakes.

The Captain of the River Drake is Ristya Darkbrow, an alluring rivergyne very wise in the ways of the Great River, and skilled with both combat and magic. Helping with her tasks are her twin sons, Corinth Lefthand and Calyx Bristleneck. There are eight other members of the crew, including six humans, an adolescent rivergyne, and Occo Fiden, a half-breed human of obscure parentage.

The River Drake is a cargo vessel, carrying bulky goods from port to port along the Great River. Many farmers have small docks from which they load their crops on the boat. Since the River Drake moves at night, farmers hang lanterns on the docks to signal they have goods to be shipped. Hides and lumber are also typical cargoes, as are trade goods from the cities to smaller villages. The boat is fairly slow, with its many stops, but shipping rates are reasonably low, so that the cargo hold is nearly full much of the time. The Captain prefers not to carry passengers or livestock, but occasionally will do so when paid an extra fee.

Layout

The River Drake has four decks. From top to bottom, they are the Bridge Deck, Cabin Deck, Main Deck, and Slug Deck. Below the Slug Deck are the Bilges.

From forward aft (front to rear), the ship's three masts are the Foremast, Topmast, and Shortmast. The Topmast actually extends through the Bridge Deck down to the Cabin Deck.

Bridge Deck

Ladders (D) on either side of the Cabin Deck are used to reach the Bridge Deck.

A. Bridge: This is the highest compartment on the River Drake, and the place with the best visibility. It is surrounded with windows, with a windowed door in the after bulkhead (wall). The Captain steers the River Drake from here, using a large, spoked wooden wheel (C). Although hooked to a complex set of ropes and pulleys, the wheel is not physically connected to a rudder, but is an enchanted object that manipulates water currents to turn the River Drake. Only Bosun Tam and the riverfolk crew know this. By clever use of the wheel, the Captain can make seemingly impossible maneuvers, like slowly moving sideways to the dock.

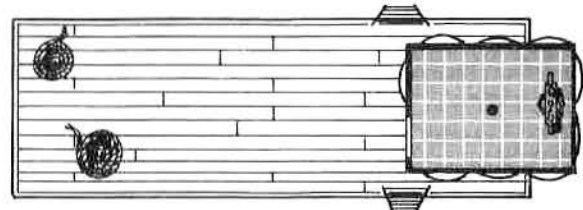
B. Dryout: The flat area aft of the Bridge is used to dry ropes and canvas (and sometimes clothes). It is sometimes used for sunbathing by the crew when they are underway.

Cabin Deck

Four ladders from the Main Deck lead up to hatches in the Cabin Deck. These hatches can be locked from above, but are normally left unlocked.

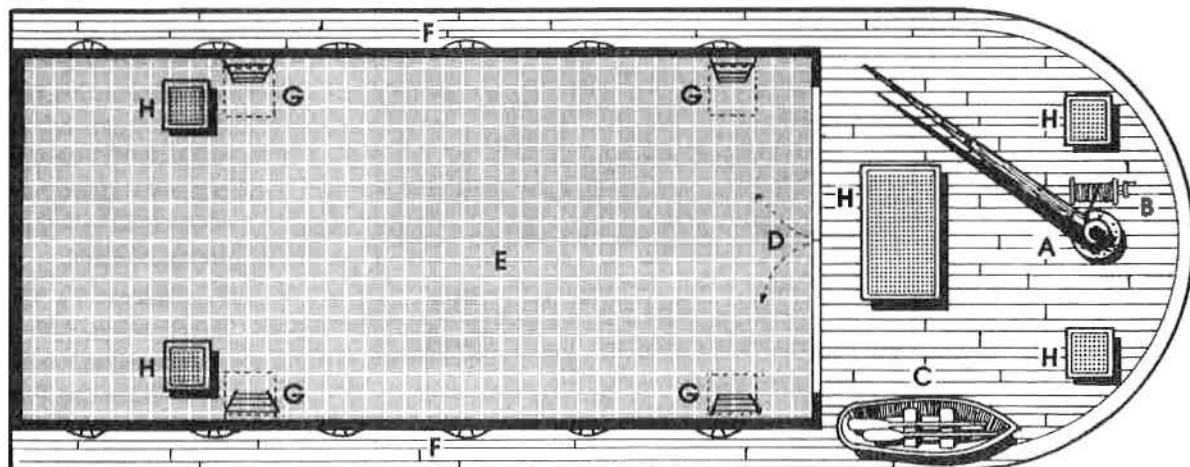
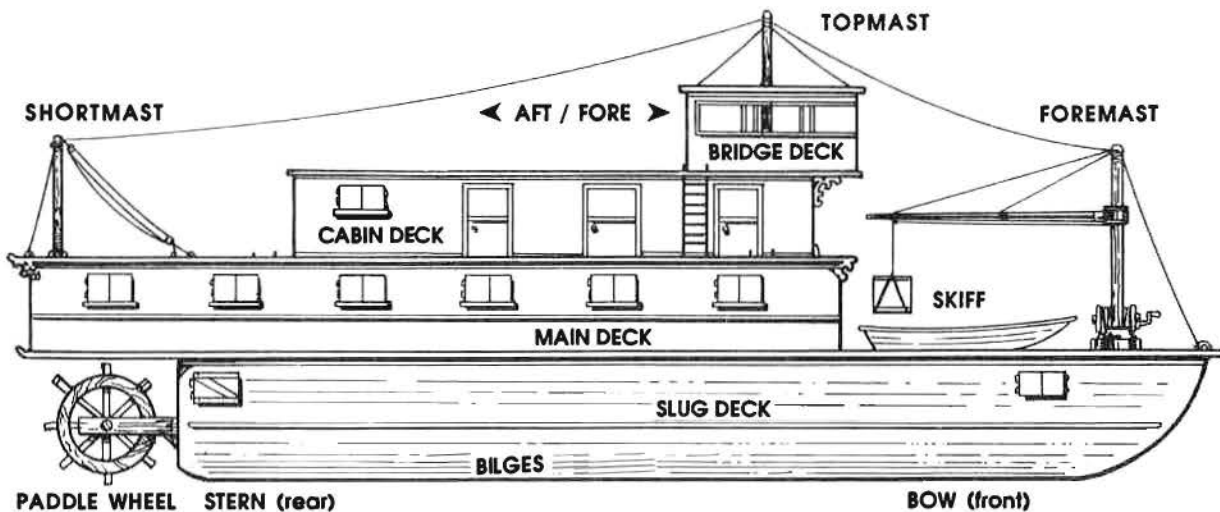
A. Captain's Cabin: Ristya Darkbrow, Captain of the River Drake, lives in this cabin, which has two windows forward, and windowed doors to either side. The base of the Topmast stands in the center of the cabin.

SCALE: one square = 1 1/2 feet



▲ BRIDGE DECK

SCALE: one square = 1 1/2 feet



▲ MAIN DECK

She has a very expensive bed, styled in the manner of high-class riverfolk. Made with a finely crafted wooden frame, it is set with inlays of many exotic woods. Within lies a heap of aromatic herbs, purchased at great expense from distant lands. To the ignorant, it seems that she sleeps in a box filled with smelly weeds. To other riverfolk, it shows that Ristya is much wealthier than would seem appropriate for a mere "river trucker." When Ristya sleeps, she keeps her weapons beside her, wears her amulet (but no other clothing), and usually holds her switch in her hand.

Also in her cabin are two trunks. One contains her clothing, while the other is an airtight trunk packed with sealed blocks of herbs for her bed. These herbs are non-magical, and have little value except to other riverfolk. A mesh bag hangs from a hook on the Topmast. Within, she keeps various fresh fruits and vegetables, used as snacks. The after bulkhead of her cabin is painted with a realistic mural of a marsh.

B. Corinth's Cabin: His cabin is on the port side (the left, facing forward) of the River Drake, with a windowed door as entry. His

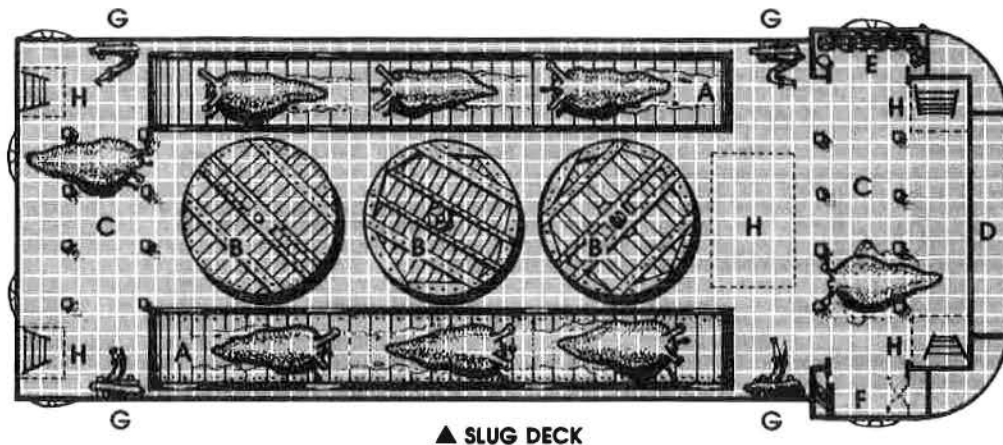
bed is a more common version of Ristya's, being a simple wooden frame filled with rushes and herbs collected from the riverside. An orange curtain along the forward bulkhead of his hides his hanging clothes. The aft bulkhead has a mural of a tree in autumn foliage. He hangs his weapons and boots from pegs on the remaining bulkhead. In addition, he keeps an extra dagger concealed within his bed.

C. Calyx's Cabin: His cabin, on the starboard side (the right, facing forward) of the River Drake, also has a windowed door as entry. He sleeps on a pile of rushes and herbs thrown on the floor. There is a pale green curtain along the forward bulkhead of his cabin, but he keeps nothing behind it. The aft bulkhead has a mural of small shrubs leafing out in the spring. Although there are pegs on the remaining bulkhead, Calyx rarely uses them. Instead, he just drops his things on the floor. When Mulya sleeps in his cabin, she hangs up his things, but this condition only lasts until the next time Calyx uses them, and subsequently drops them. He is not annoyed by her neatness; it is merely unimportant to him.

D. Bosun Tam's Cabin: His cabin is on the port side, aft of Corinth's. Although small and containing many items, the cabin seems roomy due to Tam's rigid discipline. He has an abundance of built-in drawers and shelves, with their contents always placed exactly the same way. His clothes are tightly rolled and stowed, and every inch of storage is used. The wood in the cabin shines with a rich warmth. Brass hinges and handles sparkle merrily. Intricately knotted ropework is displayed decoratively. A small locker contains rolls of bright ribbons. He sleeps in a hammock, which is carefully put away when not in use.

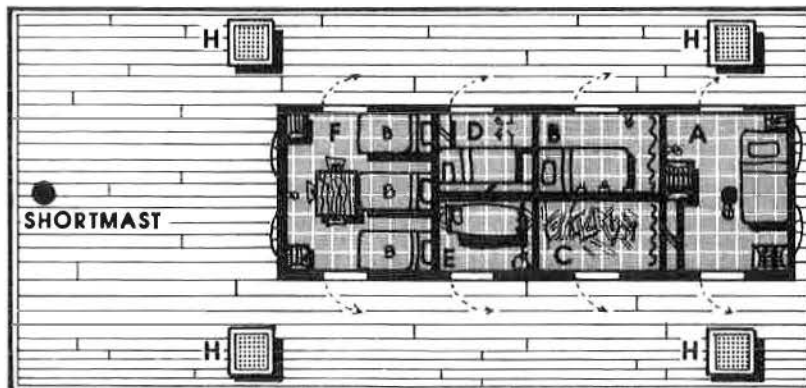
E. Bartholomew's Cabin: His cabin is on the starboard side, aft of Calyx's. The cabin is virtually empty—a hammock is stretched between two hooks, and a duffle bag in the corner contains spare clothes. He seems to have nothing else of a personal nature.

F. Deckhand's Cabin: The largest cabin, with three windows and one windowed door (aft). There are three sets of bunk beds fastened to the bulkheads in the front of the cabin. Each set is a stack of three bunks, so that there are nine



▲ SLUG DECK

SCALE: one square = 1 1/2 feet



▲ CABIN DECK

sleeping places total in the cabin. Each crewman has a footlocker, stowed either under the lowermost bunk or under a window. In the center of the cabin is a small table with three chairs. Often the deckhands play cards here. The most popular game is called "Gangup," a gambling game for three in which the object seems to be for two players to take all the money of the third. Wilari, Occo, Black William, Furth and Little Morgie sleep here. The other four bunks are vacant.

G. Ladders, to Bridge Deck.

H. Hatches, to Main Deck.

I. Shortmast.

J. Base of Topmast.

Main Deck

Four ladders from the Main Deck lead up to hatches in the Cabin Deck. These hatches can be locked from above, but are normally left unlocked. Four hatches in the Main Deck lead down to ladders from the Slug Deck. These hatches are normally locked from below, preventing access to the Slug Deck. A fifth large hatch also opens down to the Slug Deck. This allows the slugs and their food to be hauled up and down.

A. Foremast: This mast supports the hoist, used to load and unload cargo. It is also used to raise and lower the skiff.

B. Hoist mechanism: Used to raise and lower the hoist. This is Occo Fiden's station when at the dock.

C. Skiff: A small boat, propelled with oars. One person can manage the skiff, although it can carry a sizable load. Wilari usually operates the skiff.

D. Main Doors: Entry into the Cargo Hold. The doors can open in or out, and one can be kept closed while the other is opened. There is a very small door in one of the main doors, so that a person can enter without unfastening them. Normally the main doors are locked. Ristya and Black William carry the only keys.

E. Cargo Hold: The large area used to stow cargo. Typical cargoes include agricultural products, leather, trade goods, and sometimes building materials. However, most anything will be carried for the right price.

F. Outer walkways.

G. Ladders to Cabin Deck: Hatches at top may be locked from above; normally unlocked.

H. Hatches to Slug Deck: Usually kept locked from below.

Slug Deck

Access is from four ladders leading down from hatches in the Main Deck. This deck is where the giant slugs provide the motive power for the River Drake.

A. Slugways: Flexible wooden treadmills. As the slugs glide along their slime trail, they propel the slugways beneath them in the opposite direction. On the starboard side, the slugs crawl forward (towards the bow of the River Drake), so the slugway moves aft. On the port side, the slugs move aft, so their slugway moves forward. A major task of Furth, the slugdrover, is to keep

the slugs moving steadily and keeping a proper distance from each other. He manages the slugs through telepathic communication, continually convincing their small brains that delicious food is just ahead. When he needs extra speed, he persuades them that a giant is coming from behind with a ton of salt!

B. Turntables: Gears in the bilges connect the slugways to the turntables, keeping them turning clockwise. The turntable shafts drive belts (also in the bilges) that connect aft to the paddlewheel. As the paddle rotates, the River Drake moves forward.

C. Slug stalls: Slugs that are not working on the slugways are kept here. This is where they feed and are bathed. Windows around the stalls are of little help in removing the smell of the slugs, but Furth never seems to mind the stench. However, he is quick to notice the changed smell of the slime when a slug becomes diseased or infested by parasites. Note that shutters can be used to close and lock the windows.

D. Storage: A narrow room used to store belts and other spares for the slugway/turntable mechanism. The belts are hung from the ceiling. Furth can barely move around in this room.

E. Storage: This room contains numerous small kegs. When the slugs are in heat, Furth collects a thick, syrupy fluid that oozes out just below their stalked eyes. Called "limexus," it is used as a base for perfumes, and can be sold for a good price to perfumeries. A full keg is sealed with wax to keep the limexus fresh.

F. Storage: Furth keeps medical supplies for the slugs in this room. There is an assortment of exceedingly sharp knives, so long as to be virtual swords, that Furth can use to perform minor surgery on the slugs.

G. Hoses: Slugs need to be kept moist and clean. There's nothing worse than a dried-up slug! Furth uses the hoses to spray the slugs while they are on the slugways, and to scrub and wash them in their stalls. When the slime begins to build up on the floors, Furth washes it away through small openings below the windows in the after bulkhead (rear wall).

H. Hatches: Furth prefers to keep locked the small hatches at the top of the ladders, so that no one will come down to agitate his slugs. As a result, others have to knock loudly on a hatch, then patiently wait for Furth to open it. This especially irritates Calyx. Usually, Furth has no visitors except for Little Morgie, since most people find the smell of the slugs overwhelmingly awful.

Bilges

The bilges are dark, confining, awash with water and slime, and exceedingly dangerous due to the chaos of gears, belts, shafts, and the return loop of the slugways. No person in his right mind would even enter the bilges, much less work there. Strangely, Little Morgie, the bilge-crawler, enjoys his work, and thinks of his job as prestigious. If he has anything hidden in the bilges, there is surely no one else on the River Drake who knows of it.

Access to the bilges is through the bilge grates found just below each of the hose racks in the Slug Deck. The hoses can be hooked up to pump out the bilges, when even Little Morgie finds them too wet.



— Ristya Darkbrow —

Personalities

Ristya Darkbrow. □ *Rivergyne, Ht. 5'7", Wt. 166#, Age: 42.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Excellent.* □ *Magic Ability: Good, C2, C3, C5.*

Ristya is Captain of the River Drake. She is addressed as "Ristya" by the other riverfolk, as "Captain" by the remaining crew, and as "Captain Dark" by most residents of the river ports. She has a striking dark mane, with thick dark brows that are combed back over her ears. Ristya always wears the same outfit in public, a thin jump suit of deep brown leather, with barely visible bands of an even darker brown. Her ankle-high boots are thin and supple.

On the River Drake, she wears an amulet of a dark green stone shot with fine red lines. A leather switch decorated with tiny shells hangs at her left hip, and she wears a thin, stiff piercing sword on her right hip. Ashore, she does not wear the amulet, and typically replaces the switch with a small quiver holding six arrows, plus a riverbow slung over her left shoulder.

Ristya's amulet warns her when magical items are brought onto the River Drake. It does not identify the type of magic, but does indicate to her a rough location of the item. It is keyed to her personally. It gives no warning to anyone else that tries to use it, nor does it warn Ristya of the presence of magical items that she has personally held. Thus, when a crewman has something of magic, he will bring it for her to briefly hold, so the amulet will not repeatedly sound the alarm each time the crewman steps back on board.

Her switch is also magical, causing an intense shock when brushed against another person. The members of her crew quickly learn to obey her orders as Captain, and it rare that an individual ever needs to feel the switch a second time.

Corinth Lefthand. □ *Riverman, Ht. 5'8", Wt. 155#, Age: 25.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Good.* □ *Magic Ability: Good, C1, C4.*

Corinth and Calyx are the twin sons of Ristya Darkbrow. Although quite similar in physical appearance, Corinth's lower neck is only lightly furred. Their dress is usually quite distinct, Corinth favoring oranges and reds. A typical outfit of his is a pair of mottled orange trousers topped by a tight-fitting rust jersey.

Corinth's favored weapons are longsword and dagger, which he can use equally well in either hand. He wears the sword on the right and the dagger on the left, drawing them cross-handed.

Calyx Bristleneck. □ *Riverman, Ht. 5'8", Wt. 155#, Age: 25.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Good.* □ *Magic Ability: Good, C1, C6.*

Calyx differs from his twin brother in having a thick, bristly ruff around his lower neck. These bristles stand out from his neck when he is angry, a fairly common occurrence. Calyx favors greens and yellows. A typical outfit is light green trousers with a yellow waistband, and a loose dark green blouse.

His favored weapons include both broadsword and riverbow. He usually carries his riverbow when on the River Drake, wearing his sword only when going ashore or expecting trouble.

Mulya Longthumb. □ *Rivergyne, Ht. 5'4", Wt. 118#, Age: 13.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Average.* □ *Magic Ability: Poor, C2, C3.*

Mulya is unrelated to Ristya. Her fur is tawny, unlike the darker fur of Ristya and her sons. She was brought on board the River Drake by Corinth and Calyx a year ago, and usually sleeps in one of their cabins or on deck. She is very athletic, being probably the best climber and swimmer on the boat. She is being trained in riverbow by Calyx, in longsword by Corinth, and in magic by Ristya.

Bosun Tam. □ *Human, Ht. 6'1", Wt. 245#, Age: 52.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Very Good.*

Tam is in charge of all deck and small boat operations on the River Drake. He boasts an impressively muscled upper body and a grip that could break the hand of a shopclerk. Though his belly shows perhaps too much fondness for the rice beer served in the river ports, he is a deceptively quick and agile man, with remarkable balance. His stamina is excellent. He normally wears brightly-colored loose trousers and an open leather vest, but neither headgear nor shoes. His torso flaunts numerous tattoos, the most dramatic being a scene of a river monster pulling a man under the water. There are no tattoos on his arms or face.

Tam insists on all the boat gear being exactly and neatly in its place. A sure way to provoke his anger is to cause a mess on deck. Every line is always stowed properly, even decoratively. The brightwork gleams and is free of finger marks. The wood of the skiff shines with fresh varnish. There are brilliant ribbons trailing from the shortmast, in new color combinations each morning.

Bartholomew. □ Human, Ht. 5'9", Wt. 178#, Age: 27.
□ Fighting Prowess: Average.

Bart is senior deckhand on the River Drake, taking charge of the other deckhands when Bosun Tam is busy or absent. Bart and Tam never leave the boat at the same time.

Wilari. □ Human, Ht. 5'5", Wt. 135#, Age: 23. □ Fighting Prowess: Average. □ Magic Ability: Average, C2.

Wilari is an ordinary deckhand. She often serves as coxswain in the skiff. Although she has been on the River Drake only slightly more than a year, she has learned boathandling and ropework to a high proficiency. In her spare time, she sometimes prepares small jars of healing potions, that she trades for various minor treats and luxuries.

Occo Fiden. □ Half-breed Human, Ht. 5'10", Wt. 196#, Age: 33. □ Fighting Prowess: Good.

Occo is an ordinary deckhand, and is in charge of the hoist on the foremast. He supervises the loading and unloading of large items of cargo. In his 12 years on the River Drake, he has never been known to damage cargo while using the hoist. He never goes ashore, at least never further than the docks. He's not talkative, but is friendly enough with the crew.

Black William. □ Human, Ht. 5'11", Wt. 170#, Age: 40. □ Fighting Prowess: Poor, except Fair with a knife.

Black William is Cargo Master of the River Drake. As such, he supervises the stowage and protection of the cargo, and is responsible for the manifest and other written records. He is very talented with numbers as well as reading and writing in all the languages used along the river. Most of the other crewmen come to him when they have letters to be read or written.

Furth. □ Human, Ht. 6'3", Wt. 315#, Age: 61. □ Fighting Prowess: Poor. □ Magic Ability: Fair, but only with slug-magic, C2, C5.

Furth is slugdrover of the River Drake. He tends the slugs, and controls them when the boat is underway. He can communicate with them through telepathic spells, and heals them with a wide range of slug-curative spells. He is the only crewman who has been on the River Drake longer than the Captain.

Little Morgie. □ Human, Ht. 5'5", Wt. 130#, Age: 15. □ Fighting Prowess: Average in brawls or with clubs; otherwise Poor. Can use a club with either hand.

Morgie is the bilge-crawler of the River Drake. He makes inspections and repairs inside the hull and below the bilge-grates. He is a moderately skilled carpenter.

proaches. You warn the Captain of the trouble brewing, and she hires on your group as guards for the two days and one night the boat will be here. You should be able to gain valuable combat experience, but may wind up in front of an unsympathetic magistrate when *your group* is charged with inciting a riot!

Scenario 2: He Slimed Me! Regardless of what people say about bushels of turnips and crates of cabbages; there simply must be some valuable treasures stored in the cargo hold of the River Drake. Now, what's the best way for a little band of thieves to sneak on board and get their share of the loot? Maybe they could swim around to the river side of the boat and climb in one of those small windows close to the waterline...

Scenario 3: My But it's a Long River. The adventurers need to go far upriver to link up with Mikal Del Brionfal Tobrannon's caravan at Crumbling Skull Rapids (consider arriving just before the bridge disappears). The River Drake is the only boat going that far. During the long trip, as they get acquainted with the crew, they can easily get caught up in the intrigues on board. Are the twins rivals for the good graces of their mother? Maybe each of them secretly approaches the adventurers, trying to persuade them to do some "dirty tricks" that will make his brother look bad. Do the riverfolk stealthily leave the boat at night when far from a river port? The adventurers might try to follow them to see what they're up to. They might notice that Black William talks with some disreputable characters when in port. Could he be operating his own smuggling racket on the River Drake, or even worse be a Stooge for the despicable drug runner, Keir Collis?

Scenario 4: Slugfest. Furth informs the PCs that one of his slugs has died. After the PCs (ugh) help him (gaak) dispose of (retch) the rotting slug (barf), he proposes that the adventurers go to the Darkmist Forest to capture and bring back a giant slug (oh, wonderful!). Then he tells them just how much gold they'll get for this little task (Hey, this sounds pretty good after all!). Of course, they'll have to keep the slugs moist, well fed and healthy. If someone asks whether the slugs are dangerous, he responds honestly, "Oh no, they're very docile. I've never had any trouble with one." OK, this will be a nice relaxed interlude between the adventurers' normally hectic adventures. Make sure they take a large wagon and a plentiful supply of food and drink, to set off on this vacation in high spirits. Just remember this: slugs are NOT docile. Furth just makes it look and sound easy. They are constantly hungry and easily become sick with the vilest diseases imaginable.

Even an ordinary cargo boat can provide a wealth of scenarios, and the River Drake is far from ordinary. With the exotic riverfolk and the bizarre source of propulsion, this riverboat should provide many entertaining evenings.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: In the Heat of the Night. In a river port tavern, you overhear some racist punks making plans to "burn out those stinking riverfolk" when the River Drake arrives. Early the next morning, your party is waiting at the dock when the boat ap-

Vrigelian's Roadside Shrine



Ask anyone in the territory and they'll tell you about Vrigelian's Roadside Shrine, and about his mighty power to protect travelers. They'll tell you things you won't believe until it's happened to you ... that if you're a faithful giver, the awesome Vrigelian will bless you with riches as well as safety!

Vrigelian's Roadside Shrine is known as the best place along the Great Road to make an offering to the gods. Not only do worshippers generally pass through the territory peacefully, but the Shrine statue is so benevolent as to occasionally reward the faithful.

In fact, the mainstay of the valuables offered at the shrine do not come from travelers at all. Locals enjoy placing coins in the mouth of the great Statue of Vrigelian, and watching the statue swallow their gift. If one stays long enough, and puts in things of value often enough, the faithful follower will be richly rewarded when a stream of coins and the odd piece of jewelry erupt from its nostrils.

Yet if a group is so foolish as to pass by the shrine without making an offering, they will regret it! Sometime after midnight, a glowing horned god will wreak his justice through the wayfarers' camp. With its appearance, spectral soldiers of the diety will attack, and pillage for the offering due.

Panda England is making her first CityBook appearance. When she's not honing her skills as a novelist, Panda splits her remaining time between being a Manager of Inter-loan for a southern Michigan library, and a Manager of two cats, two kids, two dogs, two rock bands and a wild man. Though she dislikes aerobics, she gets her exercise training service dogs for the blind and physically handicapped.

Until now, Tom Dow's involvement in the adventure game industry has been limited to work for Trf-Tac Games. Look for his art in *Stalking the Night Fantastic* from Trf-Tac.

History

In an ancient time, the Faithful of Vrigelian paid homage in a temple at this location. The people of this land were overrun by a warrior folk, who were in turn displaced by another tribe in an endless series of take-overs and take-backs. The armies destroyed the temple more than once, and its priests were put to the sword with unpleasant frequency.

Eventually, there was but one old priest who kept the place up. This old fellow received frequent visits from Barnaby, a young man who soon inherited the leadership of a small group of highway bandits. Barnaby loved to hear the old man's stories (though the gems in the statue's eyes attracted him, too!).

The old priest wore a distinctive belt over his faded curate's garment. Its hexagon-shaped buckle was set with a hex-cut yellow topaz, identical to the gems in the eyes of the Statue of Vrigelian. Over the course of a year, the old man became senile at an alarming rate. He groaned that sleep danced ever out of reach, and that he saw fearsome visions at night.

Finally, realizing he would die soon, the priest took Barnaby into his confidence, assuming him to be a friend worthy of trust. He showed Barnaby the trap door to the statue, and the tunnel that connected with an abandoned underground monastery, built by the shrine's founders.

He spoke of the belt he wore, and how it could make illusions to trick the unwary. He gave Barnaby a hex-cut topaz ring, and warned that whoever wore the belt would always know where those who wore the rings were. But, he gasped out, the belt buckle was a thing of magical power, something one did not use without paying a price. So saying, he died, and Barnaby grieved for him (surprised that he could feel such emotions).

It struck the young bandit (for his father had also died recently, leaving him in charge of the gang) that it was far better for the many wayfarers on the Great Road to bring their wealth to him, than for him to track it down and take it from them. He moved his men to the underground lair at the shrine, and installed his older brother as priest. Travelers who disdained to make an offering at the shrine (unless they are a large group, and well-armed) would be punished when the statue "came to life" at night. Further, after making an offering, sometimes a worshipper would receive a monetary reward in return (Barnaby discovered a long-lost function of the statue and figured a way to make it pay).

The rationale behind the plan boded well. It fostered a gambling mentality, where ultimately the "House" collected more than they distributed. The source was as unending as there were people willing to risk some wealth for the elusive jackpot. "His Holiness," Phedro, established and now maintains a large house in a nearby town (not the City), where the Orphans of Vrigelian live. Presided over by Annabel, Barnaby's widowed mother, the little urchins are fed and clothed by the bounty (well, a small portion of the bounty) of Vrigelian's Shrine. Once a week, Barnaby's sister, Dacia, is brought to the house to teach them their letters and numbers. On the side, Annabel teaches the children to pilfer from travellers, but they NEVER steal from the locals.

In order to enforce the need for protection, Barnaby's henchmen will attack the impious. Of the 15 bandits, four command strategic lookout posts where, during the day, they signal each other with mirrors when there is movement on the road. Three ride patrol, and eight remain in the lair at any given time. Each wears a small topaz ring.

Barnaby's followers' loyalty is directly proportional to how

well their needs are met. They also realize they cannot escape Vrigelian, now that they wear the rings, and they resent this.

At night, travelers report seeing colored flares, lofted by bowshot. A blue flare signifies a strong group, or that they gave a suitable offering, so let them pass. A red flare means the group did not make an acceptable offering for the size of the group, so gather at the checkpoint for an attack.

Layout

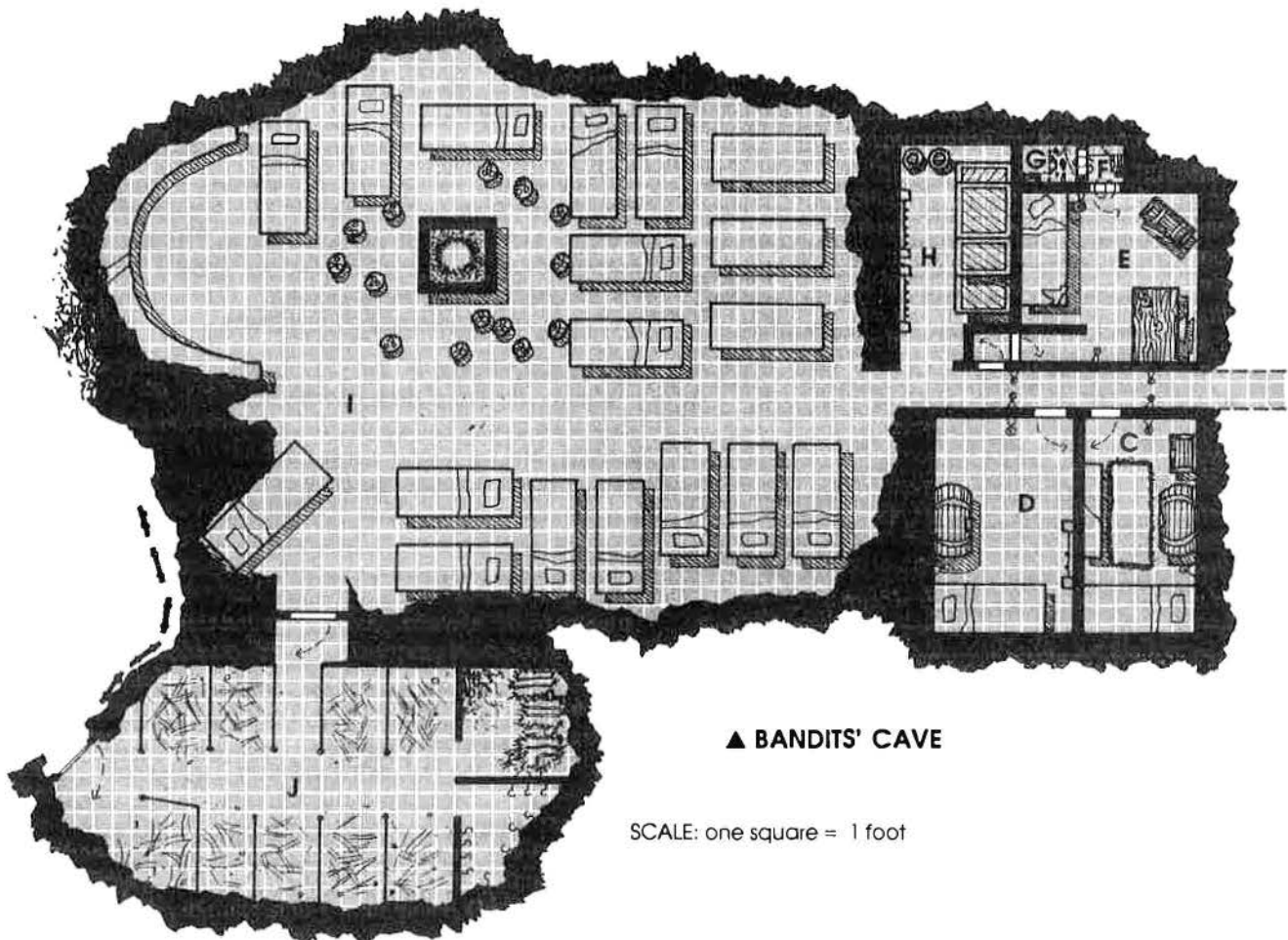
The Shrine is located on an isolated stretch of the highway that curves around the terrain, making it impossible to see very far up the road in either direction. As well as drawing the steady traffic of the Great Road, it also is near a busy crossroad and not far from a dock which juts out into the Great River.

The building is set at the foot of a hill that wears the forest like a dark cloak. Ascending the hill behind the Shrine one finds an abrupt cliff, with a barely discernible path and stream peeking from beneath the trees far below.

The smooth-walled building wears its roof like a sun hat. The six sections of the roof convene at the peak around a thick, hex-shaped glass skylight, nearly six feet across. The double doors of Vrigelian's Roadside Shrine face east toward the road. Outside, south of the doors, a water well waits to serve the nearby trough. Several yards back, a privy is built into the side of the hill.

The ground all around the building is bumpy with barely discernible blocks from previous building foundations.

A. Shrine Main Room (20' x 20') Entering the hexagonal shrine, one must ascend four steps to the main floor. By day, the huge



▲ BANDITS' CAVE

SCALE: one square = 1 foot

smoke-marred skylight offers a peaceful lighting, latticed with shadows from the network of support rafters. In gloomy weather, and after sundown, long-handled torches lend a more eerie illumination. Other than small, slitted stonework censers in the walls, the room sports no other feature than the platform holding the Statue of Vrigelian, and a door in the back wall.

The six-sided building represents the sacred number six, man's number. For man must follow the six Holy Principles to be in harmony with Vrigelian. Sadly, these principles died with the old priest, and were only recorded in the lost book of Rites and Rarities of Vrigelian.

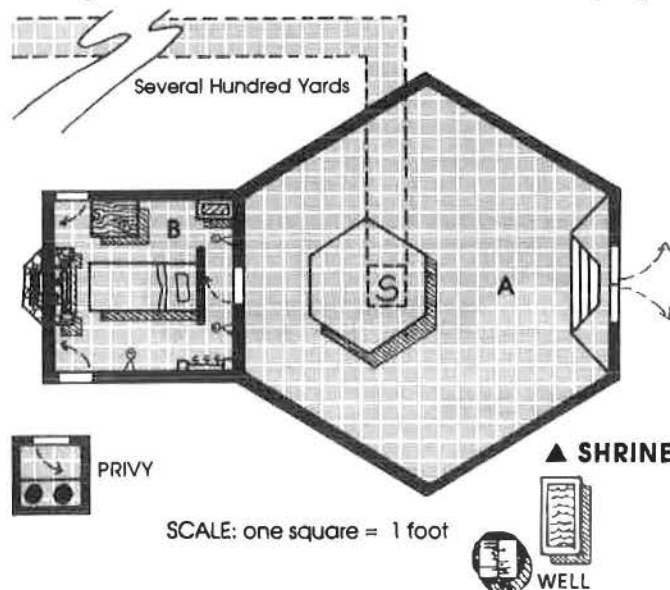
The statue of a rampant rhinoceros, frozen in stone amidst his trampling charge, dominates the chamber. Though Vrigelian can take other shapes, the maddened rhino is how he flaunts himself when tracking down those who by-pass his shrine. The glittering topaz eyes of Vrigelian seem to follow one intently, no matter where a person might stand in the room.

A worn spear handle protrudes from a slot in its chest. Whenever an "offering" is placed in the statue's mouth, and the spear-lever is moved, the mouth closes and the Statue "swallows" the gift. Four out of one hundred times, a return of some monetary value is blown out of the nostrils. This is usually a few coins (90%), but a piece of jewelry has been known to appear (10%).

Pressing the center brick in the door arch to Phedro's room will open a trap door in the backside of the Statue. If both feet are on the floor when the brick mechanism is used, the person will receive a (d6) electrical shock. [ed. note: if you're standing on one foot, no damage.] If the person is wet, 2d6 of damage is given. The door leads to the underground lair of the bandits.

The eyes of Vrigelian are topaz gems that collect the sun's energy. Barnaby must crawl into the statue once a day to connect his belt to the gems and recharge the belt's powers. The charge will linger no more than 36 hours. The Belt is powerless until fully recharged. If the gems do not get at least four hours of sunlight, they will fail to energize, and will not be able to charge the belt. The eyes can only be removed from the statue from the inside.

B. Priest's Room (10' x 10') Phedro lives here. To the north of the door squats a box of incense, and to the south stands a rack holding threesets of priestly garments. A box of personal belongings sits beneath his bed. On the west wall a fireplace warms the room. A bare table stands near the north door over a box of cooking utensils. A door in the SW corner leads to the privy.



C. Dacia's Room (6' x 10') Dacia's narrow bed is tucked snugly in the far end of the room, with a crocheted coverlet over two plain blankets, and home-woven linens hidden within. A fastidiously clean chamber pot is under the bed. Along a west wall, raised from the floor by a mud brick at each end, a rough-cut board serves as a bookshelf of primers, spellers and simple math. These were a portion of some booty stolen from hapless wayfarers who neglected their duty to the shrine. Barnaby would have discarded them, but Dacia begged them from him. Though self-taught, she knows them well.

She has covered the mid-portion of her dirt floor with a woven mat. On the east wall a plain wooden trunk holds modest, neatly mended female clothing, and a slightly smaller trunk cradles her needlecraft supplies and projects.

D. Dagan's Room (8' x 10') His room contains his bed, clothing trunk, and a shelf with his weapons on it (this last only if he is in the lair). Under the pillow sleeps a harp, wrapped into silence by a soft cloth.

E. Barnaby's Room (10' x 10') His door lurks in an alcove. Opposite the entry is his large desk. Bare screw ends mark the place of two missing drawer knobs. Locked in the desk's middle drawer are the accounting books for the shrine's business. If these are scrutinized carefully, the party will realize that there must be more valuables around than what is found in the small closet.

Barnaby's large bed holds an unapologetic tumble of bedding and abandoned clothing. Near the NE corner, askew from the wall and its lid agape, sits his trunk of personal things, and clothing.

A candle and glass globe on a wrought iron holder are firmly fastened in the wall near the bed. A spindle with screw threads on an exposed end protrudes from the design. If one were to unscrew any handle from the desk, and screw it onto the spindle, it would make a clicking sound. When it is snug (but not before), the spindle will turn and the outline of the hidden door next to the bed will become visible.

F. Secret Closet (2' x 2') On the floor is a medium size chest, containing up to 100 gp worth of valuables. The small closet is a decoy to protect the real treasury. It is here, on a narrow shelf that Barnaby hides his belt while he sleeps. The Belt can only be destroyed by immersing it in water, or striking it with lightning (or similar short-circuiting methods). It is impervious to hammering, cutting, and high-pitched singing.

G. Treasure Room (4' x 6') If one were to look carefully, she might find the secret door into the real treasury. This contains a disorderly pile of money, jewels and jewelry, worth as much as 2,000 gp, and 1-4 weapons of various magical endowment. These weapons could be better used to help the bandits in their pillaging, but Barnaby is certain that **SOMEONE** will **GET** these treasures, and thus he keeps them hidden.

A ragcloth strap secures a small, flat, wooden box. Inside the time-marred box are 24 velvet-lined ring slots, six of them holding hex-cut topaz rings, identical to those worn by Barnaby's followers. Once a ring is put on, it will not come off save by the will of the master of the belt. By taking mental inventory, the wearer of the belt can locate each ring, and identify the wearer, and his or her surroundings.

This is the manifestation of Barnaby's true power. Those who wears the rings can never be hidden from Barnaby, nor from his retribution, should they disobey him.

Also in this room, hidden in a secret cache in the floor, is a book wrapped in a doeskin cloth. It is the Rites and Rarities of

Vrigelian, a book that describes the power gems in the rings and Belt, their uses and weaknesses. Even Barnaby does not suspect it is here.

Barnaby is afraid to spend his wealth for fear it will be used up, for fear people will notice and suspect how he obtained it, and for fear his followers would be jealous. He has even cut back the pittance spent on the orphanage.

H. Armory/Storage (6' x 12') Weapons, arrows, boxes of candles, torches, baskets of dirt-shielded roots, crates, rope, etc., all are neatly arranged. There are also three large urns, tightly lidded, and a glowing ointment. This preparation is made from phosphorescent fungi, and is used by the bandits to ghoulish effect when on a raid.

I. Dormitory (28' x 18') This rough, natural cave houses up to 18 bandits. Barnaby currently has 15 in his employ. Each bed is supplied with a blanket and linens. Three beds have no bedding, and their boxes are empty. There will be eight bandits in the room or immediately outside at any given time.

Fourteen stools sit like mushrooms near a huge square fire pit. The hood over the fire, vented by a pipe to the outside and aided by a natural draft from the cliffside, draws the smoke out. Cooking utensils and foodstuffs line the shelves on the curved west wall. A door leads outside, sheltered from the weather by the overhanging cliff.

J. Stable (12' x 26') Nine horses can be housed in the stable. There are tethers outside for nine more. In the back of the stable (east end) are areas for fodder and tack.

Personalities

Phedro. □ Human ht.: 5'4" Wt.: 120# Age: 24. □ Fighting prowess: Fair with weapons.

Although the eldest of the siblings, he is perhaps the least clever. Small and insignificant, Phedro loves being the Priest of Vrigelian. He has built his self-esteem on his new role, as it's the only "important" thing he has ever done in his life. He loves to accept the money and homage of the wayfarers on the road, and delights in surprising them from time to time with a return gift from the statue. He will fight to preserve things the way they are.

Phedro handles the actual amount of the "take," and is growing hungry for a larger share of the wealth. He's been bleeding off some of the money set aside for the orphanage, and Annabel is beginning to complain.

Phedro knows Barnaby can always tell where his ring-wearers are, if he wishes. So when Barnaby's attention is directed elsewhere, like on a raid, Phedro sneaks into the underground lair and searches for the treasury. Thus far he has only located the Secret Closet (F).

Phedro has one of Barnaby's desk knobs on his person, and through clumsiness will drop it when he sees the adventurers in person. He'll retrieve it, but the party will have had the opportunity to see the knob.

During the day Phedro tends a garden and fruit trees in the open area across the road from the Shrine.

Barnaby. □ Human. Ht.: 5'8" Wt.: 150# Age: 22. □ Fighting prowess: Good with weapons.

Handsome and well-groomed, Barnaby's thick, curly hair glows an almost white-blond. The acknowledged brilliance of



— Barnaby —

the group, he has a singular charisma as well. It is he who leads the others in their raids against the "unfaithful." He carries a regular sword, and anyone who fights him will receive a stunning electrical shock from the Belt.

Sometimes he will be away to the City to visit his "fence" to cash in the offerings and visit one of his favorite girls at the *House of Infinite Dreams* (CB III). The fence guarantees the offerings will not show up within 100 miles of the shrine. *The House* guarantees that Barnaby goes home a bit poorer.

Barnaby has never had any close friends before Dagan. Among the bandits, the turnover was fairly steady as other opportunities or death removed his companions. He sees people's worth in direct relation to their usefulness. When he established the scheme with the Shrine, he was dissatisfied with the precarious life of a bandit. He wanted wealth that would automatically bring him friends, security and happiness. Instead, his new powers brought him paranoia and depression. He fears one of his followers will try to take his place. He is obsessed with knowing where they are and what they are doing.

When he found the ring case, he delightedly gave each of his band and his family a topaz ring. Once the ring was on, nothing would remove it, save the Belt-wielder's will. One bandit was bold enough to cut off his finger in an attempt to escape his ring—within minutes he died from the ring's strange powers. Another fled, only to be hunted down and slain while he slept. Barnaby gloated silently that no one would ever leave him again.

The belt can cause an illusion to appear once every other night. The illusion created most frequently is a lifelike image of the statue, which hunts down the unfaithful. When it finds the travelers, the bandits move in and raid the group. However,

Barnaby has become enslaved to the powerful belt. He cannot sleep when he wears it, and only takes it off for rest. Even so, his periods of sleep are becoming shorter, as he is compelled to put the belt back on. It is robbing him of his sanity, making him more paranoid, irritable from weariness, and less a cool judge of what is best. He is crazed enough at this point to kill anyone that he thinks is threatening his hold on things, even his brother or sister.

Dagan. □ *Human Ht.: 5'6" Wt.: 160# Age: 21. □ Fighting prowess: Fair.*

Dagan was an apprentice bard whose training was cut short by his involvement in the accidental death of a noblewoman's drunkard son. Forced to flee, he found refuge in Barnaby's hideaway.

Everyone likes Dagan, especially Barnaby, who immediately recognized Dagan's intelligence and potential. He made Dagan his second-in-command. Paradoxically, it brings Dagan into further suspicion as Barnaby's paranoia grows.

Also, Dagan has fallen in love with Barnaby's sister, Dacia. Now they would like to escape to a gentler life of love, music, laughter and books.

He has short, black wavy hair and is only beginning to show evidence of an eventual beard. He is a bit on the stout side, and not given to heroics, but in a desperate situation, a lion can awake within him. He is unaware of his own potential.

Dacia. □ *Human. Ht.. 5'4" Wt.: 120# Age: 17. □ Fighting prowess: Poor.*

Barnaby's younger sister returns Dagan's love and long to flee with him. She is blonde and pleasant to look at, though life as a bandit ill becomes her.

She hungers for reading material and diversion from her continuous chores. Once a week, accompanied by Barnaby and Id6 of bandits (who visit the local pub), Dacia visits the orphanage to teach. Otherwise, she will be found in her room or, weather permitting, in the camp area outside the caves. She does spinning, mending, laundry, cooking, etc. for 18 and is helped by whatever two bandits pulled housekeeping duty rotation.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario One: Against House Odds. A wealthy merchant from town has discovered that his son, an addicted gambler, is losing his father's wealth to the shrine. The lad believes that Vrigelian is real and will reward him for his devotion. The merchant hires the adventurers to investigate the shrine and expose any flimflam.

Scenario Two: The Dilemma of the Horn. The adventurers choose not to make an offering at the shrine, and are subsequently visited by Vrigelian that night. The bandits take something eminently valuable to the travelers. In order to retrieve it, they must face the shrine and discover its secrets.

Scenario Three: For a Song. A noblewoman of the City wants to hire the party on the sly to find and kill Dagan in retribution for his part in her son's death. She thinks Dagan has hooked up with some forest fugitives somewhere along the Great Road, and begs for food at Vrigelian's Roadside Shrine. While in the City, the party can hear some of the guild's side of things, and that they want him back, alive. They are willing to handsomely reward a group who can rescue their talented apprentice.

Scenario Four: On Schedule. Until recently, Forgeway coaches have been stopping at the shrine, using it as a quaint "road-side rest stop." New schedules, requiring tighter time-tables have eliminated the stop. Since Forgeway coaches carry wealthy passengers, they are prime targets for the bandits. Of course, it only takes one hit for the bandits to go on Forgeway's "list of problems to be dealt with severely." The adventurers could be hired by Forgeway to deal with the matter, or in turn, maybe Phedro hires them to defend him from some Forgeway thugs (since using the bandits would be dangerous).

Misuse of religion and abuse of the trust of the faithful is not a just a phenomenon of our current society, but has been prevalent throughout history. The possibility exists for it within any religion. It often begins with the premise that God (or the gods) will not or cannot punish offenders. But in a fantasy world, that's a dangerous assumption to make. A GM might want to consider what would happen if Vrigelian decided that his (her?) shrine was being misused and the faithful abused? Would he (she?) summon a band of adventurers and charge them with a holy mission—"cleanse my shrine and I will greatly bless you and your descendants!"

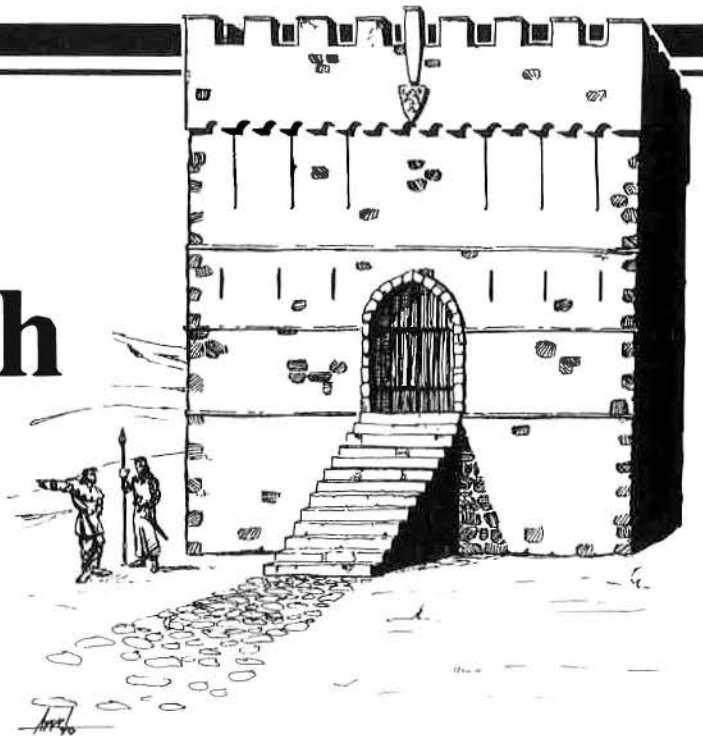
The Houndsteeth Border Garrison

Standing tall and firm between the borders of the City's lands and those of surrounding states are the lonely border garrisons. The proud warriors who man these outposts are the law of the frontier.

To the north of the City lies an arid stretch of flatland bounded on the west by the frigid Houndsteeth Mountains and on the east by the mighty Great River. At a point approximately three days' ride from the City, a spur of the Houndsteeth extends eastward almost to the Great River, leaving only a narrow neck of wasteland to serve as a northern border to the City's demesne. This neck measures a day's ride in all directions, and near its center lies a solitary hill, a hill that some say is the last offspring of the Houndsteeth, and others a holy place of power, built by some long-forgotten race.

For the past two centuries, a rugged tower has rested upon that hill, a garrison post for a company of City guards. These guards serve primarily as highway patrol, ensuring the safety of merchants traversing the wasteland, driving off predators both human and animal, and performing minor physical upkeep on the road itself. When necessary, the company can hold felons in the tower's huge, single cell until they can be transported back to the City for trial. But as well, the garrison serves as a listening post for the unlikely event of an invasion from the northlands. From atop the tower, watchers can see a distance of several days' ride in all directions, easily spotting the dust clouds raised by caravans, bands of cutthroats, or the hypothetical military expedition. To honest travelers, the patrolmen are a comforting presence, and the tower serves as a welcome stopover on a journey. To bandits and smugglers, the garrison broods over the wasteland like a frowning figure of justice.

There is a mystery concerning the tower, as well. Legends say that those unfortunate enough to be held in the tower's cell dream



about their crimes, and that if their guilt is great, justice visits them in their sleep. According to these legends, many criminals have died during a night spent in the cell, to be discovered the next morning with a look of utter horror frozen upon their features. Others, slightly less evil, perhaps, have been driven mad by their dreams in that dark pit, and it is said that only an honest man may sleep there without fear, but few are willing to put their honesty to the test in such a way.

Actually, the legends are not far from the truth. The hill upon which the tower stands is the site of an ancient temple, a spot where an entire nation once worshipped Tholl, the god of dreams. According to their legends, Tholl dwelt in the *realm of dreams*. At night, when people entered his realm, he could visit them and demand an accounting of their presence in his world. The spirits of those who displeased him he consumed. Of those who pleased him, Tholl would demand some service in the waking world, a world to which he wished to extend his rule, but which he could not enter.

From among those who worshipped him, Tholl chose priests and commanded them to seek a way for him to enter the waking world. But the priests of Tholl grew to recognize in their god a ravening hunger for power, and they realized that if he were released from the *realm of dreams*, he would ravage the real world. So Tholl's own priests set to bringing about the *ruination* of his power, while keeping him sated enough to remain ignorant of their plans.

With the passage of centuries, the distance between the waking world and the dream world has increased, and Tholl's access to our world has diminished, until now it is only upon the bare earth of Tholl's holiest site, once the location of the god's most important temple, that a sleeper can enter the realm of dreams, only upon the bare earth of that hill's very summit, which is now the floor of the border garrison's detention cell.

As a consequence, the garrison's guards occasionally discover prisoners dead with hideous expressions upon their faces, and upon occasion prisoners have gone mad overnight in the cell. Among themselves, the guards attribute this to the cell's near absolute darkness, but they will often taunt new prisoners with haunting stories of the cell's earlier victims.

While author Lester W. Smith is no newcomer to the adventure game industry, he let me know quite often that he was honored to be included in the CityBook series, which he has used since the first book was published. Look for his *Temple of the Beastmen* board game and *The Deathwatch Program* adventure module from GDW. He informs us that he intends to continue gaming and writing about it forever (should he survive the completion of his Master's thesis).

Christopher Appel once again lends his illustration talents to us, as does Randy Kuipers, whose contributions to this book insured that it made it to press on (or nearer to) deadline.

Layout

The tower consists of three levels. The lowest is windowless and can only be reached by trapdoors from the second level. The second level serves as main floor for the garrison; the bulk of the guards are housed here. This floor is reached from outside by a steep stone stairway and has arrow slits instead of windows, to allow for some light and air, as well as archery, while preventing access by attackers. The third floor serves as armory, and as quarters for the garrison's officers. The tower's roof has a short, crenellated retaining wall built around its edges.

The outer walls of the tower are constructed of carefully sized and placed stone. All interior floors and walls are of heavy timber finished by chisel and knife.

There are no fireplaces in the tower. The first floor is entirely without heat; the second has a fire pit; and rooms on the third floor have braziers.

A. Roof (40' x 40') The tower's roof is flat on top with a crenellated wall around the edges. From here, watchers can see to a distance of two or three days' ride in all directions, including into the first slopes of the Houndsteeth Mountains to the west, north to the edges of the Warrell Forest (pine), east into the swamps beyond the Great River, and south to the edge of the croplands that serve the City.

In times of need, defenders can fire missile weapons and hurl stones from this roof to repel attackers below. The roof is accessed by a trapdoor near its center, which leads into the armory below.

B. Armory (20' x 25') The guards are allowed to keep short swords, knives, and leather helmets with their personal belongings on the second floor. Heavier weapons, missile weapons, and armor are stored in the armory, under the watchful eye of Sergeant Mung. The armory holds enough bows, arrows, cross-bows, and quarrels to hold off a small army for several days, long enough for a messenger to reach the City and return with reinforcements. As well, it holds two dozen chain mail shirts and a like number of small shields, spears, and battle axes.

Access to the armory is through the door to Sergeant Mung's quarters, and there is a trapdoor in the ceiling, leading to the roof.

C. Sergeant Mung's Quarters (10' x 20') Sergeant Mung leads a relatively Spartan life, and his quarters reflect that fact. The furnishings consist of a rough wooden bed piled with woolen blankets, a rack for his most cherished weapons, a crate in which he keeps the two uniforms he is not wearing at the time, and a small, locked chest containing a few medals and a jug of fiery brandy.

D. Hallway (5' x 20') This hallway is empty and unadorned except for a square of canvas that serves as a curtain over the single window.

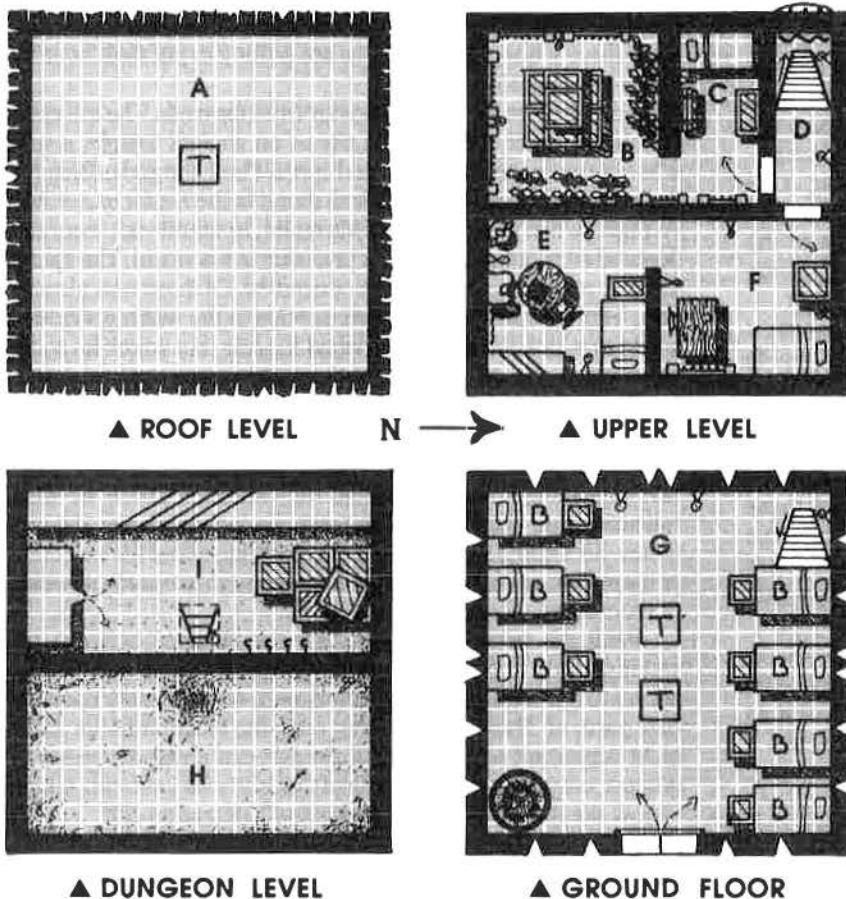
E. Captain Aramin's Quarters (20' x 20') This room contains old, but comfortable furniture, a handful of personal weapons, a good number of general interest books, a few pieces of modest art (both sculpture and painting), Aramin's clothing and toiletries, and an expensive chess set.

F. Lieutenant Vadis's Quarters (20' x 20') Vadis's room is sparsely furnished with a small weapons rack, a cot, a chest with three uniforms, one straight-backed chair, and a small wooden table holding a few maps and books of military theory.

G. Main Hall (40' x 40') The border garrison's eighteen guardsmen dwell in this great, open hallway. Cots and chests line the north and south walls, and a fire pit (for cooking) lies in the southeast corner of the room (smoke escapes through the arrow slits). In the center of the hall are two trap doors, one leading to each of the rooms on the first floor. A set of stairs at the back of the room climbs to the third floor.

H. Detention Cell (20' x 40') This room typically holds about three prisoners awaiting transport back to the City for trial. New prisoners are simply dropped into the room from the trapdoor above, and exiting prisoners are hauled out by a lowered rope. The room's floor is bare earth, and contact with it projects a sleeping character's spirit into the realm of Tholl, Lord of Dreams (see the personality description below for details).

I. Storage (20' x 40') A fixed ladder descends



SCALE: one square = 2 feet

into this room from the hall above. The room contains crude shelves and stacks of crates full of supplies, mostly foodstuffs. Drying onions and other herbs dangle from the floor joists overhead. No one has ever slept upon the bare earth in this room; if they had, Tholl could have entered their dreams as well as in the detention cell.

Personalities

Listed below are the four most important NPCs for this location. As well, eighteen patrolmen are assigned to the garrison, of which a half dozen will be away from the tower on patrol at any given time. GMs who run magic-rich campaigns may wish to add an official mage to the roster, perhaps someone old and decaying yet still skilled in defensive combat magic, living out his last years in this unprestigious service.

Captain Aramin. □ *Human male, Ht. 6', Wt. 190#, Age: 49.* □ *Fighting prowess: Good with sword and shield, Fair otherwise.*

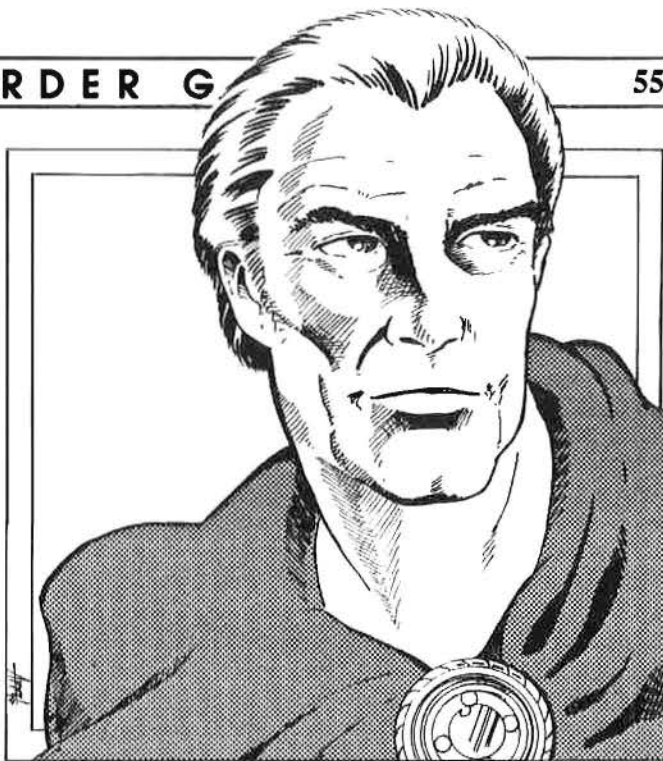
Aramin is one of those rare individuals who are ambitious enough to achieve what they desire in life without being so ambitious that they feel driven to obtain more. Nearly 12 years ago, after two decades of quite respectable military service, Aramin found himself sent to the Houndsteeth Border Garrison with a squad of soldiers to help break up a particularly dangerous bandit gang. In that campaign, the border garrison's commander was killed, and Aramin took charge until a replacement could be sent. But in the interim, Aramin discovered that he loved this post in the wastelands, and he called in a few favors to have himself assigned as its commander. Since that time, he has had two offers for administrative positions in the City, both of which he has politely declined.

Strangers note early on that Aramin seems to get worked up about very little in life. If the food stores are full of insects, for example, Aramin says there's plenty more food in the City, and everyone can stand to eat light and lose a few pounds until it's delivered. Many mistake his easy-going attitude for simpleness, but Aramin is as shrewd as he is amiable. Once, when a bandit chief led half a hundred brigands to the tower and demanded that the garrison surrender, Aramin told the chief to wait a moment, then he led his men in a mad charge from the tower, captured the bandit chieftain, and drove his cutthroats screaming into the Houndsteeth. When asked later why he chanced a face-on confrontation, Aramin replied, "Anyone could tell they were a rag-tag bunch, and I knew my men had the equipment, the training, and the fortitude to send them mewling for their mothers."

The attitude Aramin holds toward Lieutenant Vadis is that he is a good man in a fight but takes things too seriously to make a good commander, at present. Sergeant Mung he respects as an experienced soldier and a capable leader of men.

Lieutenant Vadis. □ *Human male, Ht. 5'10", Wt. 160#, Age: 26.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Excellent with sword and shield, Very Good otherwise.*

Most guard officers are the offspring of well-to-do parents. Lieutenant Vadis is an exception, having earned his rank in the field during a border conflict two years past. Recognized as a sound tactician and a well-disciplined soldier, but being judged as lacking the flexibility and inventiveness that makes a truly



— Captain Aramin —

excellent officer, Vadis has been assigned under Aramin in hopes that something of the older man's attitude will rub off.

Vadis is somewhat mystified by Aramin's personality. Having heard of the old man's tussle with the bandit leader, Vadis can easily understand the discipline that would send a handful of guardsmen against a force more than twice its size. But that such an attack would rout the bandits still seems something of a mystery to him. Vadis is only just beginning to recognize that it was something in Aramin's attitude in dealing with the bandit chief that made the attack come as such a devastating surprise. As a consequence, Vadis's first opinion that Aramin was a goldbrick who had found an easy post where he could slough off until retirement is beginning to change to one of guarded admiration.

Sergeant Mung. □ *Human male, Ht.. 5'11", Wt. 185#, Age: 42.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Very Good with sword and shield, Good otherwise.*

Mung is the sort of soldier that every officer dreams of having serve under him. A veteran guardsman, Mung is entirely dependable, keeps the troops well in hand, doesn't worry about the ethical implications of any particular fight, and is an amiable companion during off-duty hours.

Mung's attitude toward Captain Aramin is one of reverential awe. Toward Lieutenant Vadis, Mung is respectful, but he tends to check up on the lieutenant a lot, ensuring that orders he gives are OK'd with the captain, and making certain that equipment he inspects is really in acceptable condition. Vadis finds this second-guessing of his every action infuriating, but he has not, as yet, confronted Mung about it.

Tholl, Lord of Dreams. □ *Supernatural humanoid entity, Ht.. Usually 6', Wt. Apparently 200#, Age: Multiple aeons.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Excellent with long bow and two-handed sword, Poor otherwise.* □ *Magic Ability: Legendary C5, C7.*

Agas ago, the realm of Tholl, Lord of Dreams, lay very close to the material realm. In those times, when people dreamed, they often entered Tholl's realm, and he could visit their dreams, demanding an accounting of their presence in his world.

One ancient race of people, the Valasians, seemed more attuned to Tholl's realm than did others, and they established a priesthood to serve Tholl. Travelling freely about the dream realm, these priests could enter the minds of sleepers as Tholl did, and they could perform great wonders of healing (or harm, if need be). But as the priests' powers grew, so did the powers of Tholl, and he began tearing at the veils that hold the *dream realm* and the waking world separate, seeking to extend his reign to the material plane. Natural laws began to warp to the whimsical ones of dreams, and nightmare visions and madness walked the waking world.

Viewing the chaos of the two realms combining, and recognizing in Tholl a senseless rapacity that would not halt till it had consumed all realms, the priests of Tholl set to work to defeat their god. First, they used their powers of sleep to lay a blanket of lethargy over their native land, numbing somewhat the power that Tholl drew from his people. Then ranging far away to other nations, they planted dreams of conquest in the minds of sleeping kings and emperors, drawing them and their armies toward Valasia. Within a few short years, the entirety of Valasia was conquered and the Valasians were scattered across the face of the world as slaves and refugees. So too was Tholl's power dispersed, and with the passing of the ages, the *dream realm* drew farther and farther from the material realm.

The mound upon which the Houndsteeth Border Garrison now stands is the last surviving remnant of Valasia. Upon that hill once stood the main temple dedicated to Tholl, and the earth at the summit of that hill still retains some strange ties to the dream realm, enough that anyone who sleeps in contact with that earth enters the realm of dreams, and very occasionally Tholl himself will stir restlessly from his age-old slumber and seek to consume the dreamer. It is for this reason that some prisoners go mad or die during a night spent in the tower's cell.



— Tholl, Lord of Dreams —

If a character dreams him or herself into Tholl's realm, and if Tholl stirs and notes the character's presence (GM's discretion), dream combat will ensue. Tholl will conjure an illusion to battle the character (the GM should make it something roughly equivalent to the character in terms of combat ability). During each combat round, the character can try one of three actions: (1) perform a combat attack, (2) attempt to disbelieve Tholl's illusion, or (3) attempt to believe into existence an illusion of his own. Combat attacks and attempts to disbelieve illusions are handled normally according to the game system being used. Attempts on a character's part to believe an illusion into existence operate similarly to attempts to disbelieve. Simple items such as normal weapons and armor are the easiest to create, with difficulty increasing for larger weapons and tougher armor (magical weapons or armor may not be created). Attempting to create other illusions, such as creatures, is extremely difficult, unless the character knows an appropriate illusion spell.

In dream combat, a character who takes his or her normal maximum amount of damage is not dead, but is driven mad. A character dies in his or her sleep if he or she takes twice that amount of damage in dream combat. Any character who defeats (or disbelieves) the illusion that Tholl sets against him or her, may confront Tholl himself immediately thereafter. In dream combat, Tholl wears black plate armor and carries both a glossy black long bow and a glittering two-handed battlesword. If Tholl is defeated in combat, his essence is dispersed for a year and a day, during which time he is unable to confront dreamers, even upon the soil of the Houndsteeth Garrison's hill.



— Sgt. Mung —

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: To the Rescue! One of the best uses for the border guards, or for any sort of official guards for that matter, is to pull adventurers' fannies out of the fire if a combat goes seriously against them. For example, if the adventurers have been ambushed by bandits, and for some reason the players all roll terribly during combat, just when things look hopeless, a band of highway patrolmen appear in the distance, and the bandits turn and run. The patrolmen can offer medical aid, then escort the adventurers for some distance, to ensure that the bandits do not return.

If you use this as an opportunity to pass along new information to the adventurers (such as a job opportunity or a clue to some problem), or if you involve them with the mysterious events at the tower, they will never suspect the guards to be a *GM deus ex machina*, believing instead that this was planned all along.

Scenario 2: Dream a Little Dream of Me. Obviously, the most direct way to get the adventurers involved in this adventure setting is to have the border guards arrest them. Of course, for this to happen, the adventurers will have to be caught in some illegal activity, such as smuggling (or carrying swords without a permit). Once arrested, the adventurers are divested of weapons and escorted to the tower, where they are tossed into the holding cell until more guards can arrive from the City to take them to trial.

While the adventurers are here, Tholl appears during one of the nights and draws one of the cell's occupants into dream combat. Assuming that the adventurer group includes at least one magic user (you can stretch the definition as much as you see fit), that adventurer will sense what is occurring and can intervene, drawing other adventurers into the dream as well (Note that Tholl

can either conjure one illusion per person or conjure a combined illusion roughly equal to the combat ability of the whole party. Such combined illusions should be more difficult to disbelieve.)

Scenario 3: Waking the Nightmare. The adventurers stop at the tower one night on their way to or from the City and find that there are a number of other travelers here as well. As luck would have it, one of the travelers is the last high priest of Tholl, a disgruntled fellow who has come to perform the ritual which will allow Tholl to cross physically into reality. The high priest knows a secret way from the base of the mound to the tower's cell, and he intends to go there to conduct his ritual, first slaying any prisoners he finds, to prevent their interfering with the ceremony.

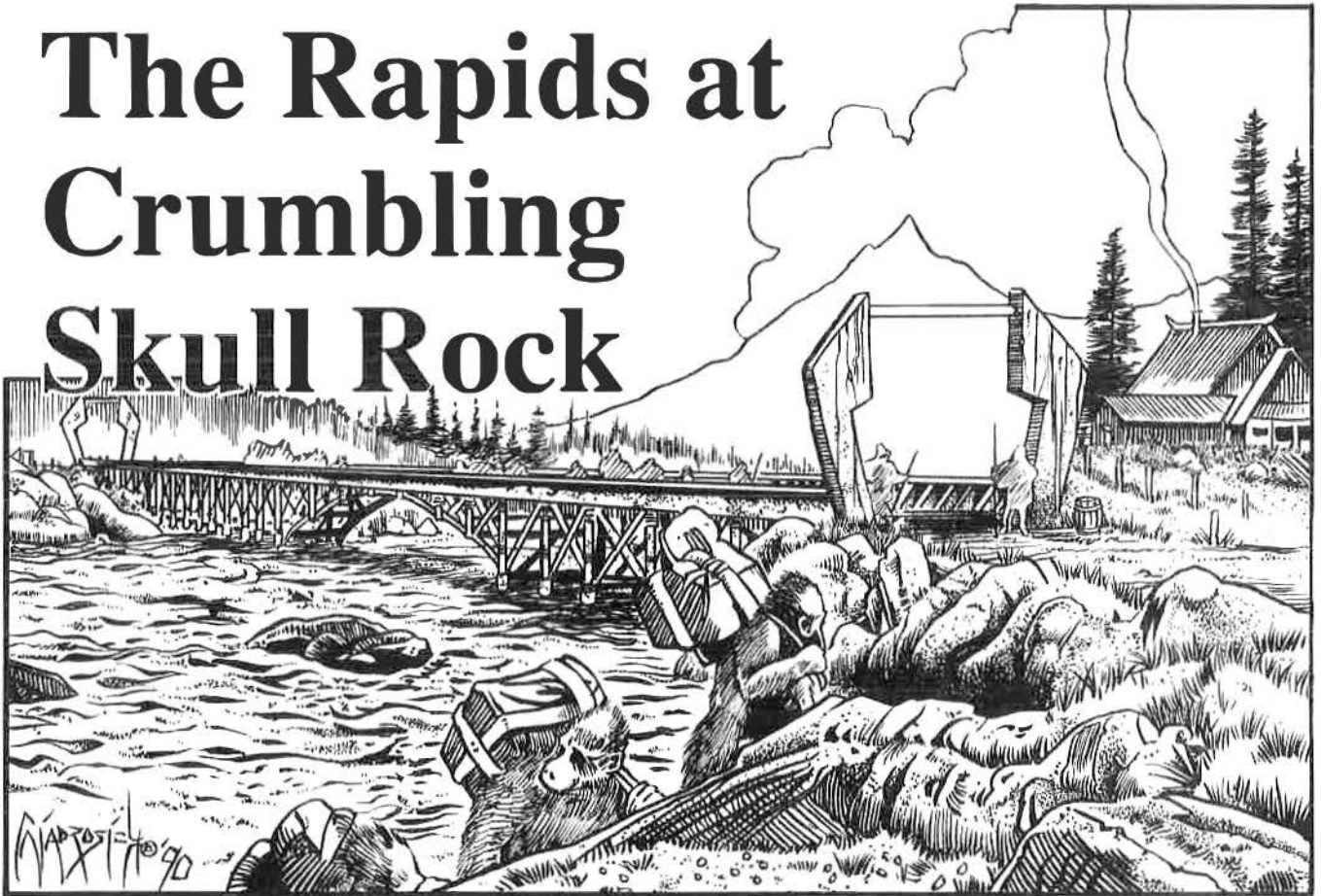
The adventurers spot the priest entering the secret passage. If they follow to discover his purpose, Tholl has manifested enough to battle them (first summoning illusions as explained above) while his servant works to complete the ceremony. The noise of the battle will certainly attract the attention of the guards, who will join in the battle, and perhaps other travelers as well (Tholl will be able to summon more illusions in response, of course). If Tholl wins, he gets to remain in the waking world, otherwise he is driven back to the *realm of dreams*.

Were it not for men like Aramin, Vadis, and Mung, and the soldiers in their command the highways between the City and other lands would be far more dangerous. Yet, in exchange for their service they often gain little benefit other than the satisfaction that others, their distant families and friends, can sleep just a little more safely at night. Adventurers would be wise to follow the example of these valiant warriors.

As for Tholl, it is often best to let sleeping gods lie.



The Rapids at Crumbling Skull Rock



Strategically placed near the head of Crumbling Skull Rapids, the toll bridge of Karth Valknar forms a vital link in the East-West road, as well as providing a portage for cargo laden ships, heading downstream from rich northern mines. For most, Karth's toll bridge is but a brief and uneventful stop in a long and arduous journey. For the keen of eye and mind, however, mystery and intrigue lie under the innocuous exterior.

The Great River flows wide and deep for much of its navigable course. Crossing points are few and it would add weeks to a caravan's journey to bypass this vital bridge. Not only does the bridge provide a means to cross the Great River, it has been built at the site of a portage which allows ships to bypass the dangerous rapids below Crumbling Skull Rock. Many ships and their cargos had been lost to the rapids and the rock known only as Delgarth's Revenge.

Passed from father to son and aligned with none of the bordering nations, Karth's bridge provides service to any and all who have the silver to pay for passage. It is a meeting place of caravan route and river highway that facilitates trade between the

surrounding kingdoms, providing a neutral buffer between rival factions. Even so, the bridge is fast becoming the center of power struggles among those wishing to control it.

History

Until recently, this area was wild, untamed wilderness. Ocean trade was the sole means of transporting goods from east to west. The Great River stood like an impassable wall, even if the wilderness could be passed safely. The river's depth did allow travel from the mountains at its source to the ocean at its egress into the ocean. However, the rapids at Crumbling Skull Rock prevented large boats from making the trip and only the adventurous or foolhardy dared them at all.

Derek Valknar, Karth's father, led a hardy band of mercenaries into the interior at the behest of King Aralorn the Expander (though in terms of the mighty City, King Aralorn is little more than a borderlands baron). After many adventures, the group, depleted by more than half, came across the grinning edifice they dubbed Crumbling Skull Rock. Sensing the importance of this site as a ford across the Great River, Derek asked the King to grant him and his children the deed to this land as recompense for his services. Eager to avoid paying the enormous reward Aralorn had promised to Derek, the King quickly granted the mercenary his request.

Using his large reserves of money, Derek set about the task of making the area habitable. The trees were cleared on both sides of the river, a wide portage road was cleared around the rapids, and a large wooden dwelling built on the western bank. A sturdy

Author Lisa Stevens, yet another first-time contributor to CityBook, is involved with the editorial operations of the game company Lion Rampant. Writers for this book seem to have come in groups, two from Michigan, two from Texas, three from Arizona, and two from Minnesota. Lisa is the other writer from Minnesota.

Bob Gladrosich is the book's other Georgian (or is Christopher Appel the other Georgian?) He shared that neighboring corner table at a game convention last summer. At least HE sold a few prints.

wooden bridge was erected over the river, with the wooden pilings sunk deep into the river bed, just upstream from the rapids. Using some favors and a fair amount of capital, Derek contracted the services of an archmage from the City to transmorph the wooden bridge into stone, providing stability to the structure. A number of additional enchantments were ensorcelled onto the bridge by a passing wizard. Only Derek and his heirs know of these enchantments and the commands to evoke them.

When Derek passed away recently, ownership of the bridge passed to his son, Karth. His wife Daisha, two daughters, and his friends, Rygor and Roy P. Zabber, share the work with him. Karth's younger brother, Kyrin, was apprenticed away to a wealthy merchant, removing him from the scene and, hopefully, eliminating any squabbles over who should inherit the bridge.

One unpleasant feature of the bridge is its source of manual labor. Old Derek discovered a tribe of semi-intelligent apes living around Crumbling Skull Rock. Using a magical ring which allowed him to control animals, Derek enslaved as many of the apes as he could capture. Very quickly, all of the free apes were either captured, died, or were driven off. Karth now owns the ring. In order to maintain his supply of labor, Derek and Karth acquired another magical device which allows them to transform humans into animals. They selected derelicts, vagrants, and loners whenever they needed to restock their labor force, transforming the victim into one of the apes under the control of the

ring. Karth doesn't like doing this, but feels trapped by the need to provide cheap labor. So far no one has questioned the few disappearances. Currently, negotiations with Torren Gadge, the used golem merchant, are underway to see if he can provide a more palatable source of manual labor.

Layout

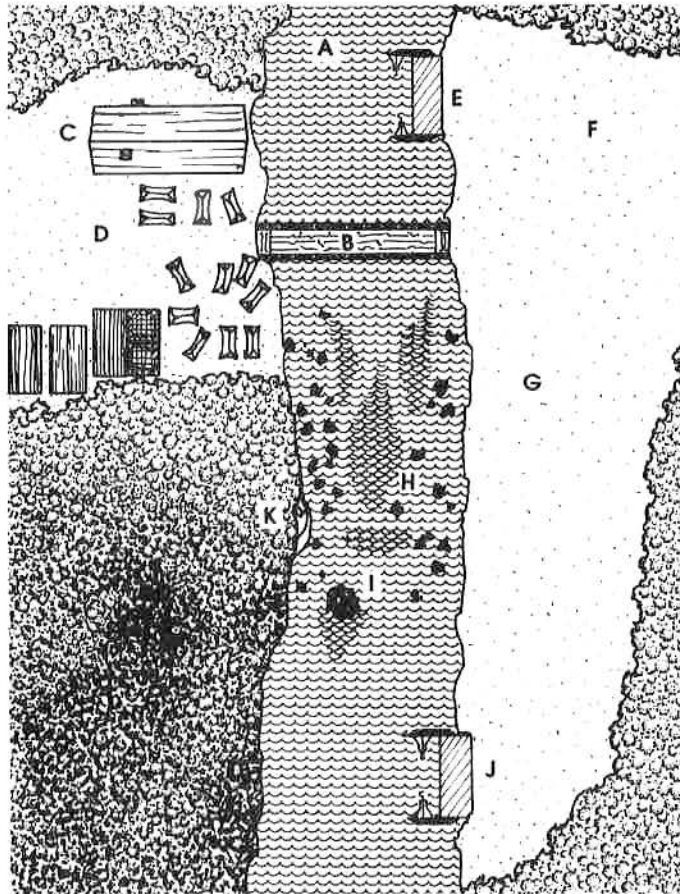
A. The Great River. With a width of about 60 feet at this point, the river has a variable depth: 30 feet deep above the rapids, 2-8 feet in the rapids themselves, and 40 feet below the rapids. Water clarity is poor due to the turbulence. Boats wrecked in the rapids will have their cargo swept far downstream, with little chance for salvage. Only a strong, unburdened swimmer has a chance to make it across the river.

B. The Toll Bridge. This is the famous toll bridge of the Valknar clan. The stone bridge's narrow width allows only one wagon or cart to pass at a time. To avoid confusion, only one party or caravan is allowed on the bridge at any one time. Control of the bridge's traffic falls into the hands of Roy P. Zabber. He collects tolls from wayfarer's before the bridge is used. The bridge opens at dawn and closes at sunset (the apes barricade the ends with strong gates). For a large sum, it will be reopened at night.

TYPICAL TOLLS:

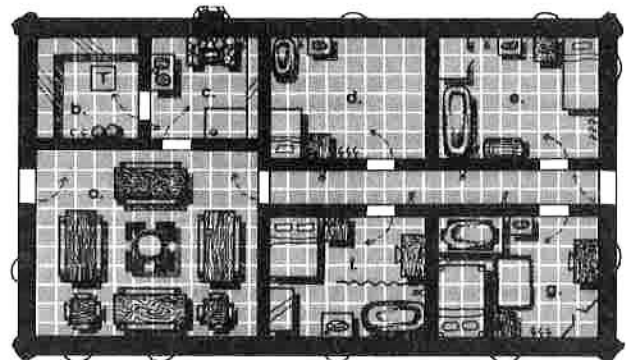
Person, each:	1 silver
Pack or riding animal:	2 silvers
Wagon:	5 silvers

Should the bridge be threatened by force, Karth can cause it to be removed to another plane until the threat has been dealt with. Only Karth knows the word which activates the enchantment. The only time the power has even been tested, the people on the bridge fell into the rapids. However, two dwarves, on the bridge at the time, later resurfaced at a tavern downstream, talking of a quaint pastoral land populated by intelligent, dark-haired humans. Any person or thing which is totally below the top of the railing when the bridge jumps to the other plane is taken with the bridge, else they are dumped into the river. The "other plane" is actually the pocket dimension of High Haven from *Tsalini's Stopover Station* (q.v.). Another spell was placed on the bridge to make the stone immune to the ravages of time and weather.



▲ CRUMBLING SKULL RAPIDS

Water	Rocks	Forested Rock
Rapids	Forest	Clear



SCALE: one square = 2 feet

Of course there are the tales told that few believe: that the wizard who enchanted the bridge also made it a gate to other dimensions, if one only knows the activating words.

C. House Complex. This one-story, wooden structure houses Karth, his family, and his friends. Made from yew logs brought downriver, the house is sturdy and has weathered some of the area's most vicious storms.

a. Main Room (20' x 15') Around this room, all of the household's social activities revolve. Eating, entertainment, and most daily tasks take place here. Large oaken tables are situated in a circle around the central fireplace with long wooden benches for seating. Important guests, caravan masters, and others invited by Karth are treated to ale and, if they are lucky, one of Daisha's culinary delights. There is room to seat up to 30 comfortably.

b. Storage/Larder (10' x 10') All the household supplies and foodstores are kept here, procured from passing merchants. A trap door leads down to a cellar where ale, wine, and other perishables are stored until needed.

c. Kitchen (10' x 10') In this small kitchen, Daisha spends her days whipping up daringly new meals to satisfy her husband's taste for exotic food. A cooking fire is always ready.

d. Roy P. Zabber's Room (15' x 10') The furnishings of this bedroom reflect the fact that Zabber is a dwarf. The overall decor is rather spartan.

e. Rygor's Room (15' x 10') Karth's captain uses this room as his personal quarters. In addition to a bed and small table, the room has a clothes cabinet and a locked² chest.

f. Koyron and Cyan's Room (15' x 10') Karth's daughters share a large bed. One can find a large variety of jewelry laying around, but none of it is of any appreciable value.

g. Karth and Daisha's Room (15' x 10') The lord and lady of the house reside in this room. Lavishly furnished, Karth's taste in decor matches his hunger for exotic foods. Everything from the burnt-umber-colored bed to the brass bathtub came from transient merchants.

D. Western Staging Area. This expanse of hardened ground is where Karth's mercenaries barrack. An assortment of tents and other nonpermanent structures fill the southern half, leaving an avenue for travelers to pass through. Here too are three large warehouses, where merchants can store their wares (for a reasonable fee of course) until their continuing transportation arrives via river or caravan. At day's end, the apes are gathered up and put into pens here. The pens are made of bamboo poles, lashed together with strong rope and sunken deeply into the ground.

E. North Docks. If a ship wishes to bypass the rapids, two hoists with block and tackle are available at this dock to lift the boat out of the water. Then, the ship can be portaged around the rapids. Either the ship's crew can portage the ship or, for a small fee of course, Karth will have his apes portage the ship, using a complex system of hoist-ways, tracks, and runners. Larger ships usually transfer their goods to waiting ships at the bottom of the rapids (or to a warehouse), hauling the cargo overland to the waiting ship, rather than actually portaging the ship itself.

F. Eastern Staging Area. If merchants and other travellers wish to spend the evening in the toll bridge area, this clearing has been set aside for that purpose. Karth's mercenaries patrol the area at all times, making sure the peace is kept. An avenue is kept clear to the north at all times for travelers passing through. Like most crossroads, this area has also attracted its share of craftsmen catering to the needs of those passing through. Though none of the establishments are permanent, a couple have been around

long enough to become part of the scenery, forming a make-shift village. A smithy, carpenter, wheelwright, and leatherworker service the transportation while an outdoor inn services the stomachs of those unfortunate enough not to be invited into the Valknar house for the evening. Many transients hawk their wares for a while here before moving on (Doctor Gopp and his medicine show have appeared more than once), but more are staying here for indefinite periods of time. Any of the more common items can be found at any given time, and many times, rarer items are also seen for sale here. Over the course of the next few years, the toll bridge could see tremendous growth as the road and river traffic increases.

G. Portage Path. Boats being portaged past the rapids are brought down this path. It is wide enough for even the largest boats.

H. Crumbling Skull Rapids. The rapids below Crumbling Skull Rock are treacherous, even without the rock known as Delgarth's Revenge. There are many other rocks and shallows to catch the unwary and foolish.

I. Delgarth's Revenge. There are many legends as to how Delgarth's Revenge came to be situated in the middle of Crumbling Skull Rapids. All agree that the wizard Delgarth, the head of the City's Wizards Guild some 500 years ago, caused the huge rock to rise up from the riverbed, sinking a ship with an enemy aboard. What the different accounts disagree on is the identity of the enemy (some say it was a rival black-haired wizard, others a haughty noble, and others Delgarth's own brother) and whether or not this enemy died. One thing can be sure, Delgarth's Revenge remains, blocking the rapids and resisting all attempts to remove it, both mundane and magical. A ship, unless it is very small or the navigator is extremely skilled, will almost certainly become wrecked on this massive rock. On certain nights, ghostly apparitions can be seen struggling in the water around Delgarth's Revenge. A few disappearances have been connected with these sightings.

J. South Docks. Like its brother to the north, this dock is equipped with two hoists to help in the launching of portaged boats.

K. Crumbling Skull Rock. Named for the grinning, skull-like rock formation which overlooks the rapids, Crumbling Skull Rock is about 50 feet tall and 200 feet across. The "face" of the rock is bare, while the "cranium" is heavily forested with pine trees and other hardy vegetation. Many a secret midnight rendezvous between interested parties of the opposite sex has taken place at any of a number of sites overlooking the rapids. Whether the "skull" is a natural wonder or a carved image, has never been determined.

Personalities

Karth Valknar. □ *Human, Ht: 5'9", Wt: 157#, Age: 37.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Good with bow and broadsword, Fair with dagger and unarmed combat.* □ *Magic Ability: Fair, C1, C2, C4.*

Karth is a seasoned traveler. His father taught him to seek out those places to which his curiosity led him and apprenticed him to a travelling merchant to give him the business sense necessary to run the toll bridge wisely. With the death of his elderly father, Karth has finally settled down here at the toll bridge. His income is spent to furnish his family with creature comforts and no price



— Karth Valknar —

is too high if he has his heart set on buying something.

A hardened man who has seen his share of death and grief, Karth keeps his emotions in check. Deep inside, though, he remains faithful to his friends unto death, and loves his wife and daughters fanatically. When under pressure, he has a quick, keen mind which can spell the difference between success and failure. He rides around the bridge area on his black destrier, supervising and making sure that all remains peaceful, in addition to controlling the apes when needed. His younger daughter, Cyan, is his favorite, and he is teaching her the limited magic he knows, while training her to defend herself with the bow.

Karth knows and trusts many of the caravan leaders and ship captains who stop here, and is particularly fond of pompous Mikal del Brionfal Tobrannon and the enigmatic Ristya Darkbrow. On the other hand, he has made it clear to Terrence Forge that if the Forgeaway Company does not stop demanding he sell the bridge, their coaches will not be allowed to cross.

Daisha Valknar. □ *Human, Ht: 5'4", Wt: 123#, Age: 34.*
 □ *Fighting Prowess: Average with dagger and bow.* □ *Magical Ability: Fair, C2, C3.*

Daisha is known throughout the caravan circuit as one of the best cooks in all four corners of the world. Some even say that her skills are enhanced with fairy blood, but none know if this is true. The daughter of a wealthy merchant from the City, she fell in love with Karth's flamboyant style and charming grace (her much younger sister Veradis, did not fare so well and was given in marriage to Keir Collis, who now runs Nightshade Shipping). She's not terribly excited about being stuck in the wilderness, but if that makes her husband happy, then she's willing

to stick it out. At least news comes in with each caravan that passes through.

Though strands of gray season her striking red hair, Daisha's beauty seems untouched by the years (though she enhances it with magic and some more mundane beauty aids). Her warm smile and gentle manner have won her many admirers. Daisha tends to favor Koyron, taking her wild daughter in tow and attempting to teach her responsibility through the study of the magical arts. She sees a lot of herself in Koyron and wants to make sure her daughter doesn't get in trouble with some young buck that wanders through.

Koyron Valknar. □ *Human, Ht: 4'11", Wt: 97#, Age: 16.*
 □ *Fighting Prowess: Poor all around.* □ *Magical Ability: Poor, C2, C5.*

Growing up around the bridge isn't all bad. Especially when your interest lies with men. There are so many new ones coming through all the time, it makes her head spin. Of course, Karth and Daisha don't approve, but that doesn't stop Koyron. Her trips up to Crumbling Skull Rock with eligible young men are becoming more and more frequent. She dislikes her nosey sister, Cyan, who spies on Koyron for her parents. On top of it all, Cyan has the favor of her father. Koyron doesn't have the patience or will to study magic, but is forced to by her mother. Someday, she wants to leave with some handsome young man and get out from under her mother's skirt.

Koyron's beauty strongly favors her aunt Veradis (see *Wanderers*) and given a little poise and cosmetics, she could easily pass for her mother's younger sister.

Cyan Valknar. □ *Human, Ht: 4'9", Wt: 90#, Age: 8.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Fair with bow, poor with the rest.* □ *Magical Prowess: Poor (but she has a great aptitude), C1, C4.*

Cyan is much less rebellious than her sister and helps out around the bridge as needed. Her aptitude in magic far surpasses Koyron's. Karth dotes on her and the sheltered life he provides has kept Cyan rather naive (as any child well deserves to be). Her curiosity matches her father's and gets her into more trouble than you can shake a stick at. She is her father's eyes and ears and tells him all that she sees and hears, including what her sister, Koyron does. This infuriates Koyron to no end and the mean pranks she plays on Cyan have left Karth worried.

Roy P. Zabber. □ *Dwarf, Ht: 3'11", Wt: 185#, Age: 91.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Very Good with battle axe, Good with broadsword and shortsword combination.*

The son of a vagabond scribe, Zabber spent his childhood on the run with a father whose gambling and drinking habits only got him into trouble. A life on the run was all he knew. He joined up with Karth about 15 years back. They became fast friends. When Karth inherited the bridge, Zabber came with him and for the first time in his life, has been able to stop wandering and call a place home.

Zabber is friendly as dwarves go. Because he was raised among humans, he has very few of the values and attitudes of the dwarves. One thing he lacks is *common sense*. He has been known to charge into dangerous situations without thinking. To his detriment as a toll collector, he has been known to take pity on poor vagrants, letting them go through free. Lately, almost everyone tries some sob story or another to win the dwarf's sympathy and get free passage. The apes' plight also tugs on his



— Roy P. Zabber —

heart's strings. Every night, he takes little treats to them and makes sure no one mistreats them.

Rygor. □ *Human, Ht: 6'1", Wt: 235#, Age: 36.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Very Good with Two-Handed Sword and Dagger, Good with many others.*

Rygor is also a long time friend of Karth's. They met during a particularly rowdy bar fight and their admiration for each other hasn't waned since that day. As captain of the bridge's mercenaries, Rygor has found a job which gives him the prestige and status that he has always yearned for. Plus, it gives him a chance to use his mouth. You see, Rygor has one of the foulest mouths. Expletives flow freely and are used to curse mercenary and pack mule alike. An outgoing man who enjoys life to the fullest, his aggressive manner and unchecked tongue alienate many, but deep down, Rygor is loyal and fun-loving.

The Mercenaries. □ *Human, Fighting Prowess: Average, mainly with swords, some with crossbows.*

These men have been hired as they passed through. The money is good and the job isn't all that dangerous. All in all, not bad for men who were desperate enough to sell their lives for silver. Karth keeps them well provisioned and equipped, while Rygor makes sure that they stay in tip-top shape.

The Enslaved Apes. These apes average around 5'6" in height and weigh around 190 pounds. For their size, their strength far exceeds that of a human. Their natural dexterity makes them perfect for the exacting work of portaging ships. Karth's magical ring allows him to control up to 30 of these brutes at any one time, as long as they are within 500 yards of him. The apes have a limited intelligence, but not enough to break the ring's

hold on them, except on rare occasions. Occasionally, one of the apes escapes, but Karth only uses the apes he needs and keeps a tight control on them to insure that none escape, for it is becoming increasingly difficult and risky to replace them. No one knows of the transformed apes except for Karth and it is uncertain how his wife and friends would react to this news should it be brought to light.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Are We Not Men? One of the apes has escaped and Karth is offering a reward for its safe return. The escapee leads the party on a long chase, trying every trick in the book to evade them. When the group finally catches the ape, it tries to communicate with them. It turns out this is one of the derelicts which Karth has polymorphed into an ape. Of course, the ape can't speak, but tries to use sign and body language to get this fact across. Does the group ignore the ape and return it to Karth? Do they help the ape regain its human form? Then what do they do about Karth? How about any other humans who have met the same fate? How do Rygor, Zabber and Daisha react if the party reveals this heinous crime?

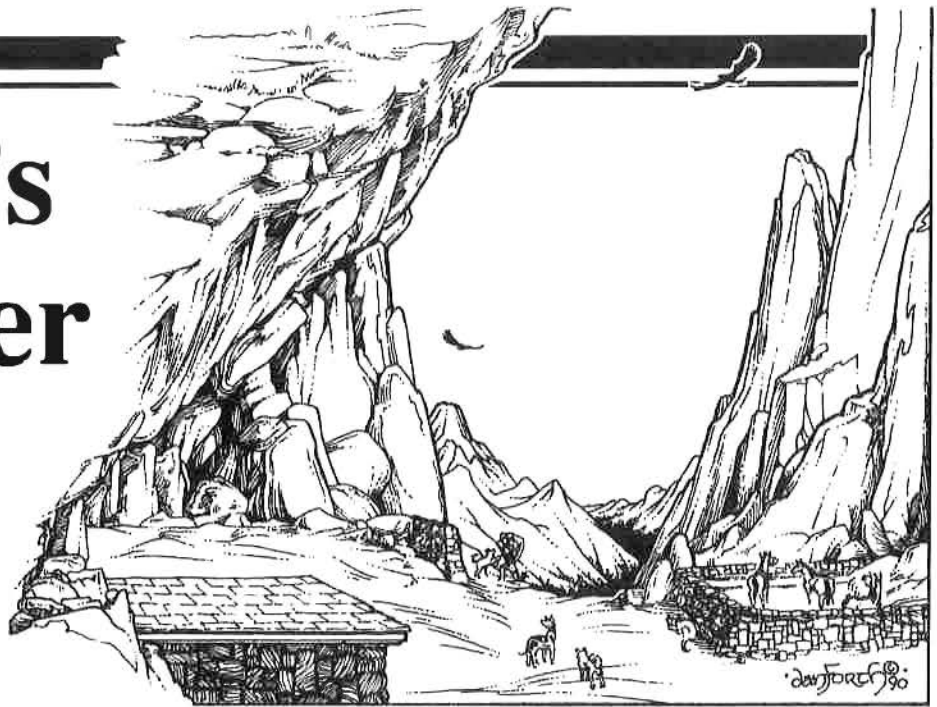
Scenario 2: But He's My Brother! Kyrin Valknar has returned incognito to wrest control of the bridge from his brother. He is allied with Terrence Forge, of the Forgeway Company, which seeks control of the bridge. Kyrin has also struck a deal with Dr. Gopp in exchange for Gopp's smuggling him unseen into the toll bridge area. Hired mercenaries have been trickling into the area for weeks now. The plan is to neutralize Karth's own troops and wrest possession of the bridge control device from him. Kyrin will force the bridge to disappear and hold the area by force of arms until it is secured. Then he will set himself up as the new owner, with special concessions to Dr. Gopp and the Forgeway Company of course. Karth escapes and tries to convince the adventurers to help him regain control of the bridge mechanism and subsequently the bridge. Do they help?

Scenario 3: Trouble over Bridged Water. Cyan finds the bridge control device. She and the bridge disappear. At the same time, Koyron runs off with the jongleur, Barregart, who is travelling with Tobrannon's caravan. The crew of the River Drake is blamed for the girls' disappearance (some suggest the heinous riverfolk ate them!). Ristya Darkbrow hires the adventurers to find the girls and clear the name of the riverfolk. Finding Koyron may be easy, but will she come back with the adventurers? Deducing Cyan's whereabouts will be harder. What happens when the characters follow her to a different plane?

Is the bridge truly a portal between dimensions for those who know its secrets? The Master knows. How much longer can the bridge withstand pressures by kings and merchant princes before Karth and his family are forced to flee. Or even worse, how long until Karth's little village becomes a town and then a City itself?

If you're ever travelling through the wilderness and you come across a toll bridge, don't be too surprised when a dwarf comes up to you with his hand out and says, "Don't ask for whom the bridge tolls, for it tolls for you!"

Tsalini's Stopover Station



Transporting goods one place to another can bring a tidy profit, but rough terrain may interfere. Thus, when crossing high mountains, one necessarily seeks a pass. If one finds a fire and a place to sleep out of the wind, all the better.

Green Ice Pass seems an unlikely place for anyone to take up residence. Even at the height of summer, a glacial chill numbs noses and makes ungloved fingers clumsy. The pass is above the treeline, and nothing slows the winds howling among the barren and aptly-named Frostpeaks.

Merchant caravans use Tsalini's Station regularly but with no great frequency, and the adventuring cadres who pass through are usually on their way to some place more interesting. No one comes for a holiday, to be sure! The pass is completely sealed off seven months of the year by drifting snow, treacherous ice, and raging blizzards. The storms are powerful, and a rumor identifies the screaming winds with the agonies of the tormented souls of a heretical sorcerer and his minions who disappeared here centuries ago.

Services

For the five months that travelers find Green Ice Pass accessible, Tsalini, her many dogs, and her occasional associates make all welcome. The small wayhouse is no luxury villa. In fact, those stopping overnight do not even sleep inside the wayhouse—there's no room. The face of the western Frostpeak overhangs the pass, and on this "porch" travelers find a place out of the elements.

Tsalini usually has at least stew and onion-flavored flatbread available for travelers. Horses, mules, and other stock get relatively poor fodder, since it must be carted up from high meadows.

Water seeps fed by snowmelt provide a good water supply.

Tsalini does not have a price list for the services provided, but does expect payment. She prefers barter to coin.

Tsalini herself is not "for sale," nor does she respond to flirting. Nevertheless, she is pleasant and friendly, moderately intelligent, and she tells fireside stories as well as any professional talespinner. She listens to travelers' news eagerly and carefully.

For travelers planning ahead, the station is an excellent place to cache supplies. Honest provisioners in the City will, for a fee, send porters with food and goods ahead of the main party. Thus, the party can travel lighter, picking up the supplies when they arrive. Others arrange for goods to be available for their return trip.

The Frostpeaks are riddled with small shallow caves. Tsalini caches the goods in these caves, sealing them in until the owners claim them. She will store goods free for a year and a day. Unclaimed, the goods become hers, although by prior arrangement and payment, goods may be stored longer.

Tsalini is careful about not turning over stores to someone who doesn't have a very good claim, and a magical guardian wards the goods against pilferage, according to solid rumor. Coordinating with the provisioners and carters, she expects a personal token to accompany the goods. The token must be described with its associated supplies before Tsalini will knock down the sealing wall. Her memory is excellent.

Tsalini winds up with quite a bit of miscellaneous "stuff." Travelers pay for Tsalini's services with all manner of things. Although unclaimed caches most often contain food, anything imaginable might be there. After dinner, Tsalini presents these goods for sale or further barter. Others also get into the act, and Tsalini welcomes the lively bazaar atmosphere that sometimes results. However, she's not even half-fooled by the likes of the sly Dr. Gopp (q.v.), but she does not interfere unless someone complains.

Tsalini is not alone at the station. Her constant companions are a multitude of dogs, large and small, that are extremely protective and watchful.

Occasionally there are more human guests. Caravan master Trobrannon (q.v.) crosses Green Ice at least once a year, and he has noticed Tsalini hosting a certain individuals, seemingly for an extended period of time. Always a woman, always dark-haired

Elizabeth T. Danforth has already had her laurels lauded earlier, as an illustrator. Nevertheless, she also participates in this compendium as an author. Liz is one of two contributors to be participating in CityBook for the fourth time! Her recently completed works include a short story in *Into the Shadows*, a Shadowrun™ braided-novel from FASA; the *Tunnels and Trails* computer game for New World Computing and Starcraft Japan; Interplay's *MeanTime™* game; and numerous illustrations for Iron Crown Enterprises' Middle Earth books. To keep herself busy, she is currently at work on *Dragon Wars™ II* for Interplay. The reason Elizabeth gets this long a bio here is because she also illustrated her own piece.

like Tsalini, this guest is often a capable archer and arms-bearer, and not averse to adventure. She seems comfortably familiar with Tsalini (although not in an erotic sense), and helps out with chores around the station. Although the two or three women Trobrannon has seen over the years were clearly different individuals, something in their looks or manner has him labeling them the "Dark Sisters." He hired one as a caravan guard and had no cause for complaint, except that she utterly stonewalled inquiries about her history.

Behind the Scenes

To understand the situation at Green Ice Pass, one must roll back the draperies of time about five hundred years. Not surprisingly, rumors about the lost sorcerer and his followers contain a grain of truth, albeit a tiny one. Chisan Blackhair was the sorcerer's name, and his only "heresy" was an active dislike for the strait-laced, authoritarian head of the City's Wizards' Guild (common tales are unclear about the other wizard's name, Del-fren? Delgado? Delgarth?). Eventually, Blackhair got himself banished. Assassins sought him, and those dear to the wizard's independent heart. Chisan Blackhair gathered his apprentices and his few surviving kin, and set out to find a refuge.

Chisan Blackhair's specialty was weather-magic (although he was a broadly-talented mage by all accounts). He sought a pocket universe where he and those with him could live their lives in peace. To this end, he tapped into the incredible power of the winter storms in Green Ice Pass to create a nexus into a beautiful and uninhabited land, a veritable Shangri-La that he named High Haven.

The land had contradictory magical aspects, most oddly that no magic could be cast in this new world. The land was uncharted, unknown by any common magics. Time passed at about half the rate it did "outside." However, Chisan determined that if the gateway were severed from the common world, High Haven would lose its link to reality and, perhaps, cease to exist. The full extent of the land is unknown.

Blackhair could not prevent others from entering High Haven, but his spells (cast outside the land) limited the gate's activations to the equinoxes. Further, Blackhair devised a testing ritual, and only those related by blood to the original travelers could leave through the gate again. Nevertheless, there have been other visitors to High Haven (see "Odd Visitors" below).

Blackhair's only surviving kin were five nieces, his brother's children. What Blackhair didn't know initially was that his sister-in-law carried a hidden genetic disorder affecting the clotting of blood, hemophilia. In time, Blackhair's nieces wed the male apprentices, and many of their sons exhibited the disorder. Without magic to mediate the difficulties, all male children came to be treated as fragile, something to be carefully protected, even those not afflicted. Some 10 or 12 generations have passed. In such a small population (about 500 individuals), the gene is ubiquitous.

A sex-based separation of work developed. Better able to risk scratches and bumps, women engaged in the adventurous lifestyles of hunters, explorers, and builders. The men tended toward the safe lifestyles of craftsmen, caregivers, or scholars, delving into the tomes Blackhair had carried with him into exile.

Because these books all dealt with magic that could not actually be practiced, the would-be magicians developed a peculiar bent: the study of magic became highly theoretical and abstract, unique and exceptionally powerful ... except no one ever

actually *casts* the spells!

All this occurred centuries before Tsalini came to Green Ice Pass. As a youth, she crossed the pass on several occasions, poking into the local caves curiously. Then one freakishly warm day, the last of summer, she entered the pass much later in the year than was really safe. A storm forced her to seek shelter in a cave she'd explored before. On that equinoctial night, as the storm howled, a pale blue glow led her deep into the cave, to High Haven's gateway. Once inside, she could not discover how to leave.

In the hidden land, Tsalini did not behave like a bloody-handed barbarian, so when she came before the council of elders, they simply explained she could never return to her homeworld. To acquaint her with local ways, she was fostered into Nembi Wellspeaker's household. Living there she fell deeply in love with Rann, Nembi's younger brother. In time they wed, started a good life together, and Tsalini bore a healthy son. She was happy, but always ached to see her homeland again.

After one anguished argument, Nembi led Tsalini to the nexus-gate to explain the ritual, and prove that the transition was impossible for one not of the blood. Wellspeaker stabbed her finger and bled the Test-stone beside the gate, thereby proving her heritage. The gateway came to life. In desperation, Tsalini dove at the blue glow, but fell back as the gate refused her—the blood-giver only could pass. The gate dimmed. In fury, Tsalini pounded her fists bloody on the Test-stone—and the gate glowed again. Before Nembi's astonished eyes, Tsalini leaped through the gate.

Tsalini found herself back in the cave by the Green Ice Pass, with no gate behind her. Almost four years had passed, though she had lived in the hidden land less than two. The people of High Haven had treated her well, so she did not reveal their secret as she took up her interrupted life. Still, she missed her family and friends in the other land. Because she now knew she had a choice to come or go, she returned to Green Ice Pass at winter's end, to await the equinox.

A renegade outlaw followed her. When the gate activated, she entered and the man came behind, unseen. He found easy prey among townsmen who quickly died from the slightest blow. The warriors of High Haven reacted quickly, slaying the bandit and capturing Tsalini. After much interrogation, Tsalini's discretion was believed and her unusual ability was understood, if dimly: she was blood-kin.

Working through lowland tales, and the histories of High Haven, Tsalini learned she was probably the descendant of the sorcerer Blackhair himself. Later generations of High Haven males cannot cross over, lest they risk spilling the blood they cannot staunch. The old man loved the world he was born into and, while he lived, Blackhair occasionally ventured out. On one such occasion, he "eliminated" his wizard enemy, Delgarth. On another, he fathered Tsalini's great-great-grandfather.

Tsalini felt debt to the hidden world for having brought so much death through the gate in the form of the outlaw who followed her. She proposed a waystation "outside" to protect the gate and to keep an ear open to the goings-on of the outer world. The elders agreed, asking her to be the stationkeeper because of her familiarity with both worlds. Although it means that she is separated from her husband and son for half of every year (though just over three months pass in High Haven), Tsalini accepted the job and fulfills it.

Odd Visitors

Any visitor to High Haven is both an oddity and a cause for concern among the reclusive folk of this pocket dimension. About 25 years ago (High Haven reckoning) an odd magical device, piloted by a grim man faded in above the village, but did not stop before he faded out again. The pilot (Tranq, see *Domdaniel's Gate* in CB3), seemed to be performing desperate actions in a kind of backwards slow motion. Not long thereafter, a stone bridge, obviously enchanted, appeared several miles distant from the gate. Two dwarves who accompanied the bridge, stayed briefly but then disappeared into High Haven's own mountains never to be seen again. The last occurred quite recently—a small, quaint little inn, run by a charmingly elfin halfling couple just appeared near the village green and disappeared just as rapidly when they learned that no halflings dwelled in High Haven.

Layout

Tsalini's Wayhouse Station is constructed of mortared field-stone, thickly plastered inside to make it snug.

A. The Waystation (21' x 12'; irregular) Tsalini's spartan home. A low bed fills the northeast corner, blankets and furs cushioning a wooden bench half a foot off the floor. Sebastian, one of Tsalini's more wolfish companions, usurps the bed most days, since he often prowls at night. Tsalini keeps a chest of personal

belongings in the southeast corner of the room. On the south wall, where the building abuts the cliff, Tsalini constructed a catch-basin below a seep that produces icy cold, clear water year round. An overflow drain leads through the wall.

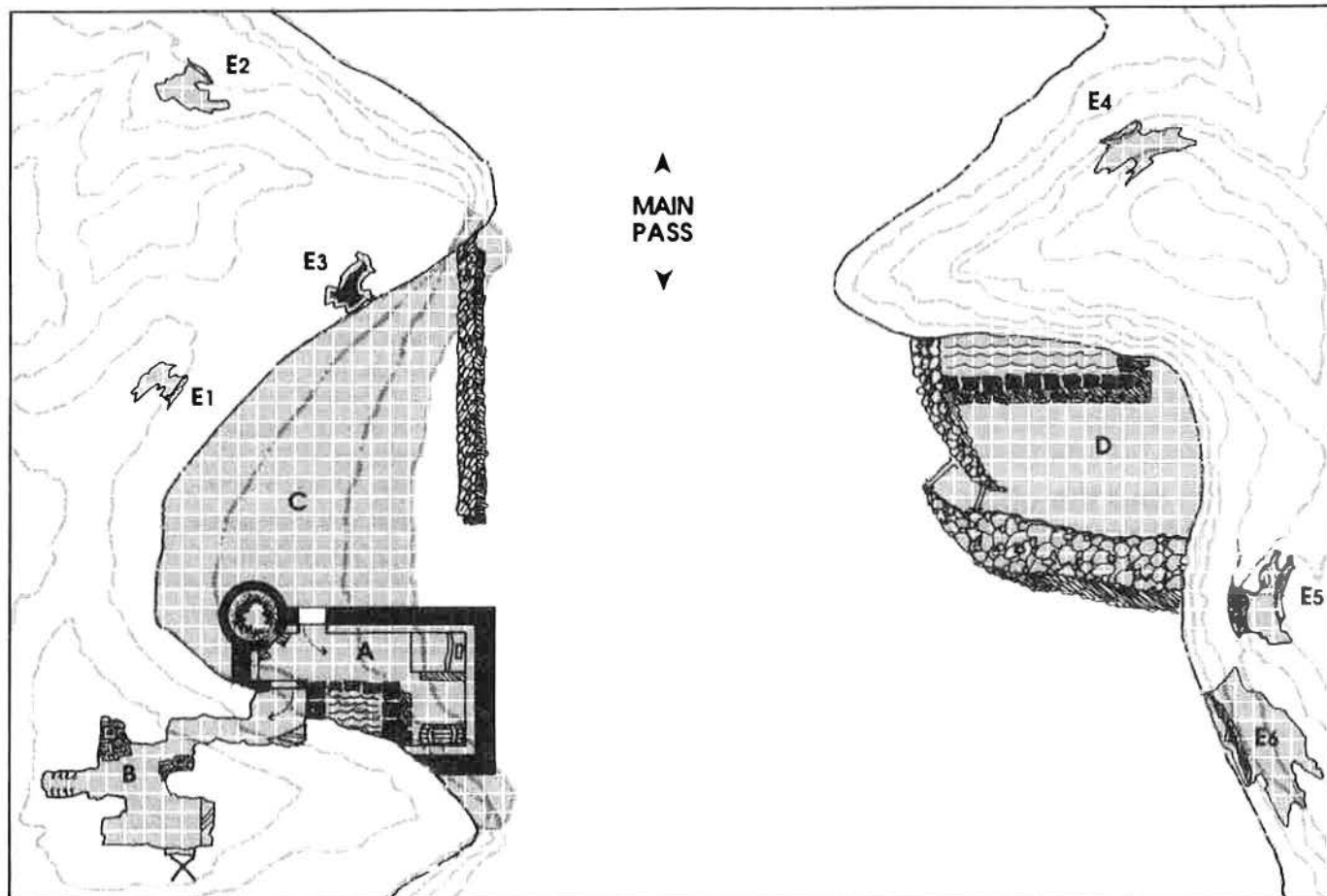
A hearth and baking oven fill the northwest corner of the waystation. The hearth and oven have their fireplace in common. With wood at a premium above the treeline, Tsalini uses coal found locally.

B. Storage Cave (very irregular, about 540 ft²) This cave seems typical of those found throughout the mountains; however, this is the gateway cave. The "X" marks the nexus-gate itself, which only activates into High Haven for 12 hours on either side of the actual moment of equinox, occurring twice a year. At that time, anyone may pass in. The blood-letting ritual is required to cross out, but that may take place at any time.

Tsalini uses the cave as her storehouse. She's built a wooden door, ostensibly to keep the cave-cooled air from invading her living quarters. There is no lock. Only Tsalini is supposed to enter, and the ever-present dogs do their part to enforce this.

The contents of unclaimed caches wind up here, with her food stores. The southern branch of the cave (containing the nexus gate) is slightly damp in the southwest corner, so little is stored there. Prowlers have no reason to linger in this part of the cave.

C. The Porch (45' in length, "roofed" about 25' deep) The so-called "porch" is a sandy-bedded rock shelter protected by a natural overhang. The prevailing winds blow up the pass from the southwest, so the mountain itself takes the brunt of bad weather. A low stone wall diverts the winds that would swirl back from the eastern side of the pass.



= 10 foot change in elevation

SCALE: one square = 2 feet

Tsalini keeps wooden cots stacked behind the waystation for those who desire such comforts.

D. Corral (appx. 24' x 18') The beasts of burden are put up in this stone-walled enclosure; a catchbasin provides water. Except at the height of the warm season, one of Tsalini's first jobs in the morning is to break the ice in this trough.

The south wall of the enclosure is a thick windbreak. No roof would last out the year, so the creatures are otherwise unprotected. Tsalini begrudgingly permits valuable animals to be bedded down on the porch, so long as the owner cleans up afterward!

E1-E6. Caves. These are quite ordinary. Cave E3 is a deep sinkhole, and the station's main repository of waste and refuse. Caves E5 and E6 have been heavily partitioned and walled up. These are Tsalini's main cache caves, although there are others nearby.

Personalities

Tsalini. □ *Human female. Ht: 5'8", Wt: 140#, Age: appears to be in her early 40's, but born more than 50 years ago.* □ *Fighting Prowess: Fair with bows, small swords, and daggers, average otherwise.* □ *Magic Ability: Trainable, but only 1 spell presently.*

Tsalini is a hale, hardworking woman, torn by her desire to live in two worlds. Travelers with news of current events in this world are listened to eagerly. However, she is strongly attached to the people of High Haven, particularly her husband Rann and her young son.

She has sought some way to bring one or both of them to her world, but the blooding is the only way to cross, according to even the best theoreticians in High Haven. The problem is a catch-22: they've got the magical knowledge to detect and correct the genetic problem but cannot cast it on their own side of the gate. To shed blood in order to cross risks bleeding to death before the spell completes its adjustments (That solution was tried centuries ago and, in fact, led to the experimenter's death.). Tsalini does not realize her son is not afflicted with the disorder. He is being raised like other boys, and shows promise of becoming one of the land's finest magical theoreticians ever. The day the boy discovers he *can* cross over to a place where the magic may be cast—the magical world will stand on its ear!

Tsalini's one spell wards the caches against robbery, summoning a spectral guardian that fights well, especially when assisted by the dogs that come when it appears!

Sebastian and the other dogs. These animals are half-wild, but the pack considers Tsalini their alpha female. Some three dozen animals make up the usual pack, with about half of them hanging around the waystation itself at all times. The others roam the vicinity, nap or hunt for themselves nearby.

The dogs are thoroughly familiar with humankind's ways, and while they'll accept a certain amount of familiarity, strangers are never completely trusted. Many working and hunting breeds are represented, from Sebastian's wolfish heaviness to rollicking white husky-like dogs, dolorous hounds, and shaggy shepherds.

The pack leader is Sebastian. Tsalini adopted the black-and-grey beast as a squirming pup a few days before her annual return to High Haven. She brought the pup across as a pet for her young son, and was astonished when, a few months later, the gangling half-grown wolf-dog followed her when she returned to this



— Tsalini —

world. Sebastian's crossing led Tsalini to theorize that the gate's enchantment does not deal with animals, only humans and their kindred races.

The Visitors from High Haven. These independent adventurers usually travel in ones or twos. They are all dark-haired women, usually capable archers and familiar with other weapons. Their skills are usually those of warriors or rangers. They have the capacity to handle magic, but little inclination since High Haven women associate intensive study of magic with their delicate and ethereal men.

Some well-known personalities from the City may have unsuspected connections with High Haven: Idaya Trueshaft (CB1) and Colonel Massias (q.v.) seem not to be natives of the hidden land, but the "Dark Sisters" could be their mothers, aunts, or distant cousins. These women and their families might carefully guard this knowledge, or they could be as surprised as the adventurer who is, in turn, related to them!

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: The Door Swings. Opening the nexus-gate weakened the fabric of the multiverse reality (as such things do). Evil Things From *Otherwhere* have begun to slip into this world around the edges of the gateway. The first Tsalini knows of this is the butchery of three of her dogs....

This can be played as a straightforward horror tale: the Evil drives Tsalini from her home, wipes out a caravan, and moves into the lowlands. The player characters must track the creature and its other-dimensional associates, and find a way to destroy horrors heretofore unknown. This will be a hard, endless task unless the adventurers can find the gate and seal it—something

Tsalini will not cooperate in. In particular, the adventurers will have to find a way to close the gate on the Evil without closing it on High Haven.

Scenario 2: The Siege of Green Ice Pass. Late one autumn, the adventurers learn that a bandit chief is convinced that Tsalini has both riches and an important secret. Whether financed by the City's merchants (who want the pass protected) or from more altruistic motives, the party checks into the station, braving the end-of-season storms. Just a day before Tsalini would close up for the season, the bandits arrive. By posing as a late caravan, they capture the waystation.

Tsalini is frantic to protect the gate, and anguished that she may not get through while it's open. She's closely watched to prevent escape, unlike the adventurers (The bandits see little percentage in keeping the adventurers alive if they cause trouble—an escape attempt had better work perfectly the first time!). If the adventurers have previously earned her trust, she will risk giving escapees knowledge of the nexus-gate. She asks that one person cross at the first glimmer, and summon High Haven's warriors. Not only do the warriors come, but Tsalini's young son also, out of concern for his mother. It's time for the boy to discover the awesome breadth of his abilities! If the problem is solved inside 24 hours, Tsalini and her son will be able to return home this season.

In her desperation, Tsalini won't warn the character that he or

she probably won't be able to leave High Haven. In fact, if the party is separated in this way, the characters should be motivated to find new way across—a way that might be as simple as a sincere blood-brotherhood or as complicated as having the enchanted bridge from *Crumbling Skull Rapids* (q.v.) appear just outside High Haven.

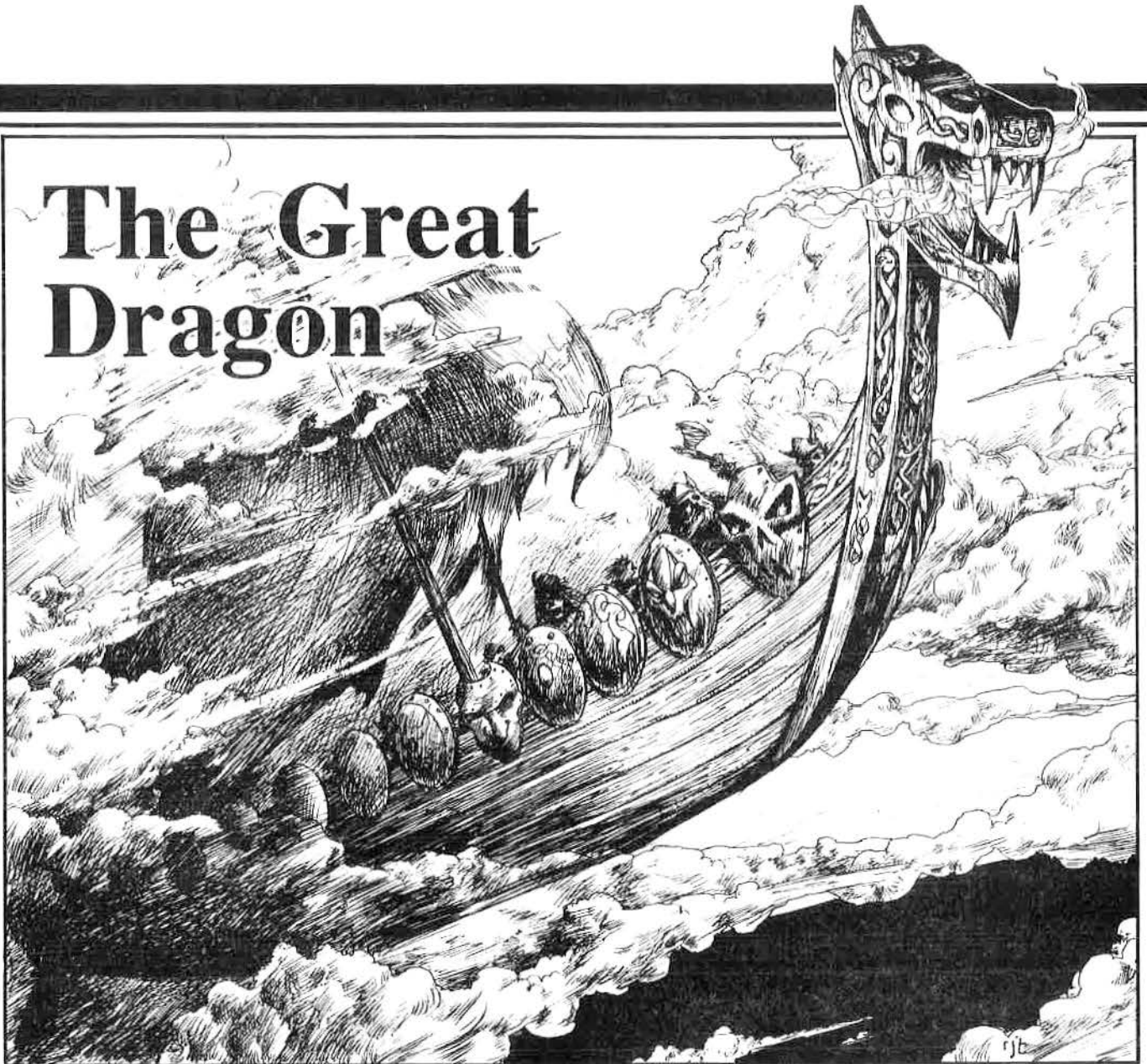
Scenario 3: Heigh-ho, Heigh-ho! A thief dropped a special item down the sinkhole in Cave E3 to dispose of incriminating evidence. When he returned to retrieve it, he found himself claustrophobic. He hires the adventurers to get it for him... *uck!*

While down there, the adventurers find a retaining wall has given away since the cave was last explored—and this tunnel goes very, very deeply into the mountain! This is an ideal back-entrance introduction to the GM's latest and greatest dungeon ...

Hospitality is a welcome thing wherever it may be found, whether in a cozy village inn or a frigid mountain pass—and Tsalini deals an equal share of it to all passers-through. Yet a sensitive visitor might notice that her heart and mind are often elsewhere—an elsewhere that just may have a need for heroes. And despite the non-magical nature of High Haven, there are apparently other ways in and out for those lucky or clever enough to find them.



The Great Dragon



For as long as men have sailed on the high seas, there have been tales. Some regale the efforts of mighty seafaring heroes or exaggerate the power and danger of legendary storms. Still others are dark and evil stories of ghost ships and the rotting corpses which man them. Of all these haunting accounts, however, one story stands out from the rest: the tale of Olaf the Grim and his Great Dragon.

History

Centuries ago, a number of fierce barbarian states known only as the Raiders were united under the banner of Olaf the Grim. This mighty warrior king had earned the respect of his allies and enemies alike because of his skill in battle and his political savvy.

Author William W. Connors is a native of New Jersey, who grew up in Pennsylvania, moved to Massachusetts, lived in New Hampshire, relocated to North Carolina, and now resides in Wisconsin. He has written support material for Game Designers Workshop, Digest Group Publications, and West End Games. Just after taking on this assignment, he went to work for a major publisher of adventure game material located on the shores of a smallish lake in Wisconsin.

Richard Thomas's rendering style is a more-than-appropriate choice for these grim barbarian spectres, none of whom I would care to share a quarterdeck with.

When the last of the Raider clans agreed to swear an oath to Olaf and sail under his flag, a great celebration was planned. Olaf called upon his trusted friend Hongar, High Priest to the Raider gods, and instructed him to oversee the construction of a mighty longboat. Hongar called upon the cruel gods of the Raiders for supernatural aid in the mighty craft's construction. Fashioned in the shape of a great sea serpent, the ship would be known as the *Great Dragon*. It would become the flagship of Olaf's war fleet. From this mystical warship, he would lead the Raider clans to an orgy of bloody plundering which would leave no seafaring nation unscathed.

On the day of the unification, when the last holdouts swore their oaths, the ship was unveiled. It was a mighty longboat with a fierce dragon's head carved upon its prow. The eyes of the dragon were flaming red gems the size of a man's fist, which danced with an unnatural light. Its dark ebony wood, was said to be able to turn aside any weapon which the Raider's enemies might turn upon her. Olaf the Grim allowed himself a smile at the sight which he beheld that day, for the *Great Dragon* was the ship of his dreams ... and his nightmares.

Not everyone, however, shared King Olaf's delight. One man in particular, Theobald the Fierce, a young rival Raider lord, vowed that Olaf's maiden voyage aboard the *Great Dragon* would end in disaster. His clan resisted joining under Olaf's

banner. Only when they realized that they had no choice, did they give in. If Olaf were to be slain, it could easily be Theobold the Fierce who would take his place.

Theobold sent a messenger to the rulers of the most powerful nations of the world and told them of the Great Dragon. He spun horrendous tales about Olaf, telling them that Olaf the Grim was soon to fall upon them with a Raider armada, the likes of which they had never dreamt of before. If they united against Olaf, however, they could be assured of the Raiders' defeat. In addition, Theobold told them of Olaf's first target for conquest and urged them to set up an ambush.

The nations of the world heard the words of Theobold's servant and took his advice. When Olaf's fleet arrived, they were confronted with a force even greater than their own. United against the Raiders were ships of a dozen nations, many of whom hated one another with a passion. Their common enemy, however, was the fierce Raider fleet.

At once, Olaf knew that he had been betrayed. Almost as quickly, he knew that the traitor must be Theobold, who had been called back to his homeland just before the fleet had set sail. Enraged, Olaf ordered his ships to engage the enemy fleet while he turned the Great Dragon about. He would return to the Raider states and see to it that Theobold paid for his actions. As the battle raged on behind him, Olaf the Grim sailed into a slowly rising fog bank and vanished forever from the ranks of the living.

The united nations utterly destroyed the Raider fleet. Never again would the Raiders wield such power on the seas. When Olaf fled the battle, he offended the gods who had blessed the Great Dragon. Like the Raiders themselves, these beings valued combat and honor highly. While they understood Olaf's desire to avenge himself on the traitor Theobold, they could not forgive him for leaving his men to die. Thus, they decreed, Olaf should be cursed to forever seek out the young Theobold. With Hongar at his side, the mighty Raider king would find no rest until he destroyed the one who had betrayed him.

Theobold, of course, had also shown himself to be unworthy. He too was cursed and transformed into a Damned One to be forever pursued by Olaf, Hongar, and the Great Dragon. His every moment would be filled with the certainty that they were coming for him and that his final death at their hands would be the ultimate in suffering.

The Great Dragon

Even before its transformation into a ghost ship, the Great Dragon was a mighty craft. Although similar to the longships employed by many seafaring nations, the Great Dragon measured 170 feet long. Its beam (width) was 30 feet and its draft (the depth at which its keel runs) was 5.5 feet. The Great Dragon has a displacement of roughly 250 tons.

The bow of the ship was carved in the shape of an ornate dragon's head with two gleaming red gems for eyes. The mouth of the dragon was carved to appear open, as if to howl a silent challenge to all before it, and filled with needle-like teeth.

In combat, Olaf can command the Great Dragon to unleash a devastating stream of fire from its mouth once per combat round. The craft's breath weapon has a range of 300 feet and is capable of melting non-magical metal (including weapons and armor) with its heat. When it is incorporeal, the Great Dragon can fly with the speed of its namesake.

When not in combat, the craft can turn invisible or even



— Olaf the Grim —

incorporeal, allowing it to pass through physical barriers without effort. Once per month, at the height of the full moon, the ship can transport itself across any distance, even through dimensional barriers.

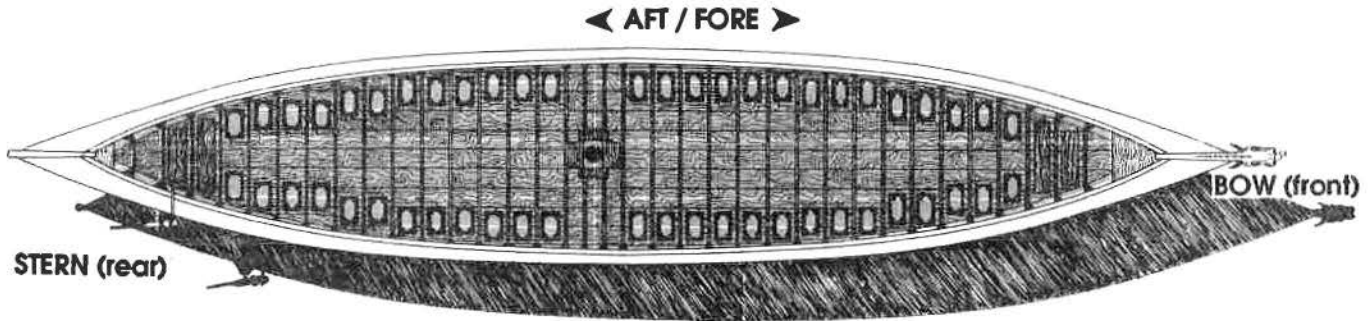
The crew of the Great Dragon are skeletons who have been raised from the dead by Hongar's priestly magic. They are used primarily as marines when Olaf raids another vessel or a coastal town. While they are not overly powerful, they are easily replaced by the bodies of their foes' casualties.

It is rumored that anyone who aids Olaf in his quest to hunt down and destroy Theobold will be rewarded with possession of the Great Dragon. Indeed, this is true. The nature of the curse, however, makes it impossible for anyone but Olaf to slay Theobold. Thus, while any band of adventurers might be able to track down the traitor, only the captain of the Great Dragon can overcome him in battle.

Personalities

Olaf the Grim. □ *Damned One*, Ht. 6'2", Wt. 190#, Age: 500 (approx.—looks about 40). □ *Fighting Prowess: Excellent.*

Olaf the Grim has been cursed with eternal life and transformed into a Damned One. Each Damned One has but a single escape clause in the curse which created it and is fully aware of the tasks they must complete before they are freed from their wretched lives. These creatures are a form of undead who look



SCALE: one square = 3 feet

much as they did in life. While anyone who is near a Damned One will sense the tragic aura which surrounds it, only those who look into the creature's eyes will sense the true nature of the being. In the dark and haunted eyes of a Damned One, the anguish and suffering of the spirit's many years of torment are clearly seen (and felt). If the spirit chooses to, it may use this gaze as a weapon which will age the victim 10 to 60 years in a second. The curse of a Damned One is all but irreversible.

Olaf was the greatest king the Raiders had ever known. He united several rival clans under his banner and lead them to battle as a unified force. In addition to his great cunning and military prowess, he was an able diplomat and a clever politician.

In his cursed state, Olaf remains as dark and determined as he was in life. Like many undead, Olaf seeks only to escape the horrible bonds of his half-life and sleep among the true dead. In order to do this, however, he must lead his ship into battle after battle, hoping to find the traitor Theobold and destroy him, thus appeasing the gods whom his cowardice offended.

Hongar the Pious. □ *Damned One, Ht. 5'11", Wt. 170#, Age: 500 (approx.—looks about 55).* □ *Fighting Prowess: Good.* □ *Magic Ability: Excellent C1 and C2, Good in all others categories.*

Hongar was the High Priest of the Raider temple who oversaw the construction of the Great Dragon. He wove powerful spells into the craft and sought the favor of the Raider gods on Olaf's behalf. When Olaf fled from the field of battle on that fateful day, the gods judged that Hongar had also failed them. His promises of great glory and heroic conquest were hollow, they decided, and thus was his fate sealed. Hongar, like Olaf, was transformed into a Damned One.

Hongar knows that he, like Olaf, must serve aboard the Great Dragon for all time. His only hope of release is to aid Olaf in the quest to destroy Theobold and redeem himself in the eyes of the Raider gods. Thus, when Olaf commands the Great Dragon into battle and leads his crew of skeletons into combat, Hongar is right there beside him.

In addition to this, however, Hongar is the only person capable of replacing crew members lost in battle. While he and Olaf cannot be killed by the hand of any mortal being, the skeleton sailors are not so hearty. Whenever one of them is destroyed in combat, Hongar will animate the dead of a living being who died in the same battle to take its place. For this reason, the crew of the Great Dragon is composed of skeletons who wear the armor of dozens of different cultures.

Theobold the Fierce. □ *Damned One, Ht. 5'11", Wt. 190#, Age: 500 (approx.—looks about 25).* □ *Fighting Prowess: Excellent.*

Theobold has been cursed by his gods for the betrayal of Olaf and the Raider fleet. His once proud spirit has been broken and he is now a hopeless paranoid. He knows that Olaf is hunting for him and he fears the Raider king is almost upon him. Every moment of his cursed un-life is filled with terror. There is no reprieve for Theobold.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Dragon in the Mist. The characters encounter Theobold in a coastal town. While they might make nothing of him at first and will possibly not even know that he is a Damned One and not a true mortal, they have some reason to remember him (dogs barking, horses shying away, sudden appearance of bad weather). Later, they are aboard an ocean going vessel, perhaps the *Golden Princess* from CityBook 2. Olaf, thinking that Theobold is aboard or that there might be some information about him there, materializes the Great Dragon out of the fog to attack. Once he learns of the character's encounter with Theobold, he presses them into service aboard the Great Dragon and continues the chase . . .

Scenario 2: Pawns of the Damned. Aware that Olaf will soon overtake him, Theobold hires the characters to act as bodyguards. In actuality, of course, he knows that nothing can prevent Olaf from destroying him. However, he hopes that the characters will delay him a while (though it will cost them their lives) and he will be able to escape. It may be that they will switch over to Olaf's side when they learn how Theobold intended to use them.

Not all forms of transportation can be booked at ticketing agents like Dimensions Unlimited. The Great Dragon is a ship of legend that comes as goes as its accursed master desires. It makes no regular stops for passengers. Aiding its horrible Captain could earn the adventurers a magical craft of great power—if they can keep their sanity long enough to make use of it.

Wanderers

All who dwell within the City do not call it home. There are those whose lives are not bound to places within the City's walls, who come and go as the needs of their complex lives dictate.

They are the Wanderers

Each of these characters is like an establishment unto him or herself. Rather than being found in some place of business, they are often free to wander the streets of the City or the pathway's of the City's world. Each character has Scenario Suggestions for how he or she might be used in your own campaign setting.

Diara, Priestess of Ceilas

□ *Physical Description:* Human female, Ht. 5'5", Wt. 110#, Age: 27 (though she looks younger). □ *Fighting Prowess:* Good unarmed, Fair otherwise. □ *Magic Ability:* Good C2, C5, C8.

Common Knowledge/Legend

The Sisters of Ceilas, an Earth Mother/Fertility goddess, are well known and generally liked. Easily recognized in their yellow robes and blue veils, they eschew both cosmetics and jewelry, but are attractive nonetheless. Well known as healers, they are openly welcomed everywhere and practice their arts on all those who need them. They excel as midwives and attend a majority of births, especially those in outlying areas. Despite the vastness of their range, the Sisters are seldom molested.

Sister Diara is quite unremarkable. She appears to be nothing more than a member of her order doing what she was trained to do. Golden blond hair and large brown eyes make her more than a little attractive. Any number of grateful male patients have fallen in love with her, only to be gently dissuaded. While the order does not prohibit sex, Diara refuses invitations to casual liaisons. She ardently believes she will know the man meant for her, but she harbors some reluctance about their meeting—the thought of bearing her own children makes her uneasy.

The Truth

The legend is mostly true. The Sisters do travel widely, healing and helping those who need them. At various times, nobles (and others who are less noble) have entrusted information or messages to them, and they have functioned well as couriers in return for generous gifts to the order. In cases where a high-born lady has been held as a hostage, the Sisters have either smuggled the hostage out, or accepted her into their sisterhood, then demanded her release.

Their training as midwives conceals the order's darkest secret. All the Sisters have been told that a child will be born with a blue crescent birthmark, and that such a child will be a vessel for the evil that will destroy the world. Every so often children (not just a single child as the Sisters are led to believe!) are born with such a mark, and the "good" Sisters insure the child expires. Because the Sisters do so much good, and because infant mortality is not a stranger in the world, no one suspects the Sisters of murdering the children.

Sister Diara joined the order as an infant. Her own mother died giving birth to her. A Sister attended her birth, but could neither understand the language Diara's mother spoke, nor determine where the woman was from or why she was hidden away in a forest cave. The Sister took the orphaned baby to the nearest convent of the order to be raised.

Sister Diara dutifully, looks for children bearing the "Mark of

This is Mike's fourth appearance in a CityBook. Aside from being an unusual character himself, Michael A. Stackpole has become a master at the art of creating unusual characters, as is the case with all those who have found their way into the Wanderers section of this CityBook. For even more M. A. S. characters, seek out the pages of his two novel series, the Warrior trilogy and more recently the Blood of Kerensky trilogy, both from FASA.

Rick Lowry's tightly rendered pencil illustrations truly stand apart from others in this book. Somehow, Rick found time to fit this work in around the same time that he opened Fascination Street art gallery in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Paul Jaquays' illustration work has appeared in numerous adventure gaming publications and products for nearly a decade and a half now. Despite being busy editing CityBook IV, he convinced himself to be available for the privilege of illustrating some of Michael's work again.



— Diara, Priestess of Ceilas —

the Demon," but is unsure if she could actually kill such a child. She knows what the mark means, but the world's end is a difficult idea for her to grasp—and infants are so frail, so fragile, so innocent. Her dread of love is deeply rooted in her belief that *she* will bear a demon-marked child. She cannot deal with the idea that her Sisters will destroy the child she desperately desires.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: A Child is Born. Sister Diara attends the birth of an adventurer's child. To her horror she discovers it is marked with a blue crescent. She cannot bring herself to murder the child. By the same token, she cannot just let the question of the child's nature go undecided, so she kidnaps the baby and carries it off to the nearest Ceilas convent in the area. The cloistered sisters there consult a secret book and decide they will attempt an untried cleansing ritual on the child. In all likelihood though, the infant will die. The ritual is to occur at the next full moon, or equinox, or solstice (whatever will allow the player characters enough time to track the child down and try to rescue it).

Scenario 2: Ashaya's Brood. Several children born with blue crescent birthmarks have escaped the Sisterhood's notice, and have grown to adulthood. All are spectacular specimens: they excel at combat or magic, and are physically attractive to an extreme. They can communicate with others who bear the mark, they seem to have foreknowledge of danger, and they all worship Ashaya (Ceilas' demon-twin and the evil the sisters fear).

Sister Diara, known to the adventurers because of aid she has given them in the past, is being pursued by two of these superhumans. She has discovered their secret, but refuses to tell who or what is pursuing her—beyond telling them she is in danger and some dangerous folks seek her death. She will ask the adventurers to escort her to the largest Ceilas convent in the country.

In an adventure that would work well as a horror story where the demonspawn pick up strength as they summon their brethren as the journey nears its goal. Hit and run attacks at night and ambushes during the day will give way to parties hunting for the adventurers. When (or if) they reach the convent, the adventurers will have to hold Ashaya's legions off while the sisters perform a strange ritual to give Diara the power to destroy the demonspawn—but at the cost of her soul.

Daub

□ *Physical Description: Human male, Ht. 5'1", Wt. 160#, Age: 30 (though he looks 50+).* □ *Fighting Prowess: Very Good with a sword, but he does not wear one when on the streets, Good with a knife, Poor with all else.* □ *Magic Ability: None*

Common Knowledge/Legend

Potbellied, hunchbacked Daub is a balding piece of gutter trash. He reminds most folk of a rat, due to both his unkempt appearance, and his habit of constantly sniffing about in other people's business. What little hair he has hangs limply to his shoulders, emphasizing his baldness. His tattered clothing reeks as if he has lived in it for the past four years (which some assume is a conservative estimate). Never alert, Daub the Rat, Dullard Daub, goes about with his mouth half-agape. He's generally unresponsive when someone first speaks to him, and when they finally yell, he ducks his head and covers it with his hands. When he speaks, it's as if he has leaden lips and a mouth full of rocks.

It's said Daub knows most of the unimportant things going on in the City, and will spill his guts for a gold coin (or a cold drink). Most believe him to be a snitch — that anything told to the Rat will spread through the City faster than a nasty cold. Most often he can be found skulking around in the older section of the City (try Domdaniel's Gate if you dare!), and he studiously avoids anyone more powerful than he (which is just about anyone) unless they come looking for him. Daub is the perfect bully's victim, and many such folk make his life a concert of misery. Daub vanishes from the City for days at a time, but few folks notice and even fewer care ...

The Truth

Obviously Daub is not quite what he seems. As a child, he was small, smart and timid. It follows then, that other children tormented him unmercifully (as children are wont to do). One fateful day he escaped his tormentors by scrambling up and over a wall into the Palace gardens. The City's young Prince, also 10 years old, found him cowering amid rosebushes, and coaxed him out. The Prince offered Daub some sweetmeats, and Daub taught the Prince how to play "Rocks and Thorns" (a game like checkers on a 5 x 5 grid) on a board he scratched out on the ground. Their friendship grew out of that first meeting, and Daub visited often after that. The Prince taught Daub many things, including swordsmanship. In return, Daub taught the Prince about the people he would one day rule.

The Prince implored his friend to cultivate the Daub persona as he grew up so he could act as a spy for the Royal House. No one credits Daub with enough brains to be awake, much less a spy, so they speak fairly freely around him (if they've noticed him at all) and take the simplest of precautions (like substituting initials for names) when the half-wit is about. Since his ascension to the throne, the Prince has even employed Daub as a spy in other nations, and Daub has become quite gifted in the art of disguise. Outside the City, Daub is often known as Duke Alfeas of the City, which is a title he actually holds!

In a direct contrast to his City persona, Duke Alfeas stands straight, is well groomed, and sports a wig to conceal his baldness. He is known as a gentleman and a collector of folk tales and strange stories. He sings a bit, which makes him both popular

with other nobles, and a favorite patron among the bards traveling the land. He's even converted a few popular folk tales into songs, which in turn have won him a certain amount of acclaim among the scholarly and literate of the world.

He is known to be the Prince's confidant and often conveys secret messages into and out of the City for the Prince. Daub's stupidity is replaced by another ruse, an intelligent innocence that leads many nobles to believe they can manipulate him toward their ends — much like assuming that because the cat hasn't scratched you yet, it has no claws.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Well Met Again. At a celebration in some other city (not *the* City), the adventurers meet Duke Alfeas and enjoy his company for a short time. At a later date, while visiting a town known to be hostile to the Prince's City, they believe they recognize the Duke in his guise as Daub. Wondering what hard times could have befallen their friend, they pursue and confront him, but Daub denies, in his timid blubbery way, having any idea what they are talking about. Daub will admit nothing and reveal nothing.

Things begin to get very hot in that city for Daub, and he discovers he's been compromised by an enemy agent. He comes to the characters and beseeches their aid. If he can convince them he is indeed Duke Alfeas (which should be fairly difficult, given his last performance), they'll have to decide if he really is the Duke, or just some street scum trying to gull them out of money for his "escape" (Perhaps having Daub recently beaten up will provide the needed explanation of why the Duke is slurring his speech much like Daub did earlier in an effort to hide his identity.). Any delay at all in the characters' decision about Daub/Duke Alfeas should be just enough time for that enemy agent to report an escape is likely, and the characters could easily find themselves hunted in a closed city!

Scenario 2: A Pocket Full of Spies... This scenario can be a light-hearted run that requires lots of good roleplaying. Duke Alfeas' songs are not just simple ditties about an old folk tale: they contain messages for the Prince's agents throughout the world. Because bards travel freely and sing the most popular tunes, they can unwittingly carry songs with messages coded into them that announce the beginning or end of a particular plan. For example, a spy might have been told, "Whenever you hear a bard sing about Black Morgan of Aldare, you must destroy the bridge over the Wrye river."

One bard, who is intensely jealous of Duke Alfeas, makes his own "modifications" to one of the Duke's songs. Unknowingly, he alerts spies in a particular city that the plot to kidnap this city's (King/ Queen/Princess/High Priestess/whatever) should proceed with all due haste. The spies are to be on the lookout for what appears to be a band of adventurers (the description of which just happens to match our adventurers perfectly) who are actually the agents who will do the deed. The spies approach the adventurers and begin all sorts of spy melodrama as the players blunder and stumble into a plot that utterly confuses them, and somehow manages to go off successfully despite more mix-ups than normal in a government operation. As a final twist though, have a second message come through that requires that the kidnap NOT happen.

Tawnell

□ *Physical Description:* Human male, Ht. 6'5", Wt. 275#, Age: 36. □ *Fighting Prowess:* Good with spear and bow, Average unarmed. □ *Magic Ability:* None

Common Knowledge/Legend

Just over twenty years ago the nations around the City banded together to destroy an odd religious sect. This particular sect, which called itself Sunfire, believed the sun was dying. The believers hoped they could keep it burning by sacrificing individuals who possessed great personal power (political, magical or other power). Several consecutive years of chilly, wet summers and bitterly cold winters helped spread the sect's panic, and sacrificial bonfires would light the night during particularly nasty spells of weather in the countryside. The sect particularly favored nobles as victims, which united the leaders of the world's nations in a pact to get rid of the Sunfirites. The Sunfire War (as it came to be known) destroyed the most militant portion of the sect, and those who survived now offer prayers instead of sacrifices to keep the sun burning.

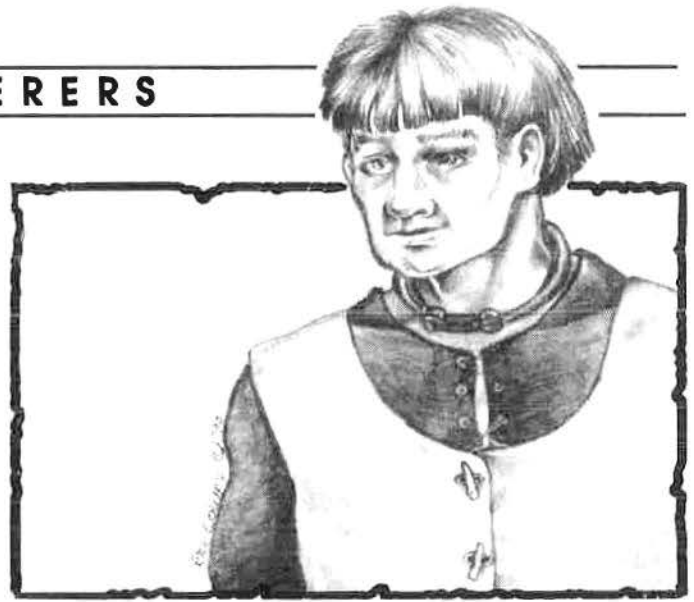
Tawnell was just a boy when he was taken as a slave during the Sunfire War. He's grown up as a slave, and the huge, handsome man is currently owned by the City's Lord Mayor. The man's gentle manner has made most people forget his past, and he's considered a trusted member of the household. The brown-haired and brown-eyed slave is efficient in every job he does, from overseeing other slaves to safeguarding the Lord Mayor on journeys outside the City. While the deep voiced man does wear a collar that signifies his subjugation, he is virtually a free man, and acts much as one.

The Truth

The above is all true as allowed by the following explanation. The Sunfirite leadership, as its own power grew, realized it would have to be sacrificed to feed the sun, and that the sect would become dormant as a result. They preached this new message by relating it to the imagery of an eclipse, and told their followers that the sect must remain docile and lie low until it can again move to offer a great deal of power to the sun in one grand sacrifice. Everyone, especially the children, were reminded that their mission was now to watch and learn—learn who had power. When the cult reappeared on the other side of its "eclipse," it would not lack for victims.

Tawnell, though still a believing Sunfirite, has almost forgotten this mission—even though he realizes he is probably the most highly-placed Sunfirite slave. He likes his owners and they have treated him very well. He knows that when the time comes he will be required to offer up the most powerful people he can, and he unconsciously measures everyone he meets against his "family" to see if this new person would serve as a substitute for someone Tawnell loves.

Tawnell's placement with the Lord Mayor's household does afford him great status, but he will defer to free men in the Merchant class, or higher. While adventurers are generally considered lower than this, Tawnell does not antagonize them. He believes the scapegoats who will save his family will probably be adventurers, so he is keen to learn as much as he can about adventurers and their particular histories.



— Tawnell —

Scenario Suggestions.

Scenario 1: The Wrong Place at the Wrong Time. Several highly confidential papers have been found on the body of a dead foreign slave and a noble accuses Tawnell of having passed them on. Tawnell cannot admit where he was during the crucial time the document theft took place because he was attending a secret Sunfirite meeting; the sort of meeting outlawed and punishable by being drawn and quartered (but never burned!). It looks bad for Tawnell because he refuses to defend himself for fear of betraying the Sunfirite master plan.

The Lord Mayor is distraught over the prospect of losing Tawnell. Though a slave, the young man has become almost like a son to him. He hires the adventurers to secretly probe Tawnell's location that night, but tells the characters he cannot help them officially because it is his office that must prosecute Tawnell. In the course of their investigation the players figure out that Tawnell's accuser is the actual spy, but they lack enough evidence to prove the noble is the one who leaked the papers. If the adventurers' detective efforts are at all clumsy, the noble and his spy network become aware of them and mark them as enemies.

The other hitch here comes with the Sunfirites who, unable to reach Tawnell, make up a story of where he was that night. They say he was attending the secret wedding of a friend, or some other laudable, yet personally private, religious ceremony. Tawnell blows the story when the characters try to confirm it with him. The players should begin to suspect the Sunfirites of doing lots more than it appears, and that should bring a mad cult down on their heads.

Scenario 2: A Bad Case of Sunburn. A week's worth of torrential thunderstorms and unseasonably cold weather prompts a particularly malevolent splinter group of Sunfirites to rise up. Tawnell offers the adventurers in the place of his family, but the revolution's leader takes the adventurers, the Lord Mayor's family and Tawnell himself as prisoners bound for sacrifice. They're all being held for two weeks until an eclipse and they'll be sacrificed to bring the sun back out again in greater glory.

The adventurers find themselves in prison with Tawnell, and he tries to convince them that they must also help him escape so that together, they can stop the mass sacrifices. Why would the adventurers be interested in helping Tawnell, beyond possibly saving their own lives? Word of the revolt has gotten out, and the City's neighbors have joined together to raze the City and kill every man, woman and child therein so no Sunfirite can escape...

Phillip

- *Physical Description:* Human male, Ht. 6', Wt. 180#, Age: 18.
 □ *Fighting Prowess:* Very Good with flail, scythe, trident and club. Good otherwise. □ *Magic Ability:* None.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Phillip is a foot soldier who came to the City from the countryside. He's not said much about his past, but his friends assume he decided to "see the world" instead of rot on the old family homestead. He occasionally mentions brothers and sisters, but does his best to avoid any direct inquiries about his family. Most assume he left under a cloud of some sort. His buddies in the City Guard like him and often kid him about his "down-country" accent.

He is self-effacing, and openly blushes when praised or lauded for some heroic act. He could be summed up as intelligent, friendly, sad and shy. The weapons he does best with are martial versions of agricultural tools and he favors a flail in battle.

The Truth

Phillip's officers have noticed a nearly berserker rage driving him in battle, and they've remarked on his willingness to volunteer for any action against bandits near the City. This tow-headed, blue-eyed, clean-limbed, lanky youth is nasty in a fight. His flail whirls about and strikes like a snake. Even his glancing blows send foes flying, and his comrades have learned to stay out of his "circle of death" when fighting. The officers don't believe he's a true berserker because he seems aware in combat and will perform ordered tasks in the heat of battle. After one of these fights he often is somewhat withdrawn, but usually bounces back within a few hours.

Unknown to anyone in the City, Phillip's family was slaughtered by a mongrel band of raiders. Phillip had snuck away from his home for a forbidden tryst with a girl from a nearby farm while he was supposed to be standing watch. Because he left, he believes, his family died (In reality the raiders would have killed him, then destroyed the farm anyway). On his way back to the farm he hid himself by the side of the road and saw his family's murderers ride off even before he realized what had happened to his family.

After Phillip buried his family, and made an empty grave for himself, he headed off to avenge his family. He jumps at the chance to fight bandits in the vain hope he might find one of the men (or creatures) he saw ride off that night. He has actually killed one of them. At least he's fairly certain it was one of the bandits. The flail made positive identification rather difficult.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Finders Weepers. Set the encounter with Phillip to occur when the adventurers are openly wearing or showing recently acquired loot. He recognizes some of the loot as once having belonged to his family. Without a quick and satisfying explanation, Phillip will become taciturn and threaten to attack. Explaining that they got the loot in a market, or from the bodies of renegades will mollify him. Then he'll press the characters for details on the whereabouts of the renegades (or the market dealer), yet he will not reveal why he wants the information (This should not be too hard to figure out if the players are more sentient

than your average cobblestone). If they know anything about the renegades, Phillip will suggest an attack against the renegades, along with the adventurers, giving the characters all the loot they can haul off.

Scenario 2: Who's That Girl? Begin this scenario by first creating a passing, yet memorable encounter with a young slave girl (at least she looks like a slave). Phillip overhears the adventurers in a tavern talking about the encounter, listening closely as another patron asks the adventurers to describe the girl (she should have certain unique attributes regarding her eye color, a white forelock, odd birthmark and so on). Phillip decides the girl in question is one of his sisters, since there were some questions about possible survival. If he did not find a body to bury, he assumed the body was burned in the house. Phillip will press the adventurers for more details, then ask for their aid in locating the girl. To complicate matters, the interested tavern patron also desires the girl. Consider the following as potential plot complications: A) the patron is a slaver with a regular client whose peculiar tastes are a match for the described girl. B) the patron is the leader of the renegade bandits, who has set the whole situation up in order draw out the guardsman who seeks his death. C) the patron is a wealthy man who once saw the girl and fell desperately in love with her. D) the patron is a misguided wizard who seeks the girl as a part of a bizarre ritual to bring back his long-dead wife.



— Phillip —

Massias, Colonel of the Deathfeathers

□ *Physical Description:* Human female, Ht. 5'8", Wt. 119#, Age: 25. □ *Fighting Prowess:* Excellent with a self-bow, Good with dagger. □ *Magic Ability:* None

Common Knowledge/Legend

Massias' rise to the rank of Colonel was nothing short of meteoric. Her long black hair and blue eyes, as well as attractive face and lithe body, spawned the cruel rumor she rose so quickly because of liaisons with superior officers. There are also rumors of sexual favors being given to the men under her command, but neither set of rumors has any validity. She was allowed into the Deathfeathers—the City's elite Archer company—because she won a City-wide archery contest. Prior to her entry, the Deathfeathers had been exclusively male. The contest did not prohibit women from entering, though most did not try because the prize was a slot in the Deathfeathers. Their insignia is a pair of crossed arrows with broadhead points that look like death's-heads. All Deathfeather arrows are stamped with a skull face on the razor-sharp head.

She was awarded a command when a small band of Deathfeathers were ambushed and their Lieutenant was slain instantly. She snapped orders at her comrades and prevented them from fighting independently, as the cocky archers are sometimes wont to do. Through her leadership the ambush was destroyed. Soon after that she led half the Deathfeathers on an expedition to destroy the renegades who staged the ambush. They were slain without a single Deathfeather casualty. She was decorated as a result of that action and made a Colonel and acting commander of the Deathfeathers First Company.

The Truth

Massias, raised in the countryside, grew up with a bow in her hands. Her superior eyesight has enabled her to hit targets others can barely see. As the eldest daughter of a large family, her command skills came from organizing a legion of siblings for anything—chores, hunts or harvest time. She left the family farm to her siblings and traveled to the City to escape the increasingly bold attempts of local men to win her hand.

In many ways she is sad with her career. The Deathfeathers, being under her command, cannot be her friends. Yet the rumors about her promiscuity and, alternately, her icy heart (a rumor started by rejected suitors among the nobility) have isolated her from much of the rest of the society. Massias would like a man who was willing to accept her and her abilities without the "Once we're married you won't have to do this anymore" attitude that seems to come with most adult males.

She does not like soldiers or adventurers as suitors, and currently has fallen for Augustine, the bard. His avoidance of her advances has confused her.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: The Telltale Shafts. Allegations arise that the death of the Lieutenant that gave Massias the chance for command was not due to the ambush. A noble, who's son is a member of the Deathfeathers and was in line for promotion, produces a hunter as a witness that Massias shot the Lieutenant as part of a



— Massias —

prearranged plot, then organized the attack against her group. She was supposed to betray the Deathfeathers, but instead she double-crossed the assassins and had them slain. Massias hires the adventurers to venture out and recover the Lieutenant's body from where the Deathfeathers buried it. The arrows that slew the Lieutenant will still be in the body, and they will prove she did not kill him (The arrows remain in a fallen Deathfeather so the spirit will know it is dead and so it will know, from the arrows, who to haunt.). Complications: 1) the noble and his sniveling son attempt to stop the adventurers. 2) the Lieutenant was buried in a private family crypt in a particularly old cemetery—one reputed to house unquiet spirits and ghouls. A further complication would be to have his body be gone!

Scenario 2: She's the Boss! The adventurers are hired on as scouts and shock troops for the Deathfeathers. Their current campaign requires fighting to get a bit closer than the archers are used to and, given their recent experience with ambushes, they relish the support. Having Colonel Massias, a woman, lead the expedition may irritate some male players, but if that's not enough, having her order the adventurers into obviously dangerous situations, should heat things up. The friction could make for some interesting character play especially if, when joining the characters on a scouting patrol, Colonel Massias and the characters are cut off from the main body of Deathfeathers and have to slip back through enemy lines to reach their compatriots.

Scenario 3: Winner Takes None. Idaya Trueshaft (see Trueshaft's Bowery in *CBI*) and Massias are both talked into an archery contest in the City. Idaya had not entered the contest Massias won because she did not want a spot in the Deathfeathers. Now a great many people have money riding on the contest and the local gamblers want to fix the match (violence implied here). Idaya and Massias both hire members of the party to guard the other, each confident she can protect herself. If the characters are from different groups within the same campaign—groups that know each other only by reputation—any battle or meetings between them will be interesting and an excellent forum for character play. Complications: Danny O'Grunion and the unpleasant elf, "Sheets" Eddrad (leaders of the Big Fish Gang from *CB3*) are secretly betting on opposite sides of the contest.

Jongher Krystalglare

□ *Physical Description:* Apparently a human male, Ht. 6'1", Wt. 155#, Age: 40+. □ *Fighting Prowess:* Good with a dagger. Very good with a quarterstaff. □ *Magic Ability:* Very Good C1, C2, C3, C7. All others fair.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Jongher began his career as a young, impatient sorcerer. He hitched up with several parties where his performance in battle made him well liked—especially due to his habit of using spells to aid his companions or to heal them before he would look to his own safety. Other adventurers came to prize and protect him. As with most adventurers, Jongher hovered on the edge of poverty until he and some companions ventured into a volcanic labyrinth seeking a dragon and its hoard. A lava bridge collapsed beneath Jongher and he tumbled from sight and was believed dead.

Much later, his companions found both the hoard and a very gaunt and bloody Jongher. Two new things struck them about their old friend. The first was the white forelock shooting through his normally black hair. Second—both attractive and repulsive—his right eye had been replaced with a very large, well-cut, flawless diamond. The dragon that had guarded the hoard was dead and Jongher—comatose when they found him—lingered between life and death for weeks.

Upon his recovery, he told his fellows that the fall left him on a ledge. He found the hoard, and barely survived the dragon's attack. He ran, defensive spells preserving his life, until he found a strange idol that offered him a trade—its diamond eye for his fleshly eye. He agreed and the diamond was placed in his head. The idol vanished and, using the eye's strange powers, Jongher slew the dragon and actually survived the battle.

Since his brush with death, Jongher has been more taciturn and calculating than before, but none of his friends mind. Though they have never seen the power the eye exhibited, they did get an eyeful of what it left behind when it killed the dragon—so they accept the eye as the source of Jongher's new and stronger magic. Jongher's nickname, Krystalglare, was given him by the local gossips and they consider his new eye to be a thing of evil.

The Truth

The real Jongher is, in reality, all but dead. The fall nearly killed him as he careened off crevasse walls. It was a severely broken Jongher who smashed down onto the dragon's hoard. Jongher's last conscious act was to grab the diamond and draw close to his face something beautiful before he died. When the diamond reached his face, it twisted in his hand and drove itself into his head.

The gem had contained the soul of Delgarth, a ruthless and powerful wizard from ages past. Delgarth's enemy, Chisan Blackhair (q.v. *Tsalini's Stopover Station*) imprisoned the evil wizard. Free at last after all these centuries, the wizard took over Jongher's body and repaired it. He slew the dragon and waited for Jongher's comrades—to slay them as well. During that time, however, Jongher's psyche battled with that of Delgarth. Neither magicker won the terrific battle; instead their personalities and memories merged to form one, less-than-cohesive personality. Because the wizard had been trapped for nearly 500 years, his memories of language, people and places occasionally varies



—Jongher Krystalglare—

from present reality. He does have one vague goal, find Chisan Blackhair or his descendants and punish them! Punish them severely!

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Memories, in the corners of my mind ... Jongher organizes an expedition to a fortress that has been in ruins for 300 years or more. He maintains there is a treasure vault in it full of gold, but others have been all over it and have found nothing. Still, Jongher is respected enough for people to want to accompany him. On the trip he keeps muttering about the way things were a very long time ago, and he is determined to find that gold.

Little does he know that during the destruction of the fortress a demon was trapped in the vault. The local villagers have long kept the secret of it hidden from outsiders because they worship the demon as the creature that delivered them from the cruel master who lived in the fortress. Jongher's appearance threatens to bring demonhunters down on their "god" and they won't stand for it. Secretly they will either hire characters to oppose Jongher, or, if the characters are on the expedition with Jongher, they will attack them.

Of course, if Jongher and his group do win through, the demon will have to be dealt with.

Scenario 2: I See a Tall Dark Stranger. A wandering sage comes and identifies Jongher by his white forelock as the key to a prophecy. He begs Jongher to come with him, but the sorcerer is suspicious. He hires the party to stay near the caravan taking him to his "destiny" in case there is a problem.

There is.

Jongher is the only person, according to a legend, who can destroy the Black Prince, a demonic warlord in the east. With Jongher destroyed, there is nothing to stop the Black Prince from conquering the world. Of course, the caravan can be expected to take a route that carries it over the odd bridge at Crumbling Skull Rapids and through Green Ice Pass—the passageway to the descendants of Delgarth's arch enemy, Chisan Blackhair.

Kenda Magebane

□ *Physical Description:* Human female, Ht. 5' 5", Wt. 130#, Age: 27. □ *Fighting Prowess:* Very Good with a spear held or thrown, Good with a Dagger. □ *Magic Ability:* *Special*

Common Knowledge/Legend

Kenda is a very nice, intelligent, outgoing individual. She is known both as an excellent ally in battle, and a supportive friend when times are tough. She has often suggested sparing members of sentient races in adventures, or to negotiate with instead of killing foes outright. She works hard to make sure any expedition successful and, of late, that's been important.

Of late, disturbing stories have come out about the expeditions Kenda accompanies. Kenda travels unscathed through magical traps and, unintentionally, leads others into horrific doom. Spells cast around her fizzle or go awry. Sorcerers have watched spells burn out or reverse themselves when she comes near. Kenda is at a loss to explain what is happening, but she is finding it more difficult to find companions in adventure.

The Truth

This brown-haired, brown-eyed warrior woman knows exactly what is going on around her. As a child, she learned that her daddy had contracted a horrible, wasting disease. She prayed desperately to her native goddess to save him. Astoundingly, the goddess appeared to her and carefully explained there was only one way Kenda could save her father: she had to surrender the energy in all magics around her to the goddess so that energy could be used to cure the disease. Unfortunately, Kenda was told, revealing this pact with the goddess to anyone would result in the pact being dissolved and, ultimately, the death of her father.

This pact makes Kenda potentially dangerous for magic users as their magics will misfire, backfire and fail until enough strength has been pulled away to fully heal Kenda's father. Of course, a group of wizards sitting around and casting spells at her would clear the problem up, but Kenda makes wizards uneasy (Face it, what wizard wants to be around a person who cancels out magic?).

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Soaking Up Sorcery. The first scenario requires a very good roleplayer to act as Kenda. Don't let the players know about Kenda's magic draining power, but give Kenda to one player and let that player in on her secret. Kenda's goal in the adventure will be to get as much magic energy cast on, or around her as possible, without letting the players in on the secret. Watching the other players trying to figure out what is wrong, and having Kenda's player goading the magic-users in the group to try harder, to use as much magic as possible should make for an exciting and fast paced adventure.

Scenario 2: Supreme Sacrifice. Someone has figured out what is going on with Kenda and is determined to use her in an attempt to drain off the sorcerous energy that holds the Hellgate closed (which prevents an unholy invasion from exploding across the world). Kenda is lured, along with her companions, into an expedition where great riches are supposed to be had. If the mission is successful the Hellgate will pop open and a demonic invasion will be unleashed. The players, unable to use magic

because Kenda is around, can do little to stem the horrible tide sweeping across the world—and the demons, being magical, cannot hurt Kenda.

Roleplaying will be vital if the players have figured out, from the clues presented in this scenario, Kenda's secret. They'll have to convince her to surrender and dissolve the pact so they can force the demons back into their world and close the Hellgate again (If they are successful, the goddess might keep the pact going because she judges Kenda's sacrifice to save the world worthy of a great reward).

Giving an existing player in your campaign Kenda's power/burden would make this adventure far more important. Including a variation where the character, not some relative, needs the miraculous cure, will bring the conflict more to the front: Can the players ask their friend to doom herself for the sake of the world, and will that person be willing to make such a sacrifice?

Scenario 3: Walking Disaster Area. This is just a simple scenario that's just perfect for an off-the-cuff run. Think of Kenda as a "Typhoid Mary" type of person who is blissfully unaware of her power, and what kind of trouble it can cause. Now imagine Kenda wandering down the street and having her power destroy the magicks that bind household elementals and otherwise drains the everyday magic in the City (When was the last time you were in a blackout?).



— Kenda —

Letius

□ *Physical Description:* Human male, Ht. 5'6", Wt. 140, Age: 30+. □ *Fighting Prowess:* Excellent with hand thrown projectiles, Good with staff and sword. □ *Magic Ability:* Fair with C3, Poor with C2.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Letius is a mime and juggler who is seen almost everywhere in the City. He performs in the streets for passersby, and lives on the money his audiences toss to him. He juggles anything from small balls to daggers and even fair-sized fruit. As a mime he can imitate anyone and can pick up their mannerisms or attitudes just by watching his "victim" walk down the street. His favorite targets are adventurers because they tend to react better (and pay more) than others in the City.

Letius is mute. The jagged scar across his throat is widely assumed to be the reason. The scar starts at the hollow of his throat and curves back toward his left ear. Most often he wears a high-necked harlequin costume that hides all but the end of the scar, but everyone seems to know about the injury. It is believed, supposedly supported by an impassioned and spectacular display of mime skill performed for a woman who dearly loved Letius, that he earned the scar in a battle with the suitor of a highborn lady he had fallen for. As it turned out, so the tale goes, the woman thought him a bother and sent her true beloved to get rid of him.

It is suggested that because the woman had broken his heart and made a fool of him, Letius decided to spend the rest of his life playing the fool. This sad tale is often told to strangers just after Letius has performed brilliantly, but has left the vicinity. Letius vanishes from time to time. It is assumed he is either mourning his lost love, or in the arms of some woman who believes she can mend his heart and make him feel whole again.

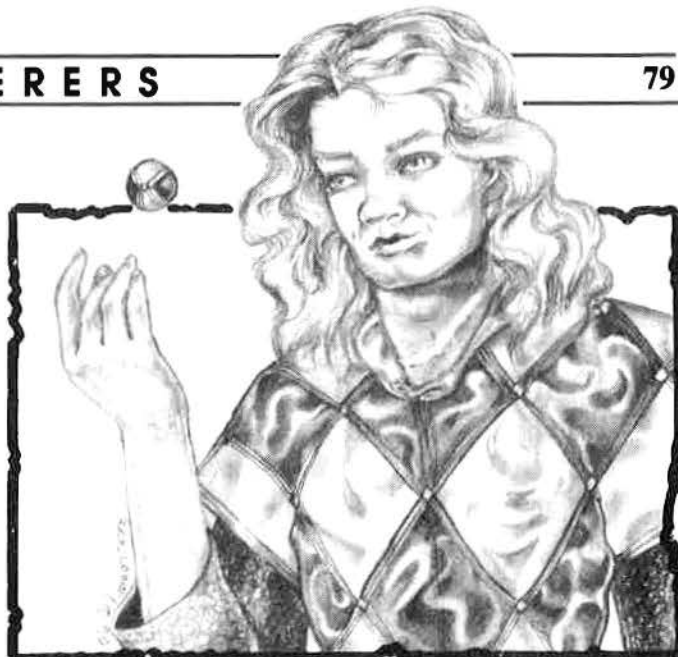
The Truth

Letius is a conman, extortionist and spy. He got the scar when he hurriedly slit a lynch-mob's noose and fled, bleeding profusely, into the night. He magicked enough of the wound closed to save his own life, but the effort knocked him out. He fell down a hill when he fainted and his pursuers missed him. He awakened two days later and all signs of pursuit had vanished.

Letius can speak and, in fact, knows several foreign languages and a number of local dialects. His voice is deep and strong, which is unexpected enough to make those who have only heard his voice describe him as being much taller. A master of disguise, he has a legion of costumes that allow him to change his height, appearance or even sex.

His identity as a mime and juggler has been very lucrative. Aside from the donations for his performances, Letius has seen and heard many things that he's been able to profit from over the years. He generally prefers to extort money from victims and because he speaks to his victims, no one has ever linked the blackmailer with Letius.

Letius sees adventurers as the best marks for his confidence games mainly because they are not permanent members of the City. The game with the most success begins with Letius passing himself off as a representative for the local ruler. He offers the adventurers 500% interest on any money they are willing to loan the ruler—the loans being backed by the local treasury—so the



—Letius—

ruler can afford to hire mercenaries to destroy a bandit gang hitting the City's caravans. The ruler, Letius explains, cannot use treasury money because he believes the bandits have a spy within the City government, and he doesn't want to tip them off. When Letius runs this sort of con, he arranges meetings for secluded spots and does his best to give the impression (within his disguise) through voice and mannerisms, of the local ruler's closest advisor.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Affairs of the (Black)Heart. A certain highborn lady was indiscreet and entered into a romantic tryst with Letius in a vain attempt to mend his heart. She was unsuccessful, but they parted dear friends. Now someone has sent her a message asking for money and threatening to reveal the affair to the public. This would scuttle her impending marriage to another noble in the City. The noblewoman immediately hires a number of toughs to search out the blackmailer. Letius, feeling the heat, plants evidence on a party member that leads the noblewoman to believe the adventurer is the culprit. If the character can convince the noblewoman that he is innocent of the crime, she'll turn around and hire them to find the real blackmailer. Not only will the party have a hard time dealing with the elusive Letius, but she will not react well if the characters try to tell her Letius is also the blackmailer.

Scenario 2: I Spy, You Die. Letius is not *totally* unscrupulous. During a con, he learns of plans to invade the City. He does not want to reveal his identity to the City officials to convince them he is telling the truth, so he cons several adventurers into believing he is the head of City security and that he needs their help to finish off this plot against the City. The adventurers will face the intelligence network of an enemy power in their attempt to destroy its organization. Once they're successful, they'll have lots of fun trying to collect the wages that Letius promised them. Then, when they reveal bits of the plot to verify their claim, City security agents will be *very* interested as to how these outsiders learned so much of the City's internal workings and enemies.

Pergessia

□ *Physical description:* Human male, Ht. 5'8", Wt. 160#, Age: appears 30. □ *Fighting Prowess:* Very Good for sword and gun, Good with dagger, siege machinery or anything else. □ *Magic Ability:* Very Good C1, Good all else.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Pergessia is a hirsute, slightly stocky man who is liked for his wit and fairness. His black beard has two streaks of white, each running from the corners of his mouth down either side of his chin, and they mirror similar streaks of white running back through his raven hair from his temples. He has been given the nickname "badger" because of the streaks and his savage fighting ability when challenged.

Pergessia is one of the best thieves in the City. His specialty is gems, with a strong preference for diamonds. It is said he is remaining in town until he can engineer the theft of "Citystar," the diamond sitting high on the ruler's scepter. Until that time he contents himself with dressing well and stealing objects with meager value from those he feels do not appreciate the true worth of these items (e.g., he'll steal a painting from a collector who want the painting just so another collector cannot have it.). Pergessia has been known to distribute the profits of his thefts to the poor, though he will return some of it to his victim if he feels that victim has learned his or her lesson.

Pergessia is *very good* as a thief. He has broken into places no one save a master sorcerer could invade, and has escaped even the most diabolical of traps. One rumor even maintains a demon was summoned and sent after him, but Pergessia somehow managed to elude and banish it.

Pergessia is always willing to help fellow thieves with advice or technical assistance. He seems to be laughing all the time—excepting, perhaps, those times when someone provokes him into a fight. The only thing known to infuriate him is the beating of a servant/slave/weaker person/animal for little or no reason. A momentary flare of anger is acceptable, in his mind, but a cruel, sadistic streak revolts Pergessia and he acts to curb or destroy it.

The Truth

Pergessia is one of the first "true men." His brothers and father tried to overthrow the gods back when time was young. The uprising involved the death of many of the gods' pet creations, hence the many races were reduced to a few, and those did not have great populations. Their revolt failed and Pergessia's kin were banished to the world of mortals. There, they interbred with mankind and eventually succumbed to death.

Pergessia, who was off creating demonkind while the revolt took place, complained to the gods that the punishment did not fit the crime. The gods allowed him to travel to the earth and bury his brothers and father deep within the heart of a mountain. Upon his return the gods further agreed to allow him to bring his kin back to the immortal realms if he would travel the earth and gather up the gods' tears. The tears, wrung from the gods during the war, all appeared on the earth as large diamonds of incredible quality.

Pergessia accepted the assignment and ventured into the mortal world to find the tears. He found several almost immediately, but the others had been broken up and widely distributed. As he searched for the gems, Pergessia also recognized in men the

streak of cruelty he'd only seen before in his father and brothers. He realized his kin had passed this flaw on to their mortal offspring, and he quickly grew to hate the trait. When he has completed his mission he will be allowed to return to the gods' realm, but he has no intention of bringing his kin with him.

Pergessia can walk between the mortal world and various dimensions. His experience with various weapons came in other dimensions as he tracked down tears that have left the world. He is a good thief because of his vast years of experience and because he uses magic when most thieves do not. Most of his magic is taken from other worlds and dimensions, hence local wizards have a hard time identifying, tracing or countering it. Because Pergessia created all demons, he knows their names and can command them, so they present no threat to him.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: A Chip Off the ... Pergessia discovers a character has a chip of one godtear in a ring of great magical power. Pergessia steals it and destroys the ring to get the chip. If the adventurers ever find out who stole the ring and confront him, Pergessia will offer to assist them in getting what they want to replace the ring without ever explaining why he stole the ring in the first place. Of course, all of Pergessia's suggested targets will be in troves that include godtear pieces as well.

Scenario 2: Strange Magicks. A sorcerer has discovered traces of a strange magic and hires the adventurers to determine the source. He offers them vast wealth if they can bring the source of this magic to him. The source could either be Pergessia or, for a more interesting scenario, it could be a godtear—a piece Pergessia is after!



—Pergessia—

Augustine

□ *Physical Description:* Human male, Ht. 5' 11", Wt. 160#, Age: 33. □ *Fighting Prowess:* Excellent with thrown knife, Very Good with sword, Poor otherwise. □ *Magic Ability:* Excellent C6—focused through his songs. □ *Musical Prowess:* Excellent with wind, voice or stringed instruments. Fair with all else.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Augustine is a golden-voiced, brown-haired, green-eyed bard who can master an audience and draw them into his songs with the first note. His eyes sparkle with an intimate, mischievous light that flares to fury in songs of injustice and glows gently with soft love songs. He has refused housing in the local places, preferring to wander throughout the City, singing and sleeping wherever he finds himself. Everyone in the City loves him and shares with him meagre meals or sumptuous accommodations. He never complains about the condition of food or bedding, and he always rewards his hosts with set after set of songs that pull them away from the worries and pains of life.

His performances are masterpieces that carry the audience to the heights of heroic actions, through the depths of injustice and villainy, to the warmth and cheer of friendship and true love. His songs are said to ease the pain of the suffering and to have helped others overcome problems like alcohol, drugs and other self-destructive habits.

No one knows anything of his past, and he resists all attempts to get him to speak of it. Various nobles have tried to become his sole patron, but he has resisted their offers. Many women, including most notably Massias of the Deathfeathers, have tried to woo him, with success equal to that of noble patrons. In the whole City, there is not a more openly loved man, save perhaps the City's ruler.

The Truth

Augustine is everything noted above and more. A younger brother of a prince of a distant nation, Augustine was not to inherit the throne. Various nobles offered to back his fight for the throne, if he so chose, and even produced a document that said Augustine's brother had actually been born out of wedlock (it said the ceremony had been performed in secret and backdated). The nobles poisoned his mind against his brother and succeeded in convincing him that his brother had always treated him badly. Augustine was on the verge of killing his own brother when he came to his senses. He suddenly realized he was under the influence of very corrupt people who wanted nothing but power over him and the nation's people. Augustine went to his brother and confessed. Despite his brother's protests, Augustine left the kingdom and began a self-imposed exile in which he decided to shed all power and wealth—or the trappings of either.

Augustine discovered the City and chose to remain because of the variety of people who both dwelt within and passed through its gates. He decided he could make many people here happier by sharing his skills with them.

His distance from Massias and other women comes from an old ballad/prophecy in his home country that tells of a prince who will return from exile with a dozen followers to take the throne. One of the followers will be the prince's beloved—and the woman is supposed to *die* in retaking the throne. He feels that if

he avoids romantic entanglements he'll neither find himself in that situation, nor produce a son who could. He is dead set against having himself or his offspring used to topple his brother's line from the throne. Furthermore, he does not want Massias—who he *does* love—to die because of him.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Flutist in the Wind. Someone convinces Augustine that a magical flute is located near the City. According to legend, no one can resist the song of the flute, and Augustine sees it as a perfect tool to make his work even more effective. What he does not know is that the flute is evil, and its song is one of despair and depression. The person dropping rumors of it is a deaf anarchist who sees Augustine as the perfect vehicle for the flute, and the anarchist expects to loot and pillage freely while the City is under Augustine's spell.

The adventurers accompany Augustine to get the flute, and face a fanatical religious cult of deaf monks in an extensive, darkened, underground monastery. The monks, despite their lack of hearing, seem to know exactly where people are (treat them as having infra-red vision or a "feel" for their surroundings so they folks can't sneak up on them).

Augustine is supposed to play the flute at a reception for the City's nobles, and the effect of the flute will be horrible. Everyone will begin wailing and crying and generally going nuts because of the flute's mournful song. Augustine himself will be unable to stop playing because of the strong magic, and it will take a heroic effort for the players to defeat the evil music. Will a player be willing to sacrifice his own hearing to save the City?

Scenario 2: Prince of Prophecy. The nobles that Augustine abandoned depose Augustine's brother and brutally kill him. The clique immediately dissolves and a savage civil war rips Augustine's home nation apart. Augustine hears of the strife and, though he is loath to do so, organizes a group of heroes to trek back to his homeland. The party includes player characters, a couple of the Citybook characters (GM's choice) and, of course, Massias. Augustine, in an impassioned rendition of the prophetic ballad, lets everyone know what they're in for. Massias, curiously enough, is so happy to learn Augustine returns her love, that the prospect of death in this enterprise does not concern her.

Of course, reconquering a nation with but a dozen followers will not be easy, especially when he knows his actions will result in the death of the woman he loves—and since the prophecy is no secret—his enemies expect his imminent return. It will be up to the characters to devise a way to "fake" Massias's death—perhaps using a "scapegoat" magical ceremony—to satisfy the prophecy. The campaign to retake the nation will have to be thought out well and will require lots of roleplaying to convince the oppressed peasants to help this small team to overthrow their rulers.

Syandra

□ *Physical Description:* Human female. Ht. 5'8", Wt. 120#, Age: 35+. □ *Fighting Prowess:* Fair with a dagger. □ *Magic Ability:* Excellent C1-8.

Common Knowledge/Legend

The daughter of two highly-regarded and powerful sorcerers, Syandra's magicks were never questioned by anyone. At a very young age she exhibited vast power and an ability to learn very quickly no matter what the magics being taught were. As an apprentice, in her teens, she traveled around the world and studied under many different sorcerers. From them she learned their specialties and the City welcomed her return.

She continued her studies, but she supplemented them with trips outside the City. These little trips spawned stories of miraculous acts by Syandra, and some people in the City began to clamor for Syandra to help them with their lives. Before any sort of a movement to pressure her into action could come to a head, however, tragedy struck and Syandra's parents both vanished. Syandra used the wealth left to her by her parents, erected a tower in the City, and became a recluse.

Syandra has little to do with anyone in the City, but is known, from time to time, to descend from her tower and make gifts of money or magical aid to those whom she decides truly need her help. Because of her actions, she's regarded as a slightly mad and snobbish sorceress, not fit to walk the streets with honest folk. Dissenting opinions come from those she has helped, but everyone agrees she is a bit strange, skittish of strangers and not really in touch with reality.

The Truth

A beautiful girl with long white hair and a black forelock, Syandra spent almost all of her childhood in the Wizards' Guild tower. Her training was intense and all-consuming—it left her very little time to grow up. Through her training and conversations with her mentors, she formed a view of the world that was just short of paradise. When she traveled outside the tower, during her apprentice years, a real world view confronted her and the world she saw caused her great pain. She could retreat back to the unreality of the Wizard's Guild or do something about what she had seen.

She decided to change the world.

She continued her studies and refined her skills to a point where she felt she could make a real difference. During her field trips outside the City she'd do things that changed the world, but only to a small degree. She swiftly realized the true difficulty in accomplishing her aims. If she made a harvest very good in a valley, bandits came and took the excess food from the farmers. If she increased rain in the hills so a stream could power a mill, another part of the world lost that amount of rain and experienced a drought. Her desire to make changes was crossed by the difficulty of controlling those changes.

She used her parents' departure (they're off traveling through other dimensions) as an excuse to become a recluse and become distant from the people of the City. This withdrawal has effectively put a stop to the requests for aid she used to get, but it has done nothing to dull her need to help people.

Syandra travels around in disguise a great deal. She appears,

most often, as Myr, an adventurer with some magical ability. Myr has long black hair which she wears braided, though she shares Syandra's blue-green eyes and slender body. Myr wears well-worn clothing and behaves in an earthy manner which none would associate with Syandra. This change of personality is long practiced and quite believable. As Myr she spends a certain amount of time learning of various people's troubles, helping out with money or very limited amounts of magical aid.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: "A Piece of Cake." Syandra is not above helping adventurers, especially if aiding them will have positive benefits for others. The adventurers, having heard of a horrible beast ravaging the countryside, will approach Syandra for aid, but will get no response from her. Instead the adventurer Myr will approach them and offer her own skills. She describes it as "a piece of cake" and will use her powers carefully to help the party without blowing her cover. This could be a very effective and puzzling scenario for lower level characters. Imagine a desperate wizard tossing off a spell he knows is not strong enough to destroy the enemies they face, then the spell has a hideously increased effect and manages to devastate all those who stand and oppose the party!

If Myr is forced to do something that blows her cover, she will confess she is Syandra and admit to having an agreement with Myr to switch places from time to time. This should lead the players to imagine Myr actually exists, and is Syandra's good friend, not just her alter-ego. She will swear the adventurers to secrecy and will reward them for accomplishing whatever mission they are on.

Scenario 2: So! You Think Me to be Mad?! During her studies, Syandra made an enemy. He was a Journeyman sorcerer with a peculiar world view—born of an unpleasant, if not degenerate cultic background and its altogether unholy dogma. He recognized Syandra's power and offered her his love and an alliance. Revolted by his twisted vision of the world, Syandra turned him down. Spurned, he fled and studied dark arts in dark places from masters only slightly more corrupt than he. Finally, after consuming his teachers and all they knew, he has returned and actually managed to kidnap Syandra.

While she could not elude him, Syandra was able to construct a *simulacrum* of Myr and commanded it to gather those adventurers who knew her. Their mission is to rescue Syandra from this mad sorcerer before he can bend her to his will. With her knowledge of the intricacies of change, the world could be unraveled and reweaved into what would be a nightmare.

This is an excellent scenario to allow players to run more than one character, and a way to bring characters from different facets of a campaign together for the first time.

Thok

□ *Physical Description:* Human female, Ht. 6.4", Wt. 260#, Age: 26. □ *Fighting Prowess:* Very good with mace, ax or cestus, Good with all else.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Thok is a giant of a woman supposedly taken in a slave raid against an Amazonian colony to the west of the City. A mute, this lithe, graceful creature moves with a strong fluidity that would make a tiger envious. After her capture six years ago, her owner introduced her to pit fighting in the hopes she would attract spectators because of her novelty. When she started killing opponents with ease, however, she became famous and a series of people bought and sold her for great profits.

Thok wears her long, blond hair in a single, thick braid. Her blue eyes always seem distant, as if she is thinking of her life before slavery. She is very shy and quite wary of strangers—she has been hurt and betrayed more than once in the past. She is swift in dealing with those who have abused her, as her last master found out (may he rest in peace). Since she won her freedom she has wandered the streets of the City's Nightside, eluding authorities (who only search for her half-heartedly anyway). She has resorted to mugging those foolish enough to wander the streets alone at night, though she never attacks anyone who lives in the area she thinks of as her "domain." In this particular precinct she is known as "The Gutter Tigress" and many people leave offerings of food out for her in return for her protection.

The Truth

Thok, whose name comes from the sound made by her fists hitting an opponent, is really named Nitæ. She was destined to rule the Amazon community from which she was stolen. She was born mute and that led the Amazons to believe she was destined to rule. The Amazon community required its rulers to take a "vow of silence" so they would spend more time listening than they would speaking or arguing. A child born mute is taken as a divine endorsement of the person's worthiness to rule. Nitæ was stolen while awaiting the death or resignation of the current leader.

Nitæ knows, roughly, where the City is in relation to her home, but having been raised to rule, she does not have the woodcraft she would need to find her way home. Trained from birth in a form of secret sign language, Nitæ's frustration because no one in the City can understand her, and because she cannot read or write the common tongue, often drives her into deep depression. Many of the people in her precinct understand some of her communications, but no one with the necessary skills to lead her home has ever taken an interest in her plight.

Nitæ's anger with the City comes, mostly, from being forced to fight. Like all Amazons, she received military training, but she was not trained to be a warrior. She is larger than most Amazonian warriors, but because of her lack of speech she was trained to be a philosopher and judge, not a fighter. She takes much of this anger out on the ruffians who are stupid or conceited enough to dare venture into her domain. Of course, fighting with bullies and thugs merely fuels her anger, and the beatings she has administered have been increasingly brutal.

Nitæ's strongest desire is to return to her home. She knows she needs assistance to accomplish the journey, but she is very

much at a loss of a way to get that idea across to those capable of helping her.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: To Hunt a Tigress. The Gutter Tigress has been seen fleeing the sites of a string of brutal murders in the City's Nightside. The City is in an uproar and the characters are hired to capture this madwoman (she has to be captured alive because the City officials want to try her and publicly execute her as a deterrent to other slaves who might consider murdering and escaping their masters). When the characters capture her, she will try to communicate to them the fact that she has been at the scene of the murders because she is trying to catch the murderer! She is willing to help catch the murderer, if the characters will let her go.

Scenario 2: There's No Place Like Home. An old woman, every adventurer thinks of his or her own grandmother, approaches the adventurers. She was Nitæ's teacher, she can communicate with the tortured young woman. She hires the adventurers to first find Nitæ, then return the two of them to the distant Amazonian community. Complications: A) Thok/Nitæ will avoid being found. B) The family of Thok's last, late master, has hired assassins to kill Thok, regardless of what the cost might be to the City! C) The weather or season should be at its absolute worst as far as long distance travel is concerned.



—Thok—

Veradis

□ *Physical Description:* Human female, Ht. 5' 7", Wt. 115#, Age: 25. □ *Fighting Prowess:* Fair with a dagger, though she travels unarmed.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Veradis is the beautiful, red-haired, green-eyed wife of Keir Collis, a powerful merchant in the City. Three years ago she met Keir, who had worked for her father in one of his foreign offices, and married the man after a fairy tale, whirlwind courtship. Veradis's father made Collis his second in command, then tragically died three months later, leaving Veradis and her husband very rich.

Veradis and Keir are exceedingly happy together. Keir runs the business, keeping it alive and growing well beyond the holdings Veradis' father had left them. Veradis spends her time in many proper social functions. She has organized everything from food distribution to the poor to some of the most impressive and high-class parties in the City.

In many ways she is envied by most women in the City. Her husband is handsome, they are rich and they know all of the *right* people. She has everything anyone could ever want. Hers is a life of leisure, without a care in the world, yet she has the compassion to help others. She is widely loved in the City.

The Truth

Veradis is not a happy woman. Not happy at all. She was not particularly inclined to marry at the time Keir Collis appeared, and he was not at the top of her list of suitors. In fact, she would not have married him at all except at her father's insistence. If Keir Collis had not tied her father's business up, and threatened to ruin him, Veradis probably would not even have spoken to him, much less married him.

Veradis quickly struck a bargain with Collis. She would be the perfect wife for him, granting him everything he needed to remain successful, if he would provide her with enough money to do as she pleased. Each agreed the other should be allowed to take discreet lovers. Veradis has not taken a lover yet, but she has met and fallen in love with Kother Lansend, the semi-retired mage who operates the *Singing Frog Tavern* (CB3). She met him while organizing the distribution of food to the poor, but she has not revealed her feelings to him. She does not know if he returns her affections.

Veradis, as time passes beyond the death of her father, has grown less and less comfortable with the agreement she made to save her father from embarrassment. She does not suspect Keir of having killed her father, though she would believe it if proof could be offered. There are many times she has thought of taking some money and slipping from the City unnoticed (possibly to visit her sister Daisha at Crumbling Skull Rapids), but the idea of leaving Kother has prevented her from acting.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: She's My Wife isn't She? Veradis finally confesses her love to Kother Lansend and discovers he loves her as well. The two of them, realizing they could never be together in the City, run off. Keir hires the adventurers to bring her back, claiming Kother kidnapped her. He offers the adventurers a



— Veradis —

bonus if they will bring back Kother's head in the bargain. He tells the adventurers, "My wife has not been in her right mind since the death of her dear father. You cannot believe anything she says."

When the players catch up with Veradis and Kother, they'll have to decide who to believe. Kother was an adventurer in his own right, and a good magician, so any attempt to steal his beloved or take his head will not be easy. Furthermore, as a trusted man in Nightside, Kother's denial of kidnapping would carry a *great* deal of weight.

Another way into the scenario is to have the players approached by Ningal Arawaza—Kother's partner in the Singing Frog Sanctuary—to assist her in finding Kother. She has heard a group hired by Collis is out to murder both Veradis and Kother. She wants the players to help her save her friend, and to gather evidence in Keir's murder plot.

Scenario 2: Old Friends. One of the adventurers grew up with Veradis, but has not seen her in years (especially since the wedding). They meet accidentally, but renew their friendship and Veradis reveals what a sham her marriage is. She also explains how she was blackmailed into marrying Collis. Though she does not ask for help, the story should have enough "coincidences"—especially concerning her father's death—to spur any truly romantic adventurers on to break Veradis free of her husband. This will be more difficult than imagined, however, as the description of Keir later in the book will attest.

Hakan Forge

□ *Physical Description:* Human male, Ht. 5' 11", Wt. 175#, Age: 33. □ *Fighting Prowess:* Excellent with rapier or dagger, good with swords in general, average otherwise.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Hakan Forge is the handsome younger brother of the Forge brothers—Hiram and Terrence, the owners of the *Forgeway Company* (q.v.). Born to money, the boys were never left wanting. The elder brothers took over the family business and were willing to make a place for Hakan, but he was not interested. At least, this is the explanation offered by the family since Hakan's return to the City.

A dozen years ago, Hakan and Hiram fought over the woman who was to become Hiram's wife. Hakan sorely wounded his brother—almost killing him—and their father, Oliver, banished Hakan. Oliver forbade Hakan to return during Oliver's lifetime, and no one ever thought they'd see Hakan again.

Hakan returned to the City six years after his father's death. His fiery red hair was shot with gray, and somewhere along the line he earned a scar trailing from the corner of his left eye back over his left ear. Oddly, the scar did not detract from his looks, and many thought he'd gone from his boyish good looks to a more distinguished and handsome appearance. Swordsmen have noted the ease with which Hakan moves, and the thickness of his sword wrist, suggesting he'd lost none of his skill during his exile. Still, Hakan has made no public displays of swordsmanship since his return to the City (Rumored duels in which he has fought recently cannot be confirmed).

Hakan is distant, but often speaks at length and depth to visitors to the City. He has not joined the *Forgeway Company*, but his money does appear to come from his family. He and Hiram have become very close, and Hakan constantly praises his nephew and two nieces. Hakan has yet to be reunited with brother Terrence, who has taken up permanent residence at the Company's secretive *Blacksmoke* operation.

The Truth

Hakan Forge left the City full of hatred and hurt pride. The increasing corruption and exploitation he saw in his family's company was another source of anguish. He rejected his family utterly and changed his name to *Ultan Steeltalon*. He refined his skills with a sword and, in the nation where he took refuge, he became sought after as a duelist who would act in place of a noble who had been challenged. Through his associations with nobles he came to learn of their indiscretions and foibles and the ever-spreading influence of the *Forgeway Company*. He used this information to work himself into the nation's power structure.

Hakan, hip-deep in corruption, realized the country would forever be involved in divisive struggles unless a powerful leader could take control. He also realized the only noble capable of ruling the country had so little support he could never reach the throne. Over the next three years Hakan played one faction off against another. Hakan even invited a neighboring nation to invade, then turned on these interlopers and united the nation behind his candidate for king.

Hakan's efforts succeeded in putting his man on the throne.

It also succeeded in making Hakan grow up. At one point he had all the power he needed to place himself on the throne, but he recognized it was his taste for power that had caused his fight with Hiram. Hakan rejected the power and turned it over to his noble. Hakan also realized he needed to heal the rift in his family.

Hakan returned to the City and apologized to his brothers, even though he sees that Hiram has become a greater abuser of power than even their father had been. He refuses their entreaties to join the ever-expanding *Company*, but feels forced to accept the money they say his father left him (Hakan firmly believes *Oliver* would have left him nothing. In truth *Oliver Forge* did leave Hakan some money, but Hiram has liberally added to this amount from the company's coffers—without brother *Terrence's* approval or knowledge). Hakan spends most of his time studying history and gathering information about local politics because he is toying with the idea of writing *Ultan Steeltalon's* biography. On the other hand, his sword arm stays exercised and he has yet to become aware of *Terrence's* plans for the future of the *Forgeway Company*—and his "beloved" brothers.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: A Family Affair. Some of the nobles maneuvered out of power during *Ultan's* power play have finally tracked him down. Being cruel and angry, they do not strike at *Ultan* directly. Instead they kidnap his nieces (aged 4 and 5 respectively) and bring them to their stronghold. They promise to release the children if Hakan will give himself up to them.

Hakan knows neither his life, nor the lives of his nieces are worth spit to these nobles. He hires the adventurers to travel with him in a rescue mission. The enemy stronghold—a castle built above a maze of abandoned dwarven tunnels—is well defended, but an elite party could slip into it and perhaps save the children.

Meanwhile, *Hiram*, insane with rage has set his own powerful forces in motion. First, all *Forgeway* service into the nobles' country is terminated. Second, he figures that if the nobles want his arrogant brother, he will deliver Hakan to them—he hires his own adventurers to accomplish the nasty task (this could be two player parties run simultaneously, with slightly different goals). Third, once he has his daughters, the full fury of the *Blacksmoke* weapons research facilities will be leveled at the enemy stronghold, regardless of who else may be in there.

Scenario 2: A Matter of "Honor." The City passes an ordinance forbidding public dueling. *Hiram Forge* uncharacteristically accepts a challenge despite the ban. What little honor he possesses has been affronted. Both duelers agree to wear hoods so their identities will remain concealed. Hakan learns the man his brother is to fight has hired someone to replace him. Obviously the whole thing is a trap (chances are that brother *Terrence* is behind it). Hakan urges *Hiram* to allow him to take his place. *Hiram* refuses, so Hakan hires the party to kidnap *Hiram* so Hakan can fight in his place. Under most circumstances, this would be a near suicidal task, considering the protections with which *Hiram* and other *Forge* family members surround themselves. Of course, in addition to body guards and traps, there will be *Terrence's* forces at work, trying to make sure that *Hiram* and no other fights that duel.

Keir Collis

- *Physical Description:* Human male, Ht. 6', Wt. 175#, Age: 27.
- *Fighting Prowess:* Very Good with rapier and dagger, good with crossbow or stiletto.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Keir Collis is the handsome merchant from across the sea who came to the City and swept Veradis off her feet. The dark-haired man took Nightshade Shipping over when her father died and has built it into an enterprise that rivals Premier Imports LTD (a division of the Forgeway Company). He's a shrewd businessman who knows how to make money. He's hired two full shifts of workers on his docks so they can unload ships around the clock. Collis pays his workers well and has decreased the amount of dock theft incredibly.

Keir patronizes the local theatre. He buys costumes and commissions new works for them to perform. He has also given money to the Sailors' Aid societies and regularly contributes to the City's Temples.

Collis' life is perfect. He has a beautiful wife who dearly loves him and a successful business that makes him very rich. He shares his money with his workers and is always willing to help them during a time of need. He is a fine, upstanding citizen and a credit to the community.

The Truth

"Sewerspit!" A common City expletive. Sewerspit is as unpleasant as it sounds—a fermenting foam of the City's daily offal, floating, surging and stinking its way beneath the City's streets. Yet the worst of it can be found in one of the City's fine mansions.

Keir Collis, working in a branch office of Nightshade Shipping—which he now controls—managed to engineer a stranglehold on the drug traffic into several key distribution centers. When he arrived in the City he explained to Veradis' father that he, Keir, had documents signed by Veradis' father that made it look as if the drug scheme was entirely his plan. He promised to destroy the documents if he was given Veradis as his wife, *and* made heir to the shipping company. Through Veradis, Collis became a legitimate part of City society and is currently above suspicion concerning any of his slimy deals.

Collis works closely with crime lord Danny O'Grunion and ships all of the *Big Fish Gang's* drugs into and out of the City (see CB3 for details). Collis is far too smart to use his own product, and pays his workers well so no one will say anything. O'Grunion has also provided, in the form of discipline, reasons for the workers to keep quiet about Nightshade's dark night business.

Collis, in accordance with an agreement with his wife, has taken several lovers. Except for his current lover, Oriana Web, the women have left the City (though most of them have only gotten as far as the deepest parts of the City bay). Keir plays for keeps.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Lord Finster Investigates. My Lord Llwelllyn Finster, special investigator for City's Justice Ministry has taken an interest Keir Collis. Apparently Collis's hands are not as "clean" as the drug runner thinks them to be. Yet, on the other hand Lord Finster has insufficient evidence to arrest, let alone



— Keir Collis —

convict a member of the High Society. Since Lord Finster fears corruption in the city guard, free agents, honest adventurers, are needed to infiltrate and expose Collis's criminal activities.

Scenario 2: Dragon Enraged. Ristya Darkbrow is mad—mad enough to risk her ship, her business, even her life to discover which of her clients has been using her ship, the *River Drake*, to ship drugs up river—and then make sure that slime never sells anything to anybody, ever again. During a routine custom investigation far up river, drugs were found in her cargo, destined for a mining town far to the north. The official knew Ristya and a small bribe purchased the woman's silence. Obviously, if the drugs were discovered, the shipper figured that the riverfolk would be blamed for them. For the first time, Ristya defaulted on a shipping contract. This cargo would not be delivered! Now, Ristya seeks vengeance for her honor and good name. No one, especially a human!, takes advantage of the riverfolk like that and lives to gloat over it. She hires adventurers to accompany her and her crew on a mission into the City to eliminate Keir Collis.

Scenario 3: For Your Eyes Only. Keir decides to take on the Forgeway Company. He hires the adventurers to break into the Blacksmoke research facility, far from the City. He arranges to meet them on their return at Crumbling Skull Rapids, where he has secretly hired a band of heavy duty thugs to eliminate any complications which the adventurers may cause later on. Of course, Forgeway goons cannot be far behind.

Oriana Web

□ *Physical Description:* Half-elf female, Ht. 6', Wt. 140#, Age: 30, though she looks about 10 years younger than that. □ *Fighting Prowess:* Very Good with dagger, Good with rapier and thrown dagger. □ *Magic Ability:* Good C3, C5.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Oriana Web is the white-haired offspring of a street trollop and an elven adventurer/warrior. Oriana's father did not know about her until 15 years after her birth and he never saw her before his death. When he did learn about her, he entrusted a large amount of money to a friend and asked him to find the girl. Very shortly thereafter Oriana's father was lost during an adventure.

The friend, Phineas Web, a pleasant-looking if bookish sort of fellow, traveled to the City to find Oriana. What he found was a 17 year old street slut. He immediately set about using her father's money to train and educate the girl. During the three years of working with her, Phineas started an insurance company, and used Oriana as an example of what could happen to their children if they died. The company became outstandingly successful, and Oriana quickly became a shining example of the result of Phineas' services.

Phineas fell in love with Oriana. They married and he spent the last five years of his life in absolute bliss. His unexpected death at the hands of person or persons unknown, shattered Oriana. The culprit was never caught, but most people ascribed the murder to old grudges and the rumor about a cult seeking retribution for Phineas' participation in the sacking of a temple.

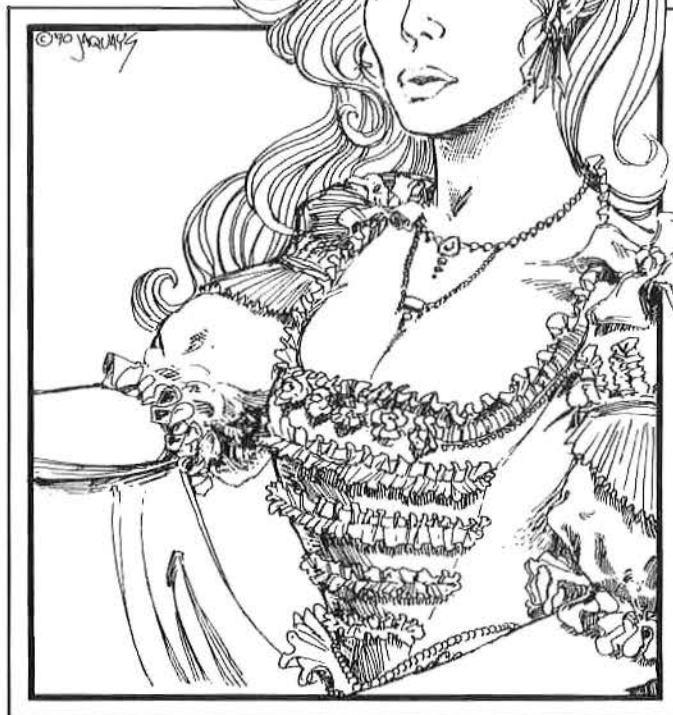
Since her husband's death, Oriana has continued the insurance business and carried it to even higher profits than Phineas realized. She hosts two charity balls each year, and often attends parties given by the "right" people. She has even, in a couple of special cases, paid off on insurance claims even though the policies had lapsed (In both cases the families were destitute).

The Truth

Oriana may have been uneducated when Phineas found her, but she was not stupid. She spotted him as a mark from the go, and gladly used all he taught her without abandoning her connections with the darker side of the City. She relished her access to the City's uppercrust. She enjoyed the money Phineas's insurance company provided her. She even liked Phineas, sort of.

Phineas' death and Oriana's skill with a dagger are not directly linked, but his blood is on her hands. She saw a great potential for expanding the insurance business to cover far more than just adventurers, but she also knew Phineas would object to diluting their resources by expanding. Oriana began to spread the story about a cult—a true tale Phineas had shared with her because it included much brave action by her father—then hired the assassin to kill Phineas. She killed the assassin and is the only person to know the truth behind Phineas' demise.

Oriana met Keir Collis at a party and their involvement grew from there. Oriana, because of her ties with the underworld, has suspicions about the passing of Collis' other lovers. She has taken a number of precautions against Collis deciding to kill her, and she has informed him of roughly half of them.



— Oriana Web —

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Ghosts in Walls. The cult in Phineas' story does exist, and wants revenge for the desecration of their temple. The cultists, seeing Oriana and her success as entirely due to Phineas, decide she must die to fulfill their mission of revenge. Oriana, through underworld contacts, learns of the plot against her and hires the party to protect her from these assassins (This will make for a great "haunted mansion" type adventure where the assassins have gotten into the Web mansion and the characters have to find them before the assassins can carry out their mission of death.)

Scenario 2: Return of the Avenger. Oriana's father is not dead. He comes back and learns of his daughter's double life. Unbeknownst to her, he had written Phineas Web and both men agreed to keep his survival a secret to surprise Oriana. Later, as Phineas got the feeling Oriana might be plotting against him, Phineas sent a letter to a tavern both men had used as a message drop. Oriana's father got the letter and has reason to suspect his daughter murdered his friend. Apparently, the friendship between himself and Phineas involved some powerful oaths and he is honor-bound to avenge his oath-brother's death. He hires the characters, as people who know the area, to investigate Phineas Web's death.

Scenario 3: He's Much Nicer When He's Dead. Oriana decides it is time to marry again and she sets her sights on a minor noble as her next husband. Of course, Keir Collis is a bit of a complication as far as her plan is concerned. She hires or seduces the characters into killing him. She tells him he is bothering her, and she drops hints about his plot to buy insurance for his ships, then reporting them sunk to ruin her business. She could even point the characters in the direction of some of Keir's dead lovers and create a scandal that blows the roof off part of the City!

Lona

- *Physical Description:* Human female, Ht. 5', Wt. 95#, Age: 25.
- *Fighting Prowess:* Very good with a crossbow, dagger or bludgeon, Good with sling.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Lona is a semi-legendary bounty hunter. Tales are sung of a scarlet-haired amazon whose strength and fighting abilities are unmatched in the world. It is said she once won the heart of a bandit chieftain and convinced him to leave the bandit trail and come to live with her in her family holding. His band, stung by several unsuccessful outings without him, came and asked him to return to lead them. He refused and they attacked Lona's home. They burned it to the ground and killed her lover.

Lona nearly died from wounds sustained in the raid, but her hatred kept her alive. She vowed to hunt down all the bandits in that group. Managing to survive by luck at first, but she slowly refined her skills and became good at bringing raiders to justice. By the time she'd finished the bandits off she'd discovered a trade and made enough money at it to make her secure. Now, when she takes a criminal, she turns half the bounties over to the victims.

When pressed, no one will admit to actually having seen her fight, though tales of her prowess are common enough. Most often, her exploits are sung of by bards and they seem to be very popular. The mere mention of her name is enough to pale many criminals (and even a few "honest" folk with something to hide). She is truly a living legend.

The Truth

Lona, as can be seen from the physical description above, is not the amazon of legend. While she does have red hair, in general she does not resemble her legendary self at all. In fact, aside from hair color, the only things the real Lona and her legend share are the names of the people she has brought to justice.

Lona's entry to the world of bounty hunting was not nearly as romantic as the legend. A sheriff arrested her for running con games and, to get out of jail, she made a deal. The sheriff agreed to let her go free if she could bring in three other criminals, and she did so. She used con games to trap her prey, and killed none of this first trio. One man—hopelessly addicted to a hallucinogenic drug—wove a tale about a flame-haired Amazon, and created Lona's legend. A few gold coins in the palms of the correct bards and the legend grew.

Lona uses the legend to her advantage. No one suspects or links her with the legend at all. She travels in disguise a great deal and uses con games and schemes to capture her prey. The unethical part of her *modus operandi* concerns her use of unsuspecting bystanders as part of the plots. She only selects people she knows can handle themselves, and will come to no harm [i.e., *adventurers*]. For example, she might let it slip to the prey that the adventurers are a group of bounty hunters who've been asking questions. She'll offer to smuggle the felon out of the City, to a safe place she knows of ...

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Just a Small Distraction. Until now, Lona's targets have been simple criminals, thugs, murderers, thieves, and bandits. Now, she's set her sights higher—a powerful wizard has

committed crimes that demand apprehension, judgement and punishment. Only no one has had the guts to arrest a wizard, especially when the crime involved the horrible, violent, lingering deaths of an entire village. No one that is, except Lona. She hires an unsuspecting group of adventurers to attack the wizard on her signal, then cons her way in close to the man. When the attack occurs and the adventurers' deaths provide a distraction, she intends to strike and capture the wizard unawares.

Scenario 2: The Price of Justice. The adventurers are unjustly accused of a crime and a sizable bounty is placed upon their heads. Rumors circulate that the legendary Lona (a flame haired amazon, at least six and a half feet tall whose twin swords of flame and ice paralyze fugitives with the slightest touch) seeks to gain the price on the adventurers' heads. During their flight, the adventurers have opportunity to rescue a small, non-descript youth from wolves/bandits/undead. Jonah, a fugitive from justice himself, joins the party, offering his own skills in thanks for their aid. Of course, Jonah is Lona. She will use every trick she has to bring the party in. Then, since she should have learned of their innocence by then, she takes the bounty, then secretly frees the party.



— Lona —

Liam

□ *Physical Description:* Human male, Ht. 6'4", Wt. 275#, Age: 35. □ *Fighting Prowess:* Very good with two-handed weapons or shield and one-handed weapon combinations, Good with thrown knife, bow, sling & crossbow. □ *Magic Ability:* Very Good C3, C7.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Liam is a large, black-haired, ice-eyed warrior. His clothing is specially tailored to hide his massive, muscular frame and the half-dozen throwing knives he wears at all times. He speaks with an accent and is rumored to have an eagle tattooed on his chest. His homeland is far away, high up in the mountains, but he has lived long enough in more civilized lands to be at ease in the City.

Liam came to the City and entered the militia years ago. He saved a petty noble from an angry peasant and the noble rewarded him handsomely for the deed. On the noble's recommendation, a dowager hired Liam to escort her daughter—the object of a madman's affections—to a Royal ball. Liam cut a handsome and powerful figure in the tailored outfit his employer provided him. The ball was a great success and the girl remained safe, if only for that night.

In fact, three nights later, the madman and two henchmen murdered her in her home. Many people in the City recall Liam tracking her murderers down. The running battle passed through much of the City. Liam hunted each man down and killed each in a most grisly manner. He killed the henchmen first, then caught the madman trying to leave the town in a sealed coach. Liam ripped the coach apart at the City gate and twisted the madman's head from his shoulders. Even though a crowd watched the killing, the City guard could not find a single witness against Liam ("Honest, officer, it was a dragon that killed the man. Gor', look at the coach! Nae a man could do that, na?")

Liam resigned from the militia immediately. He is highly sought after as a bodyguard. His physical size and his determination in hunting down the girl's murderers has dissuaded anyone from attacking his charges.

The Truth

Liam is a renegade Black Eagle assassin. The clan gave Liam's father an assignment, but when he reached the City he discovered the target was a man who had once saved his life. He refused the assignment and, because the assassins could not get another killer into the City fast enough, missed a deadline after which the man's death did not matter. Because he besmirched their reputation, the Black Eagles killed Liam's father.

Liam left the clan and moved to the City to prevent any future attempts on the man his father had refused to kill. The man he came to guard eventually passed on due to natural causes, but Liam dared not leave the City. He knew the Black Eagles had watched him, and he suspected they would strike at people he knew and valued. One of these was the girl—the daughter of the man Liam's father had refused to kill.

Killing her was just one of the games the Black Eagles have played with Liam. Liam killed her assassin to prove to his brothers and cousins that he had not gone soft and was more than capable of destroying those who struck at him through others (he did rip the door off a coach and broke the man's neck with his bare hands though). Over the years Liam has developed a working



— Liam —

relationship with the City's beggars and a loose association with the *House of Infinite Dreams* (see CB3 for details on both), so he has sources of information that let him know when a Black Eagle arrives in the City.

The Black Eagles are really little more than a folktale in the City—at least as far as the common people are concerned. In their homeland, and the surrounding nations, they are feared. Failures are the exception to the rule and suspicious deaths are often attributed to "Black Eagle fever." Individual assassins often do not know the names of their targets until they reach the area where the target lives. Because of the clan's structure, the assassin will never know who the client is, and no one is mad enough to suggest assaulting the Black Eagle's mountain stronghold. Captured Eagles either commit suicide or they are rescued/murdered if there is a chance of their divulging important Black Eagle information ("A Black Eagle confession," said one king, "isn't worth the breath it's written on.")

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Black Eagle Rising. Some nobles seek to kill the City's ruler before he can sign a trade treaty with another citystate. The Black Eagles are brought into the City to complete the mission, and to implicate the citystate in such a way that no City ruler will ever deal with them again. Liam realizes this influx of assassins is more than he can handle by himself, so he seeks the adventurers out to gain their help. He selects them because of their skill, and the possibility they have heard of the Black Eagles and will believe his story.

For a hack and slash group of players, this may seem to be a scenario where cutting and gutting are the order of the day. The Black Eagles, on the other hand, are not stupid and would not be above ambushing the adventurers, or leading them on a wild-goose chase as long as it means they will not be where they should be at the time the Black Eagles choose to strike.

Scenario 2: King Eagle. Because Liam is part of the Black Eagle clan, he is still, technically, in line to rule the clan if the right assassins in line before him die. Talon, his younger cousin, dearly wants the throne, but must kill Liam to get it. He engineers the kidnapping of Liam's latest charge and brings the victim to the Black Eagle stronghold. Liam, expecting his trek home to be most dangerous, hires the adventurers to accompany him and act as his retainers in what will shape up as an assassins' civil war.

Solanu

□ *Physical Description:* Dwarven female, Ht. 2'9", Wt. 95#, Age: 30+. **No beard!** □ *Fighting Prowess:* Very good with an ax or dwarven war hammer, good with dagger.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Female dwarves, as is common knowledge, are somewhat rare as the birth ratio runs about 4:1 male to female. Before a male can marry, he must amass a great deal of wealth. (This explains the dwarven lust for gold...) Through hard and long work as warriors, adventurers or miners, one obtains the needed riches to obtain permission to marry. Weak dwarves are killed trying to make money, hence only the strong or very lucky survive long enough to marry and father children. Because of their scarcity, and their extreme value to dwarvenkind, dwarven women are seldom seen outside their homes. This, of course, leads to all sorts of strange stories about their having beards or traveling in the outside world in disguise.

Solanu is the only remaining member of the younger generation of the Pyrite clan of dwarves (at least the branch of the family that lives near the City). Her father died in a battle and her mother was married off to a member of a clan that had no love lost on the Pyrites. Solanu's only brother, and the last male of the line, Nackle, left the stronghold before his 30th birthday to make his fortune and care for his sister and grandparents. When he did not return after two years, Solanu set out to find him or find out what became of him.

In the time she has been searching, she has joined a number of adventuring parties who were heading off for parts far distant. She aids them in local adventures, and asks them to keep an eye out for her brother in their journeys. She tends to avoid other local dwarves and has become something of a regular at the local bathhouse. (She is known for giving good massages.)

Solanu does not look like the common (and erroneous) conception of a female dwarf. She is very well and symmetrically proportioned—more closely approximating human norm than her male counterparts. Her golden-blond hair cascades down over her shoulders and her large, brown eyes make her very attractive. Her ample bust and wide hips mark her as different from human children the same height. She is quite beautiful, even by human standards.

The Truth

All of the above is accurate, but it only portrays part of the story. Solanu avoids local dwarves because she is afraid she will be kidnapped and forced into marrying a dwarf from the same clan that claimed her widowed mother. Solanu escaped the dwarven stronghold under the pretext of searching for her brother because he is her closest living male kin. As such, he has to give his permission for her to marry. In the time she has spent outside the stronghold, however, she has garnered the sort of wealth that would entitle a male to select a bride, and she's beginning to toy with the idea of returning to the stronghold and picking herself out a *husband!*

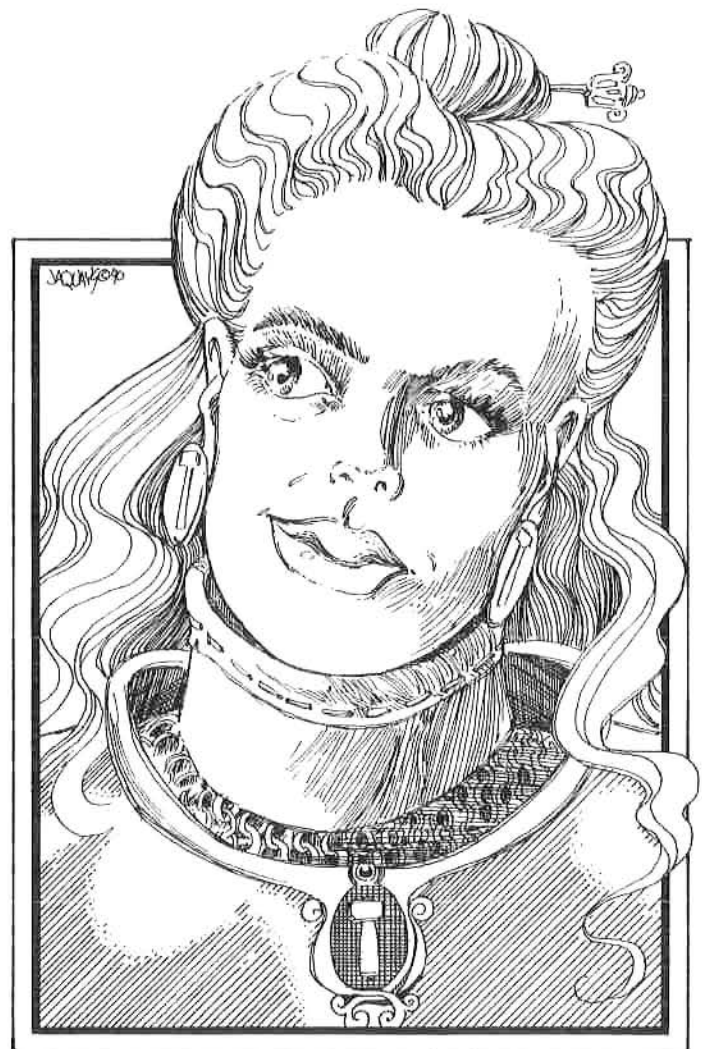
Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: "Do you Solanu, take this..." A male member of the Oron clan has gathered a massive fortune and has decided to

marry. No marriageable dwarven women are available in the stronghold, but someone reminds him Solanu is living in the City. He and his brothers decide to kidnap her and swear he has been with her "unescorted." As dwarven law states very clearly, the male, in such a case, must marry the female and provide for her. While the law was designed to protect women from oversexed males, it has been used before to bring a resisting female to the marriage bed.

Solanu, friend of the adventurers, is giving one of them a massage at the bathhouse when the dwarves kidnap her. Her friends must rescue her because, by dwarven law, only death may sever the marriage bond! Assaulting a dwarven stronghold to steal a bride away on her wedding day is probably foolish, but an intelligent player can probably find a way to use dwarven law against the Oron boys to rescue their friend.

Scenario 2: "In a Canyon, in a Cavern..." Someone reports he's seen Nackle in a slave collar working in the local salt mines. Solanu rushes out there, but Nackle does not recognize her and actually appears drugged. While the adventurers are certain to help Solanu rescue her brother, the greater mystery revolves around what is hidden in the mines that forces the owners to drug their slaves?



— Solanu —

Blackmoon

□ *Physical Description:* Elf, Ht. 6' 3", Wt. 150#, Age: ? but looks 30. □ *Fighting Prowess:* Excellent with longbow and dagger, Very good with sword or bare hands. Note: will never touch a non-edged weapon with any thought toward using it. Might, in very extreme circumstances, pass a non-edged weapon to a compatriot (Arrows, with a razored broadhead, are considered "edged."). □ *Magic Ability:* None. He is magically neutral—no magic will work for, on, or against him.

Special powers note: Blackmoon does have the unsettling ability to look into a person's "heart" to determine if the person is basically good or evil. The person being studied—it takes about five seconds—will feel a cold wind against the spine and his or her hackles will rise.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Once in every four or five Elven generations, a child is born with utterly black eyes. This child is instantly called, though never officially "named," *Blackmoon*. The community raises the child and it will never know who its blood parents are (though the rest of the community reveres them for the honor they have been given by the gods). The child is trained from its earliest days to use a bow, a dagger and a sword. The weapons used in training are very special, but the child will forge its own weapons to carry before it leaves the community (The training weapons are forged by the previous Blackmoon... possibly a millenium before).

The Blackmoon can be either male or female and can be born to any of the various Elven stocks, so only the eyes will reveal a Blackmoon's identity. Because the eyes are almost totally pupil, the Blackmoon cannot tolerate direct sunlight. The Blackmoon will travel hooded and veiled during the day or openly and silently at night. If a Blackmoon ever became a renegade, the world would have a very efficient and deadly assassin.

Elven legend maintains a "beast" will devour Elvenkind if it is not defeated. The legend also speaks of the Blackmoon as the only elf capable of killing the beast. The Blackmoons are destined to search the world for the creature. When they find it they are to gather a dozen good people to aid them, then they must destroy it.

There is only one Blackmoon at any one time and each keeps a journal of his travels. The Journal is returned, magically, to the Elven High Council on the Blackmoon's death and the new Blackmoons all read the journals of their predecessors.

The Truth

All of the above is absolutely true. A Blackmoon does not need pure and pristine adventurers as companions—he or she only searches for people who are good at heart. This means a Blackmoon is just as likely to choose an adventurer desiring to atone for a sin as easily as it will choose a kindly virgin princess born on a bed of silk to be its companion.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: The characters have been hired to recover a hostage from a group of bandits that attacked a caravan. The bandits are somewhat politically motivated—the leader was burned out of his farm by the local baron—and the hostage was taken along

with some of the baron's retainers. The Blackmoon will be lurking around in the background and will even intervene to turn the tide when some of the bandits try to ambush the characters. The Blackmoon will reveal little of its mission to the characters, but it will let them know it wants someone "up there"[in the bandits' stronghold] to join him.

The only kicker is, of course, that the Blackmoon wants the bandit leader to join his group. The baron, on the other hand, has offered a vast fortune for the bandit leader's head.

Scenario 2: Mark of the Beast. The "beast" or a flaunting of its power has been discovered. The Blackmoon must act swiftly, taking less care than she (or he) would normally take in selecting companions. She hires the adventurers to fill out her 12 companions. Choose the remaining members from among of the good-hearted characters in this section. The mission can be just about anything, from a hit and run "surgical" strike into a foul fortress to a complex multi-part quest aimed at saving the world. Whatever the GM chooses, the main villain should be working on some plot to destroy, eradicate or at least discredit Elvenkind.



— Blackmoon —

Terraesa

□ *Physical Description:* Human female, Ht. 5', Wt. 95#, Age: 17.
 □ *Fighting Prowess:* Poor normally. In alternate form, Very Good with "bare hands." □ *Note:* Vulnerable to magic or silver only, no matter what form she is in.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Terraesa is a perfectly normal girl. Her fine blond hair frames a pretty face and her innocence shines forth like a beacon. While shy and withdrawn, she will open up to anyone who takes the time to get to know her and she has a genuine affinity for female adventurers (She sees them as what she could be if she was braver.). She works very hard at her job of shepherding and often her sheep are the fattest and highest priced at auction. Terraesa spends most of her time out in the pastures watching the sheep, though she does have time to wander the City when the sheep are brought to the lower pastures during the winter.

The only unusual thing ever associated with Terraesa was an incident that occurred one night while she tended her flock. A wolf had been on the prowl in the area. People had urged her not to stand guard alone. Terraesa refused to draw other shepherds away from their flocks to protect her sheep or her. She assured others she would be fine.

Two City guardsmen, riding a mounted patrol through the area, discovered Terraesa unconscious and covered with blood. Beside her lay the wolf. Something had broken its neck cleanly, then disemboweled it. The sheep, milling around in terror, had wiped out most of the tracks in the meadow, but the guardsmen swore, from two tracks and the wolf's condition, a mountain lion had attacked the beast and killed it.

Terraesa had not been hurt in the attack. Most folks assume a local mountain deity intervened and killed the wolf before it could kill Terraesa. The girl is well liked in her little village near the City. Most folk believe she is blessed, so they treat her very kindly.

The Truth

Terraesa has known, since puberty, that she is a were-cat. In the mountains she can sate her hunger by catching rabbits or rodents. She has enough control over herself to refrain from killing sheep, and her animals sense she will not hurt them. Once a month, for three nights running (tied to her biological cycle as opposed to the lunar cycles), she becomes a puma (a mountain lion).

The night of the wolf attack, Terraesa changed into the puma even though only two weeks had passed since her last episode of transformation. This worries Terraesa because she has no memory of killing the wolf. She believes she exerts control when she expects the change. Discovering she can change accidentally makes her afraid she might actually hurt someone.

Terraesa does not know who her parents were. She has heard unkind stories about her mother, and she is afraid her father was an evil sorcerer whom the gods punished with a were-cat daughter. In actuality her mother was an adventurer who used a ring that allowed her to shift into a cat's shape. She did not realize she was pregnant at the time she made extensive use of the ring, and the magic affected her daughter. Terraesa's mother left the child with relatives, but they abandoned the child when the money left for her care ran out. A shepherd found Terraesa and raised her as his



— Terraesa —

own child, but he died several years back.

Because of superstitions, Terraesa has revealed her true nature to no one. Part of her is certain her parents abandoned her because she "is a monster." Deep in her heart, she harbors the hope her parents were a Prince and Princess cursed to be pumas, and she hopes they will return for their daughter when they are rescued themselves. Until then she is content to work hard because she realizes dreams won't feed her.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: Night of the Cat. Terraesa begins experiencing headaches and periods of "black out." A particularly nasty spate of murders in Nightside—the victims are transients and beggars—coincide with Terraesa's black-outs. This worries Terraesa, especially because people have described the killings as "animalistic" and savage.

The killer is actually another were-cat and Terraesa, unconsciously, is drawn to it when it hunts and kills. She has seen the murders, but she has blanked the memory of them from her mind (hence the headaches) because she identifies so closely with the killer. Still, she does know who the killer is and could end the murders if she could remember what she knows.

This scenario can head off in several different directions. It could be melded with the Thok scenario concerning murders. Terraesa can believe the killer is actually kin (father, brother, sister). She'll want to save that person to learn more about her background. The killer would be using the ring Terraesa's mother had, and possibly could have killed her mother to get it.

Quentin Fisher

□ *Physical Description:* Human male, Ht. 5'10", Wt. 155#, Age: 29. □ *Fighting Prowess:* Good with a crossbow, fair with his fists. Has an affinity for any technological device. □ *Magic Ability:* none, but magic does not work against him unless the spellcaster knows his full name (Fisher's middle name is Thomas). Spells used against him tend to fizzle, and those used around him tend to go awry.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Quentin Fisher is an odd sort of individual. Rumors about him abound and most are unbelievable. He speaks with a strong, foreign accent and his grasp of the "common" tongue is slightly worse than that of your average slave-troll. He is unremarkable physically and despite his youthful face, his hair is thinning and he always looks tired.

The earliest story about him concerns the Black Sorcerer of Carnatham. This evil sorcerer attempted to raise an army of dead men from an ancient battlefield. With the army, the Black Sorcerer could have conquered half the world, but Fisher killed him with a silver crossbow bolt and ended his evil. Since that time Fisher has been credited with the overthrow of three tyrants, the deaths of four roving monsters, and breaking the hearts of a half-dozen Princesses. It is rumored he's the only man to have visited the Citadel of the Assassin King and lived to tell about it. The story hints at some sort of involvement with the Assassin Princess, and it is said a half-dozen assassins are out to get him at any one time.

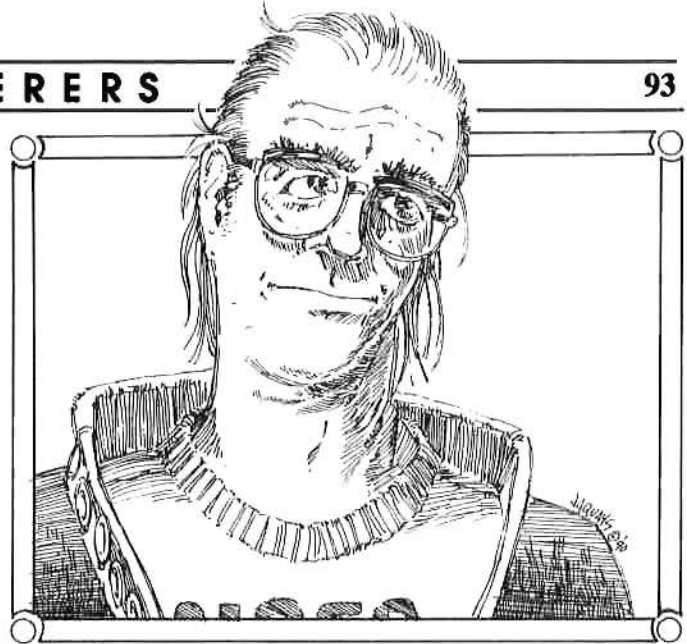
The Truth

The above is all true and is less an account of a heroic career than it is the chronicle of a comedy of errors. Quentin Thomas Fisher is a man from our own mundane world who had the misfortune of helping Pergessia on a trip to our world. Pergessia became ill and, running a fever that made him delirious, he teleported himself back to the world of the City. Fisher, who had seen Pergessia stumble while walking down the street, caught Pergessia and vanished with him to the City's world.

The two men arrived in Carnatham—a place well away from the City. The Black Sorcerer captured them, but Pergessia simply walked away. Because of his illness he did not even realize he'd brought Fisher to the City's world, much less realize he'd left him in such a dangerous situation. Quentin, given little choice, using simple items he carried on his person, killed the Black Sorcerer and escaped.

In the real world, Quentin Fisher was an inventor and industrial engineer. At first Quentin did everything he could to return to his own world. Yet slowly, he has come to love this simpler world and is afraid of the things modern technology could do to it—particularly in the area of military science. On the other hand, he wants to use his knowledge of modern agricultural and manufacturing practices to make the world better. His crusade against tyrants and wandering monsters comes from his belief in freedom and self-determination. This has marked him as a dangerous man as far as many feudal leaders are concerned, but Fisher is well liked by the common people, so no one has acted openly against him.

Fisher's command of the "common" tongue is better than



— Quentin Fisher —

common knowledge allows, and Fisher has no trouble passing unnoticed if he so desires. The rumor about his visiting the Assassin King is true, but sounds more suspicious than it really was. The King invited Fisher to visit because he wanted to know why so many leaders wanted the man dead. The King, after his meeting with Fisher, decided not to kill him and, unbeknownst to Fisher, has assigned a half-dozen assassins to watch over Fisher.

Scenario Suggestions

Scenario 1: ¡Viva la Revolution! Too many alchemists have been independently "discovering" black powder lately and immediately using it to make weapons. Though Quentin has been meddling in other areas of technological growth, he suspects another dimensional crossover has occurred and that this newcomer will turn this world's society towards the armed craziness of his former world. He has narrowed the location to somewhere within the City, but now needs the help of others to track down his nemesis. The nemesis, a beautiful young chemical engineer from a repressed third world country despises tyrants too. It's just that she sees nothing wrong with arming the masses against oppressive overlords. To help Quentin convince her that she is in error (and probably begin one of those stormy, yet fated-to-be romances) the adventurers must defuse, bypass or set off dozens of crude, yet clever and effective, chemically-powered traps and overcome her musket-toting henchmen.

Scenario 2: Let Darkness Fall. Angry despots seek Quentin's head. The assassins guilds won't take the contract so one of the despots hires the adventurers to eliminate this dangerous criminal. Of course to get to this "evil monster" the party will have to fight their way through a whole village full angry peasants. Quentin is currently building an irrigation system for their village and setting up a school to teach their children. Of course, then there are the assassins who protect the man too!

Scenario 3: A Visit to the Library. Through the Dimensions Unlimited travel agency, Quentin has found a way to go home. He intends to go just long enough to raid several university libraries of selected engineering textbooks, which he intends to translate into the languages of the City's world. Of course, the trip requires crossing the bridge at Crumbling Skull Rapids, and Quentin could use a few companions on his dangerous journey. Use this to set up a fun cross-over adventure into the 20th century.

Prince Josev, (retired)

□ *Physical Description:* Human male, Ht. 6', Wt. 185#, Age: 26.
 □ *Fighting Prowess:* Very good with broadsword and bow. Good with all other. □ *Magic Ability:* None, though he is the sole living conduit of the legendary healing powers ascribed to the Lion Throne.

Common Knowledge/Legend

Prince Josev is the exiled Prince of the Lion Throne. His home nation lies far to the south and is little more than a loosely allied federation of tribes and clans. His face bears a scar running from the right corner of his mouth back up to his cheekbone. The Prince wears his black hair short and is clean shaven. Well mannered and out-going, he is the darling of the upper classes.

The Prince's father, King Turo IV, lost the throne while his son was off on a journey to the City. General Buto, leader of a large clan, killed the king and placed himself on the throne. Prince Josev has not returned to his homeland since the revolution. Many openly supposed the Prince will lead an army of liberation to win back the throne. Merchants in the City, anticipating favorable trade agreements later, have pledged to support the Prince in his war to win back the throne.

Prince Josev seems to be tolerating his exile well. He has earned great respect as a poet and archer, though he is the first to acknowledge his betters at both undertakings. At social functions he is charming and appears tireless in dealing with boring couriers who wish only to be remembered when he wins his throne back. He also spends much of his free time talking with adventurers—presumably sizing them up for his army of liberation. Adventurers report the Prince is genial and seems truly interested in tales of their travels and adventures.

The Truth

Prince Josev has no interest in taking back the Lion Throne. His father was a despot and lost the throne because he had destroyed all the internal alliances that kept the throne stable. General Buto forced new and powerful alliances, then killed Turo IV. Because Buto struck fast, and the Prince was outside the country, no one opposed the coup.

Prince Josev would not have fought against Buto even if he had been in the country. Josev did not want to be King because it would force him out of the arts and into politics. He understands politics well enough and despises those who practice its arcane rituals. King Buto pays Josev a stipend so he'll remain in the City, and Josev is more than happy to stay put.

Prince Josev speaks with adventurers because he's bored. He believes adventuring might be fun. He has resigned himself to never seeing his homeland again, and seldom experiences bouts of homesickness.

Scenario Suggestions

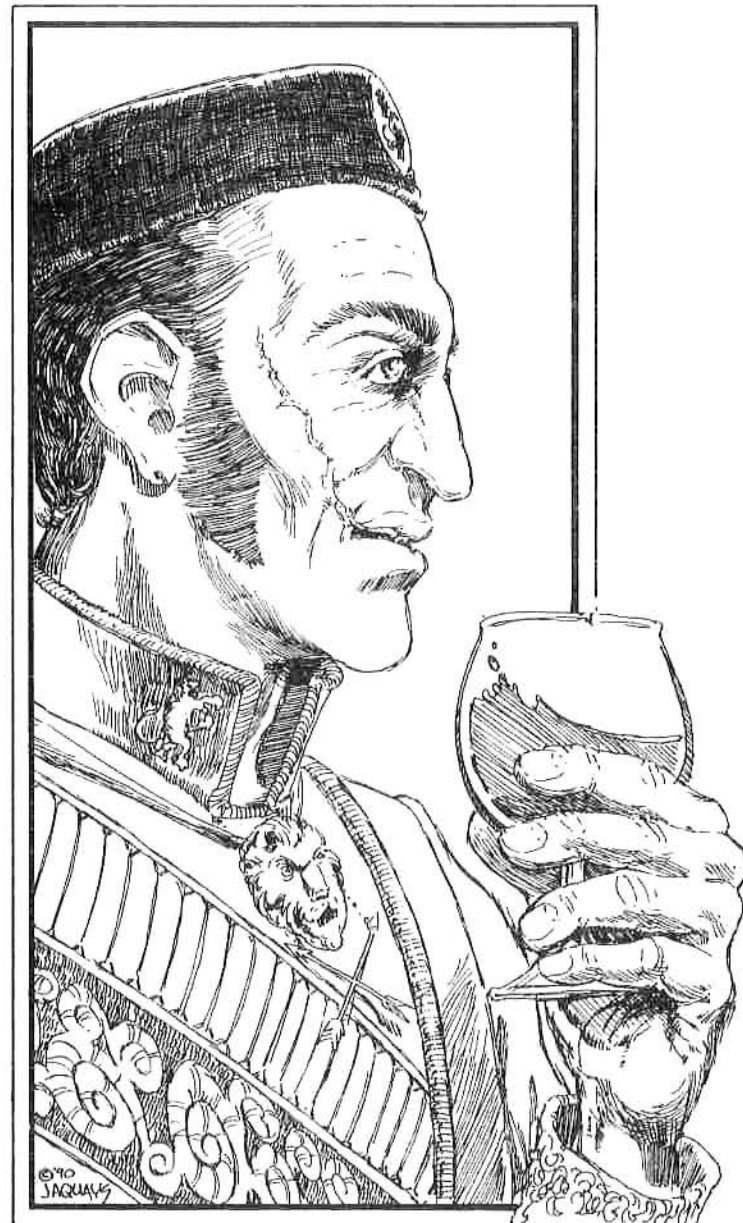
Scenario 1: Hunting the Hunter. Prince Josev wants to go monster hunting, putting his skills with a bow to use. He hires the adventurer's to accompany him. Of course, King Buto has decided to eliminate any future problems by having the exiled Prince eliminated once and for all.

Scenario 2: A Pound of Cure. A great plague sweeps over the

Lands of the Lion Throne. King Buto cannot command the healing powers of the Lion Throne, so he needs to have Josev return to save the nation. He realizes, however, Josev's return and salvation of the nation will result in a popular uprising that will toss King Buto out on his ear. Buto's advisors tell him he'll be able to command the throne's powers after Josev is dead (They are probably wrong.)

Buto hires men to convince Prince Josev to return to his homeland. Buto promises safe passage, and Josev agrees to return to save the people of his country. The adventurers should see what Josev, in his pain over the plague's effect on his country, does not: Josev will die after he has saved the nation. Somehow the players have to rescue Josev, but they have to allow him to get to the throne and use it to heal the nation.

Of course, the best way to motivate the adventurers is to describe the symptoms of the disease, then clue them into the fact that they have it too, and only the Lion Throne can heal it.



— Prince Josev —

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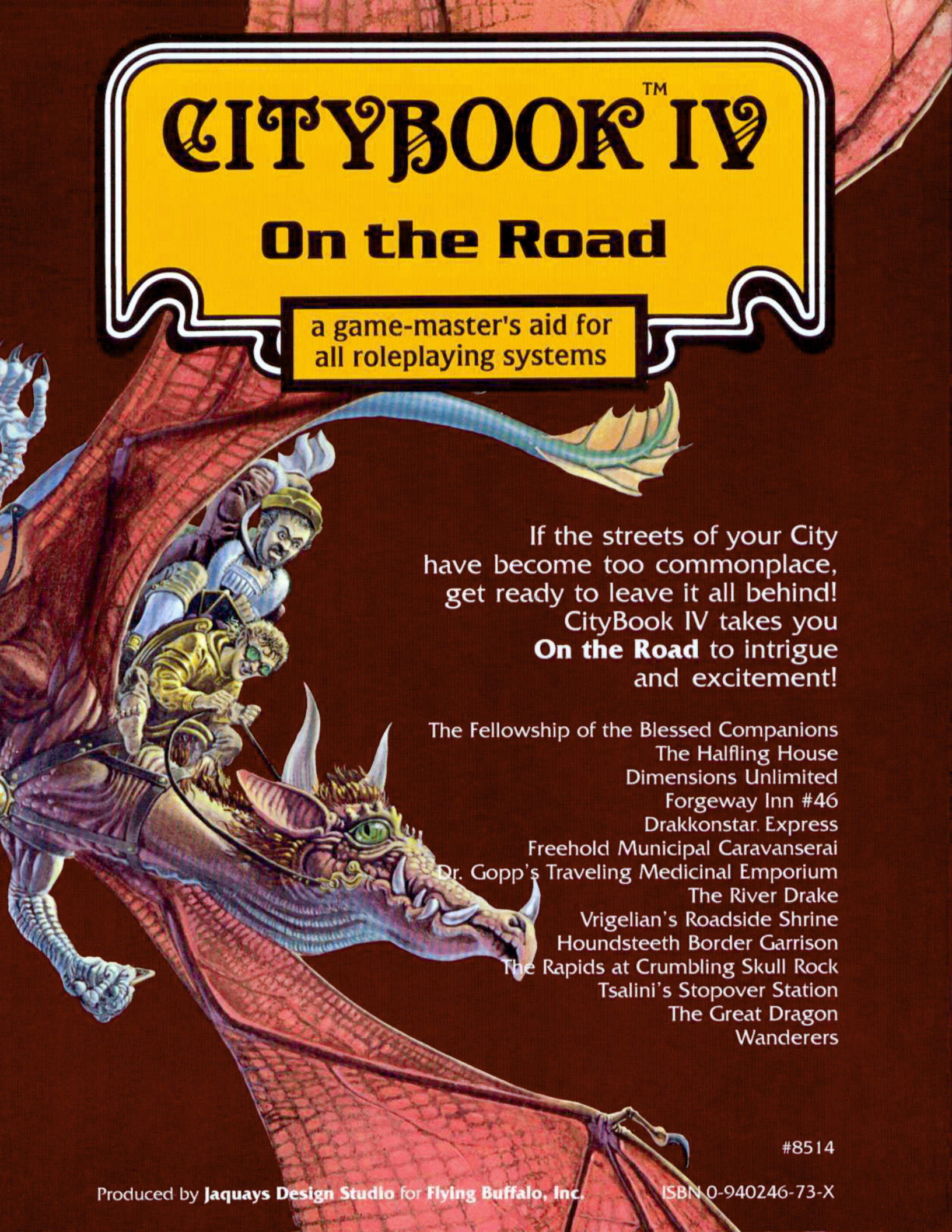
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