

MONARCHIES of MAU

ADVENTURES FOR
CURIOUS CATS



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CURIOUS CATS

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Colby, Monster, and Morgan, who are all very good dogs.

Jake, a valiant steed.



*Requires the use of
the Monarchies of Mau Core Rulebook*



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INTRODUCTION

To the curious cat, adventure lurks around every corner, in every flickering shadow or dark cave. One of the Precepts of Mau is “always trust your instincts,” and cats should keep this in mind whether investigating a shocking murder, encountering strange creatures in the mountains, or walking political tightropes while interacting with other species.

The Monarchies of Mau are by nature both political and secretive, but cats are also thrill seekers, adventurers, and trailblazers, so their stories can cover a wide range of events and interactions. As the main theme in *Monarchies of Mau* is that of instinct versus society, you will run up against this conflict time and time again in these stories, as the cats your players control figure out how best to approach the situations within. Do they use cunning or force? Do they sneak by guards in the night, try to talk their way past them, or even bribe

them? They can use any and all of their secrets in the pursuit of knowledge and glory over the course of the stories presented in this collection.

THEME: DISCOVERY

Though the stories in this collection cover a diverse array of events, the overarching theme of all three, and indeed many *Monarchies of Mau* stories, is that of discovery. Whether cats are discovering secrets, long-buried treasure, new artifacts and creatures, or treacherous plots, they are always curious, and always seek new pieces to solve compelling puzzles.

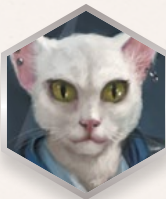
MOOD: INTRIGUE

As in the *Monarchies of Mau* core, each story in this collection features some sort of intrigue, whether against the players, the monarchies, a specific non-player character, or even possibly against the entire world. Play-

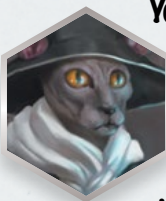
ers will have to explore, gather clues, and uncover many secrets along the way, but will be rewarded with artifacts, glory, and new tales to tell over a cup of catnip tea.

how to Use This Book

Adventures for Curious Cats is a collection of ready-to-play stories for *Monarchies of Mau*. As such, it does reference *Monarchies of Mau*, which is needed to play through the stories presented here.



Hello! I'm back to help you make the most of your *Monarchies of Mau* games, by letting you know when things are different from other games like this one.



You likely won't need me as much this time around, but I'm here to give advice to newer players and Guides. My first tip is that, with some tweaks, all these stories will also work for Pugmire, or a mixed party of cats and dogs if that is your players' preference.

There are three separate stories in *Adventures for Curious Cats*, though they can all be run as part of an otherwise-separate, larger campaign, as jumping-off points for new campaigns, or as even one-shot stories. They can also be woven together into one long campaign with some planning on the Guide's part! Remember, too, the stories told at your table are yours, so if there is anything presented here that you or your players would rather not include, that's totally fine. The Guide should read through any story they plan to run and take notes if needed to facilitate smooth play.

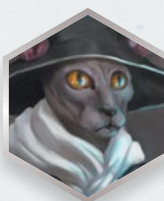
In the story "Murder Most Foul," which is geared toward first-level cats, players will meet Hook Maincoon von Korat, and help him solve a murder while uncovering a deep conspiracy threatening the monarchies.

"The Lost Library of Amosen" a third-level story, takes cats on a harrowing trail to uncover forbidden knowledge of the Old Ones. Along the way, they must avoid perils both natural and of the Unseen.

"A Lizard's Tale," for cats of fifth level, sees them assist a young gecko in retrieving a lost family artifact from ruins of the Old Ones, though meddling dogs and terrifying creatures threaten to turn the whole journey on its head.

Any of these stories can be adjusted for cats of different levels, and each story includes:

- A brief section detailing the **non-player characters** central to the story. There are also a few references to **enemies** listed in *Monarchies of Mau*; if you need to adjust or add anything along the way, feel free to reference the correct section of the book to do so.
- A **synopsis**, or a brief overview of the story, providing a bird's-eye view of the plot and how the scenes interrelate.
- An **introduction** to help you get the player characters engaged quickly with the plot of this story.
- All the **scenes** you need to run the story. These don't need to be run as written, and their order can be shuffled as the Guide sees fit. Feel free to add, delete, or alter scenes if it will make a better story or flow for your game. In the end, you want your players to have a good time, and to help Guide an engaging story. What you see before you is a guideline, not a set of orders.



A good Guide is always learning, so pay close attention to the things your players liked and the things they'd rather do differently. Don't take criticism personally — they're not saying you have done a poor job, they're telling you how to make the game better, and they're telling you they trust you. Trust is hard-earned and easily lost, so listen closely when your players make suggestions!



MURDER MOST FOUL

In ages past, there was a cult devoted to the darkness of Man. They were convinced that cats, dogs, the rats, and everyone else had risen up to fight against the Old Ones. They spoke of abuse, pain, and experiments Man forced us to undergo. Most cats know these are myths; the Old Ones worshipped us. They would never do such a thing. Some dogs get violent when you bring up this story. It goes against everything they believe about the Old Ones, but a few dogs believe in these stories with a passion, think those holding up the Old Ones as an example are wrong and broken, and want to bring all of our faith and social order down on our ears.

Now, what if I told you these terrible tales weren't myths at all? What if I told you this group of cats and dogs was still out there... here... even? Would you get upset? Would you run away? No, no, I didn't think so, young one. The Consistory is here and we know the truth. Are you ready to join us? To learn truth? To be welcomed into the broader world of knowledge?

-The Temptation of Masoto von Ocicat

CHARACTERS

“Murder Most Foul” is a story for cats of first level, designed to help the Guide get their feet underneath them and start their campaign. Included are a series of hooks and options to help get characters involved, and along the way, you’ll find optional adjustments to the story to help craft the narrative in a way that keeps players coming back to the table. Before running this story, the Guide should read the entire story, and then feel free to reference elements to prepare prior to a session. Taking notes and adjusting to fit your players is always a great idea.

CHARACTERS

Below are notes for the major non-player characters important to this story.

THE CONSISTORY

Several generations ago there was an intrepid group of cats and dogs who chose to head far to the west. Very few returned, but the ones who did were adamant the Old Ones were evil and were destroyed by a rebellion of cats, dogs, and other species. The Consistory was relatively short-lived, as the stories these people told were drastically out of sync with the relics of the Old Ones and other secrets known to cats. Within a generation, they were subject to ridicule and their ideas were outlawed. Their contemporaries regarded them as nothing more than a short footnote soon to be lost in the annals of history. Yet, small pockets of the heretical cult still crop up from time to time, creating strange unions of cats and dogs who seek to undermine the core elements of their societies.

This Consistory is behind a plot to undermine the monarchies and Pugmire, and they will stoop to any level to enact their plans. Murder is a simple step in their hope to destroy society, and they have other, darker plans prepared.

SANDY GOLDEN-LABRADOR

Sandy is a scion of the mercantile Golden-Labrador family. Several decades ago, the family’s patriarchs, two brothers, split the family in two. One side works the warehouses, takes on the dirty work for the family, and focuses on the manual labor required to keep plastic rolling in. The other works in Houndton’s political circles, trying to gain a reputation which might lead the family to become a noble house. Sandy is the youngest daughter of the

working side of the family. She was trained as a shepherd but turned her back on the Church of Man to lead the Consistory, an organization her family has been a part of for generations. Her association with the cat members of their order has provided her access to some necromancy, a terrifying combination. She has a corrupted version of the powers of the Church of Man at her disposal.

SANDY GOLDEN-LABRADOR

CR 4

Defense: 16 (magic robes)

Stamina Points: 32

Speed: 30 feet

Proficiency Bonus: +3

Abilities: Strength: -1 (8), Dexterity: +3 (16), Constitution: +2 (14), Intelligence: +4 (18), Wisdom: +1 (12), Charisma: +4 (18)

Skills: Bluff, Know Arcana, Know Religion, Sense Motive

Attack: Dagger (+5 melee, 1d6 + 3 piercing)

Secrets:

- **Create Zombies:** This spell creates up to three zombies, which use the template found in *Monarchies of Mau*, p. 208
- **Prayers of Man (Corrupted):** Though Sandy still has the ability to heal, the power is corrupted, creating one zombie for every 3 stamina points healed. The zombie is not under her control and will attack the closest living being upon rising.
- **Summon Demons:** This power allows Sandy to summon zombies or the Unseen to her side. She may use this four times before sleeping.
- **Robe of Majesty:** This give Sandy an air of royalty. Should she lose it, her Charisma drops to +1 (12).

HOOK MAINCOON VON KORAT

Hook is a charming rogue of a cat. He used to be a captain in the Korat military, but chose to step down a few years ago. Since then, he’s worked as a private gendarme, investigating crimes for individuals instead of working with the military. When off the case, he can usually be found in the Cat’s Cradle, nursing a heavy dose of catnip tea. He’s a bit too fond of the catnip, but he’s functional and he’s also well-known for getting the job handled. Not well-liked by guards, Hook stays just barely on the right side of the law.

HOOK MAINCOON VON KORAT CR3**Defense:** 13 (padded armor)**Stamina Points:** 24**Speed:** 30 feet**Proficiency Bonus:** +2**Abilities:** Strength +2 (14), Dexterity +2 (15), Constitution +0 (10), Intelligence +0 (10), Wisdom +2 (15), Charisma +1 (12)**Skills:** Bluff, Know Culture, Know Arcana, Notice, Search, Sneak**Attack:** Short sword (+4 melee, 1d6 + 2 slashing), unarmed strike (+5 melee, 1d4 + 2 bludgeoning)**Secrets:** Low-light vision

- **Now It's On:** Once per battle, Hook may take a bonus action to regain 1d8 + 2 stamina points.

TYLER GOLDEN-LABRADOR

Tyler is a young member of the Golden-Labrador family who doesn't agree with the Consistory or their goals. His intervention, which comes at just the right moment, allows the characters to escape with their lives. He's not a skilled fighter, but he can help out in a pinch.

Use the Penitent Mutt (Excluding the Healing Bark) on p. 201 of *Monarchies of Mau* if you need to involve him in combat.

LIAM VON OCICAT

The leader of the Ocicat family, Liam and Sandy Golden-Labrador are lovers and leaders of the Consistory. Liam is a vicious and cruel cat to those who cross him. He's also the head of a gang which acts as a group of enforcers for the Consistory and which brings money into the organization within Korat. The Ocicats are members of the Shadow Bloc.

Use the Cocky Brawler on p. 195 of *Monarchies of Mau*.

SATARI VON OCICAT

Satari is an adopted member of the Ocicat family. She is a slim gray and black tabby who has carried on a secret off-and-on-again relationship with Hook for years. She's not a fan of what her family is doing, but she will do all she can to stop them from hurting people, if she can do so while protecting them at the same time.

SATARI VON OCICAT CR2**Defense:** 14 (leather armor)**Stamina Points:** 22**Speed:** 30 feet**Proficiency Bonus:** +2**Abilities:** Strength +3 (16), Dexterity +0 (11), Constitution +0 (10), Intelligence +0 (10), Wisdom +0 (10), Charisma +0 (10)**Skills:** Sneak**Attack:** Dagger (+5 melee, 1d6 + 3 piercing) or crossbow (+2 ranged, 1d6 piercing)**Secrets:** Darkvision

- **Sudden Strike:** Satari does an extra 1d6 damage on any target on which she has advantage.

MASOTO VON OCICAT

Masoto is Satari's identical sister. She is a skilled mancer, but her personality is the exact opposite of the personable Satari's. Given the chance, however, she will do anything to protect her sister, even if she otherwise agrees with the plot the Consistory has planned.

Use the statistics for Insane Mancer on p. 195 of *Monarchies of Mau*.

SYNOPSIS

After being hired by Hook Maincoon von Korat to assist him in investigating a strange merchant, the merchant is discovered murdered in one of Korat's back alleys. After searching the merchant's rooms and fighting off a zombie attack, the characters must then head to Houndton to discover something about who may have killed Conroy Pekingese, the merchant in question. There, they discover details of a hidden cult concealed among the good dogs of Greyhoundton. After escaping thanks to the intervention of a young member of the Golden-Labrador family, the cats make their way back to Korat, where they must face off against the Consistory and attempt to save the monarchies and Pugmire from utter destruction.

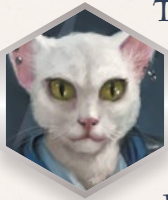
INTRODUCTION

Each character is a regular in the Cat's Cradle Lounge, located in a small city within Korat known as Cailen. The Cat's Cradle has a varied reputation; it's a place where secrets get revealed,

arguments get settled, and friendships are made, so many cats seek out the lounge for their own purposes. Each character receives a request to meet Hook Maincoon von Korat, a charming but roguish gendarme, to discuss a case he's working. Each character knows Hook in one way or another; your players can either make up their own connections or roll for a suggestion from the table below to detail their links. No matter how they know him, they trust him to have their best interests at heart.

Cailen is situated alongside a series of canals that connect to the rivers flowing through the monarchy. A lot of mercantile traffic flows back and forth along the canals of Cailen, most on the level, but enough illicit for it to have gained a reputation for illegal activity.

1. Hook trained the young cat while he was still in the Korat military
2. Hook is close friends with the family of the cat in question
3. Lost one evening, Hook helped the cat home, and they struck up a quick friendship
4. A connoisseur of catnip, the character and Hook often chat over a cup of catnip tea
5. Hook leaped in to help stop a bar fight between several people, and the cat in question was thankful for the save
6. After briefly dating, the pair chose to be friends as the spark just wasn't there between them



The characters in this story come from a variety of backgrounds, and that's okay! The Guide should help the players choose a few connections within the group, but character ties aren't a requirement if the players' concepts don't make for easy linkages. This story makes no presumptions about characters' loyalties or histories.

SCENES

Below are the major scenes that make up this story. While they're numbered, they don't need to be presented in this order during the game itself. As long as the story keeps flowing, everything's fine!

SCENE 1: THE CASE BEGINS!

- **How did the player characters get to this scene?** They were invited to meet with Hook to discuss a case he's investigating.
- **What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene?** Learn the location of Conroy Pekingese.
- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** Hook's a little nervous to open up about his secret concerns regarding his employers.
- **What scene or scenes should logically happen next?** Scene 2: "The Merchant was Murdered!"

You've never been in this back part of the Cat's Cradle before. Winding your way past the regular patrons' seats, you follow a single hallway with a very low ceiling to a stoutly locked and banded door. There is one small window in the hallway, large enough to squeeze through if necessary. The cat carrying the keys is elderly and blind. She feels her way by touching certain places on the walls. She slides a fat, bronze key into the lock; it clicks open, and she motions you inside.

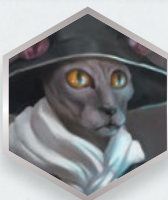
At the table is Hook Maincoon von Korat, the gendarme for hire. He's got a pipe in one hand and a steaming cup of catnip tea in the other. Whatever mixture he's drinking has already started to hit him pretty hard, and he's got a big smile on his face as you enter.

"My friends, I'm not sure if you know one another, but please, take a moment to introduce yourselves if you don't!"

Once the introductions are finished, read the following.

Once everyone is a bit more at ease with each other, Hook announces, "Now that's out of the way, let's have a cup of catnip and

a puff of hazelnut together and get down to business! You see, I've got a case I can't make heads nor tails out of. There's this merchant from Houndton making passes around all the prominent cat houses, which isn't too strange, but it's where he's going after dark that has my employers spooked. You see, he's hitting the fancy houses during the day and the seedy lounges at night. Some of those lounges are the types of places you might find cats who don't want to make deals with dogs, and yet he's being let in without any question. My employers want me to figure out what he's up to, but I'm in a pickle. I want to talk to him, but he already knows who I am, and I think it would be too obvious what I'm after. I was hoping you folks could try to see if you can figure out what his game is. You interested?"



When you see sidebars like these, it means it's meant to be read aloud. But you don't have to if you don't want to. If you feel more comfortable paraphrasing or improvising the content of the description or speech, go right ahead. They're there to give you something to fall back on, to provide information the players should know.

If the characters have questions, allow them to collect the following information from Hook.

- The dog is Conroy Pekingese, from Houndton, and Hook gives them the address of the apartment he's renting.
- Hook met him in a seedy lounge he'd rather not talk too much about, and they drank catnip together.
- With a successful Intelligence or Wisdom check at difficulty 12, a player will notice

Hook is hesitant to reveal much about his employer; if pressed, he'll admit he was hired by a young woman to learn more about Conroy. He won't say anything more, except she's a young noblewoman and he's worried she has ulterior motives.

- He'll tell them Conroy can be found visiting the Red Spot, a lounge on the edges of the roughest part of Cailen.

He also casually mentions this investigation has to stay off the books. Specifically, the authorities cannot know Hook is involved as he's recently run afoul of the town guard.

Allow the players to decide what and how they'll plan to approach Conroy. If pressed for guidance, Hook will suggest they pretend to be merchants who specialize in peas, beans, and other similar plant products. Hook's overheard Conroy mention the vegetables a few times, and he figures it's as good a way to start a conversation as any. Then, he suggests slowly pushing the conversation to politics, to see what sorts of things Conroy decides to say.

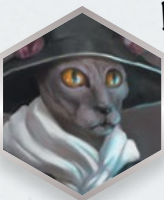
SCENE 2: THE MERCHANT WAS MURDERED!

- **How did the player characters get to this scene?** They were sent to look for Conroy Pekingese at the Red Spot by Hook Maincoon von Korat, or they stumbled upon the scene of the crime on their own.
- **What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene?** They will discover the body of Conroy Pekingese and get the key from his body to the house he's renting.
- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** The dog's body is in a public area and someone could have gone for the guards if there was any commotion.
- **What scene or scenes should logically happen next?** Scene 3: "Signet Ring of the Golden-Labrador"

You're making your way down the dark streets, and mist is starting to collect at the edges of the street corners.

As you weave through the tight streets and alleyways to the Red Spot, you notice a small splash of blood on the cobblestones and drag marks in the mud, which lead down into an alleyway. As you turn the corner into the alleyway, you see more and more blood, and the coppery smell overwhelms you. Ultimately, you discover the body of a dog with long tan and brown fur; it's clearly Conroy Pekingese.

Have the players make Intelligence checks at difficulty 10 to search the scene of the crime. Whoever passes their check will notice he was stabbed and that there is a small knife and a set of keys on the ground next to his left paw. On a triumph, they will also find a small scrap of bloodstained, embroidered cloth with a few strands of long, yellow fur clinging to it under Conroy's paw. A Wisdom check at difficulty 10 will allow the characters to figure out he was reaching for the knife as he was killed, likely in self-defense, and that the keys have a small leather strap hanging off them stamped with "331," his address.



Remember, cats can add relevant skills to their ability checks, so in the above situation, if a cat has the Notice or Search skills, they can provide a bonus to the Intelligence check! Keep this in mind whenever your players make an ability check, as having a skill that helps them can be the difference between success and failure.

As the characters investigate the scene, make note that other cats are passing down the main street and any loud noise will capture the attention of others very quickly. It's late, but there is not a lot of time for the characters to make a decision and move on.

If they would like, they can call for the town guard, but they know doing so will likely lead to

them spending many hours answering questions and could derail them indefinitely. They can also attempt to flee the scene and get to Conroy's apartments before anyone shows up.

The Law

No matter what the players decide, a squad of Korat city guards arrives. If required, the four guards have the stats for Stray Bandit on p. 195 of *Monarchies of Mau* and are led by a cat in red armor. Use Hired Killer on p. 195 of *Monarchies of Mau* for the leader if required.

Hopefully no one resorts to violence, because having the law after you is never a good idea, but if the characters decide to push the issue or if the guards can't be convinced they weren't involved in the murder, it could easily get physical. If a fight breaks out, have reinforcements arrive before it gets too bloody and have them put the characters under arrest.

The guards will hold the characters for several hours asking questions and detailing the scene of the crime. Patience and diplomacy are required if the characters want to avoid mentioning Hook's involvement in the case. If he doesn't come up, the characters are released after a few hours of questioning as the guards realize they had nothing to do with the crime.

If Hook's name does come up, the guards will hold the characters overnight but won't be able to find Hook to bring him in for questioning. In the morning, the players are bailed out by a mysterious cat who refuses to give her name.

The cat, a calico in oversized, dark clothes says, "Hook heard you mentioned him to the guards. If you want to get back in his good graces, you'd better get back on the case immediately. And try to avoid the law this time, you hear me?"

She turns and stalks quickly into the morning fog. Just before she disappears from view, you hear her mutter, "Amateurs."

If the players attempt to follow the mysterious cat, they will find no trace of her.

SCENE 3: SIGNET RING OF THE GOLDEN-LABRADOR

- How did the player characters get to this scene? They grabbed the key off Con-

MURDER MOST FOUL

roy's body and made it to his apartments, eventually.

- **What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene?** Find the signet ring, defeat the zombies, and realize this is bigger than one murdered merchant.
- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** The apartments are a mess, and zombies aren't the easiest to kill.
- **What scene or scenes should logically happen next?** Scene 4: "To Houndton!"

The apartments in this area of Cailen provide lodging for most of the merchants who live outside of Korat but who do regular trade there and make tidy profits on the trades they perform. Some of the merchant families rent out the homes to their staff while they are away, but they expect their rooms to be ready at a moment's notice if they are in town.

Passing through the streets, you don't see many other people. The fog is heavy, making it hard to see very far. Because of the mist and overcast weather, it's often hard to know where one is in the city. City blocks are numbered with yellow stone tiles, and gray stones mark the buildings on each block. With the help of these signposts, it's not too long before you find your way to the apartments of Conroy Pekingese, number 331. The apartment building is made of smooth gray stone, and there is a gate leading into a small courtyard.

As they arrive, ask the players to make an Intelligence check. Allow the highest roll to notice a slim figure in a long coat darting down the alleyway. If they give chase, they quickly lose the figure, but whether they give chase or not, the player who rolled second highest on the Intelligence check finds a small clue on the ground, a silver cloak pin designed with a series of intricate spot patterns along the shaft. It's unclear what the symbols represent at this stage, but it's still another clue, and worth holding on to.

As you turn the silver key in the lock to enter the courtyard, a soft wind begins to shift the fog and a cold sensation crawls down your backs. A quiet dread permeates the street,

like the cobbles are waiting for something to happen. The faint yellow numbers of the rooms appear to glow in the darkness. The wet, muddy courtyard is deathly silent, and you walk up to number 331, its doors bound by iron. The windows in the courtyard are all shuttered. As you turn the lock, you hear a small creaking sound; you look up to see the weathervane on the top of the building has shifted and the black iron crow points due west.

The characters enter the apartment to find it in complete shambles. It'll take time for them to find anything useful in the clutter. One Wisdom check at difficulty 12 allows the players to find an ornate, gold signet ring with an intricate seal in a desk drawer. A second Wisdom check, difficulty 14, uncovers a shipping manifest from under a pile of dirty laundry. In the shipping manifest is a picture of the ring's seal, labeled "Golden-Labrador," as well as various charts, tables, and notes, several of which mention Houndton as a base of operations. There is nothing else of interest here, aside from a pouch containing a few plastic coins. It's up to your cats' morals whether they want to steal from a dead dog.

THE COURTYARD

Throwing up your hoods and putting your hats firmly on your heads, you step out into the rain. The moment your feet touch the pavement, a slippery smacking sound catches your attention. From somewhere beyond your field of vision in the wet darkness, you hear a moan echoed by several more moans, and the wet sound of flesh striking cobblestones. The sources of these horrible sounds turn the corner into the courtyard, and the party is faced with a trio of zombies who fully block the exit from the apartment block. They are clearly intelligent enough to cage you in, creating a nigh-inescapable net.

Use the zombie stats on p. 209 of *Monarchies of Mau* for the three zombies. If the party has more than five cats, increase to five or even six zombies. It's recommended to have at least an equal amount of zombies to cats, but if your players have been doing particularly well so far, feel free to make this a challenge, with at least two more zombies than cats. The zombies try to pin the cats in, surround-

ing them and attempting to bite them. They are not intelligent, precisely, but they're obviously following clear, careful instructions. They won't run away when their fellows are killed but will keep trying to come after the cats until all are vanquished.

During the fight, read the following:

It's hard to tell at first, but as you've been fighting this zombie cat, you notice it has perfectly patterned spots, something you've rarely seen on a cat in the Monarchies.

Once the horde is down to one or two zombies, escape is possible with a Dexterity check at difficulty 15, but then the characters are leaving a zombie loose in the Monarchies. This choice may have unpleasant consequences for them in the future.

When defeated, these zombies crumble into a fine black dust. It's unclear why these creatures attacked the group, but the characters have no identifying information on them and the rain has washed away any trail they may have made. The characters likely retreat to somewhere safe, perhaps to the lounge. If the characters attempt to hide inside the apartment without engaging the zombies, they have a long night in store, as the zombies will wait until near daybreak before they shuffle away.

SCENE 4: TO HOUNDTON!

- **How did the player characters get to this scene?** The players rushed away from the apartments of Conroy Pekingese after the zombie attack.
- **What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene?** The clues the characters have in hand point to Houndton. How will they get there?
- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** The two ways to Houndton are fraught with moderate peril.
- **What scene or scenes should logically happen next?** Scene 5: "Shake Down the Golden-Labradors!"

The characters have made it somewhere safe after the zombie attack. It's late at night and they likely try to talk about their plans before they split up or get some rest. If they return to the Cat's Cra-

dle, Hook will meet with them. If they do not seek him out, Hook will try to find them before they leave the area. If the characters were arrested or detained by the guards for a long period of time, alter the text to read aloud below accordingly.

"Well, it's been an eventful night, huh? Why don't you tell me a little bit about what's been going on?"

At this point, the characters can fill Hook in on any or all of the clues they've discovered. It's up to the players how much they'd like to share with him, but he seems more serious than before, and if the players make a Wisdom check at difficulty 12 they will know he is in earnest, with no ulterior motives. He wants this case solved.

"I see. Well, while you've been digging into Conroy, I've been trying to get a lead on his contacts within Korat. So far, I haven't been able to track down exactly whom he's been making orders for, but I have uncovered this."

He sets a small leather pouch filled with dark, rich soil down on the table before you.

"It's a type of dirt which can only be found far to the north, which should tell you all you need to know about how dangerous it could be. This dirt is used as part of some powerful necromancy, and I'm told this is one of the things Conroy was shipping back to Houndton. Conroy might be dead, but my employer will want us to keep digging into this to try to figure out what exactly is going on. Are you all willing to head to Houndton while I keep digging for details around here?"

The rest of this scene should be free space for the players to debate in character about how to go to Houndton. If they seem reluctant to go, have Hook offer them more plastic or have him re-emphasize the seriousness of necromancy and the fact that zombie attacks within the monarchies could spell disaster down the road. Once they've chosen the land or the sea route, jump to either "Ramming Speed!" below, or "The Forest Attacks!" on p. 15.

RAMMING SPEED!

If the players choose to travel to Houndton by ship, they will need to get to Sunfish Wharf



on the Rex coast and charter a boat from there. There are a few things that could hamper their journey, from pirate attacks to the usual perils of the road. As Guide, decide if you'd like the group to encounter any of the hazards below on their way to Sunfish Wharf. Alternately, if you'd like to skip road travel scenes, you can jump directly to the read-aloud sidebar below.

1. **Zombies, again?:** Another small group of zombies (*Monarchies of Mau*, p. 209) attacks the characters on the road to Rex.
2. **Bandits:** A group of moggie bandits (use the stats for Moggie Highwaycat on p. 192 of *Monarchies of Mau*) targets the characters on their journey to Rex.
3. **How do we choose a ship?:** The player characters need to ask around the wharf about what ship they should hire, ultimately settling on the *Lion's Share*.

As you walk up the wide gangplank, a stiff wind pulls in a whiff of the strong-smelling sea.

The acidic air wrinkles your nose and drains your sinuses. You can tell the passengers from the crew, as the passengers are all holding cloths to their noses, but the crew seems oblivious to the harsh bite of the Acid Sea. You settle into your quarters, a small cramped room with a series of bunks barely large enough for you to lie down on. The first day at sea is uneventful, and you split your time between sleeping and walking the deck of the ship. The sky remains pleasantly clear, and a steady wind blows, giving the ship good speed.

At this point, if the player characters want to do something while on the ship, allow them, but try not to dwell on the period of empty time.

As the sun begins to rise on the second day of your voyage, a thick fog rolls over the ship and the wind abruptly dies. The crew become visibly tense, and murmurs pass among them. The first mate calls out, "If you aren't skilled with a blade, I recommend you crawl down into the

hold. This doesn't bode well..." As the words escape his lips, a single arrow slams into the deck of the ship. Thrust through the arrow, a small black flag with a rat skull stitched in white flutters weakly in the dead air. A heartbeat later, the fog breaks enough to reveal a large ship cutting through the water at ramming speed, on a collision course with the *Lion's Share*. A loud crunch signals when the pirate ship makes contact, and at that moment, the pirates swing onto the vessel.

Use the Mouse Marine template on p. 205 of *Monarchies of Mau* to represent the pirates. Some of them are mice and some are rats, but the statistics generally work for both. This attack shouldn't overwhelm the characters but should be difficult. It's recommended to have at least two more pirates than player characters, but other pirates are engaged in combat with the ship's crew. If it appears that the crew of the characters' ship has the upper hand, the pirates will escape, and use some magic in their vessel to pull away with surprising alacrity.

The attack leaves the characters' vessel temporarily crippled and requires a day of repairs. After, the ship continues onto Waterdog Port, and the player characters walk to Houndton without incident.

The Forest Attacks!

If the players choose the forest route to Houndton, they will have to gather supplies and begin their trek, joining a caravan that is headed to Pugmire. It takes approximately a week to get through the Fearful Forest, then they have a brief stop in Mutt Town and can take a ferry to Houndton from there. Traveling through the forest is the most dangerous leg of the journey, so feel free to add random encounters with Stray Bandits (*Monarchies of Mau*, p. 192), Badger Slashers (*Monarchies of Mau*, p. 193), or any of the other CR 1-2 enemies from *Monarchies of Mau* in addition to the encounter below. The other members of the caravan are merchants, and are trusting the players' cats to act as guards, so they won't help in a fight, choosing instead to stay in their wagons and hide. It's also possible that the caravan becomes lost in the forest. If that's something that will enhance the story or build tension, use the rules for getting lost on pp. 102-103 of *Monarchies of Mau*.

Traveling through the Fearful Forest isn't as uncommon as it once was, but it is still fraught with anticipated danger. You've chosen to accompany a small caravan headed to Pugmire, via Mutt Town. This earns you small bits of plastic and ensures you've got a larger group to keep you safe while traveling through the forest.

The days pass mostly without incident. The forest remains eerily silent, deadening the spirits of the travelers and making hours crawl by like days. One of the caravanners begins to pipe out a little song to try to cheer the members of the group. Partway through each song, though, he hits a wrong note, throwing the entire piece into disharmonic disarray. When you enter a small clearing in the forest, the late afternoon sun glimmering in the greenery almost brings the caravan a ray of hope - but then, things go haywire.

Crawling and scurrying from the edges of the forest are small, bright green beings. Their large golden eyes look like they once belonged to cats, but their scaly skin and serrated, raised fringes remind you of lizards you've seen in the past. When they open their mouths, three rows of knife-sharp teeth grin back at you. They charge!

FOREST SHARK

CR 2

Defense: 12

Stamina Points: 16

Speed: 20 feet

Proficiency Bonus: +2

Abilities: Strength +2 (14), Dexterity +1 (12), Constitution +1 (13), Intelligence -2 (7), Wisdom -1 (9), Charisma -4 (3)

Attack: Bite (+4 melee, 1d8 + 2 piercing)

Secrets: Resistant to bludgeoning damage, Darkvision

- **Team Tactics:** The Forest Shark has an advantage on an attack roll against a character if at least one ally is within five feet of the target and is not Incapacitated.

The Forest Sharks will attack in a swarm of four to eight, depending on how many cats are in the party. They attack in pairs, using their Team Tactics secret so one can attack while the other distracts the cat they are aiming at.

ing. This means if there are more cats than pairs of Forest Sharks, the “extra” cats (those who aren’t being attacked) will be able to strike at them unhampered, but the Forest Sharks will usually have advantage against the cats they choose to attack.

Once all the Fearful Forest encounters are done, read the following:

Although the rest of your journey is uneventful, you’re on edge the entire time and the mood of the caravan stays in the doldrums. Even the short stay in Mutt Town does nothing to cheer you. Those of you who drink have a beer at the tavern and head to sleep. You muster out before daybreak, and it’s only the rising sun as it hits the river which finally raises your spirits. The ferry master barks out the first real, booming laugh you’ve heard on the journey while the ferry carries you across the water. The caravan is lively over the next few days until you reach the outskirts of Houndton’s associated villages and it’s here you break away. You’re paid some plastic coins, and the caravan manager, pleased with how well you dealt with the forest’s troubles, offers you work in the future.

HOUNDTON

Now that the characters have arrived in Houndton, they can begin asking around for information on the Golden-Labrador family.

Everyone in town acts like they don’t know who the cats are talking about. When they persist in asking about the elusive family, dogs stop talking and actively shun the cats. Eventually, a small dog approaches them, tail tucked between his legs and quivering in his boots.

In whispering tones, the strange dog explains they should go to Greyhoundton, the most easterly of the towns that make up Houndton, specifically the warehouse district. He doesn’t give his name and his voice occasionally quavers in fear. You aren’t sure at first if he’s afraid of cats or of the Golden-Labradors, but after he tells you where to go he murmurs, “Please forget we spoke. If they find out, they’ll hunt me down.”

SCENE 5: SHAKE DOWN THE GOLDEN-LABRADORS!

- **How did the player characters get to this scene?** After extensive travel and danger, the characters have made it to Greyhoundton.
- **What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene?** Discovering how the Golden-Labradors were involved with Conroy Pekingese and meeting Sandy Golden-Labrador.
- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** The Golden-Labrador family will not take kindly to their ritual meetings being interrupted.
- **What scene or scenes should logically happen next?** Scene 6: “Who is This Darn Cat?”

As you meander through the city, you notice the glowing lights of an evening festival. Slow, drum-filled music steadily thumps a pulsing beat. As you weave your way deeper into the city, you see the edge of a large building ahead. You’ve discovered the warehouse of the Golden-Labradors, and – luckily or unluckily, you’re not sure yet – there appears to be a large meeting of the dogs happening right now. They’re a rough-looking crowd, but there is some distinction within the family. Some clearly have more money than others, although those who have fewer jewels and stylish ruffs have the beef and brawn of dogs who might actually work the warehouse. Two older dogs hug one another, one dressed in fine clothes and the other in a crisp canvas apron with a small gold star pinned on its upper corner. They look so alike, they must be brothers. This must be where the family line split. There are 15 dogs in the main area of the warehouse, and likely more who can’t immediately be seen.

You also spy a young dog, another member of the family, tied up with several others to the side of the open space. They don’t look like they’re enjoying themselves.

Ask the players to make Dexterity checks at difficulty 14 to hide but keep an eye on the warehouse. The characters could alternately be spotted



by other members of the family as they arrive, if you wish.

If the player characters choose to attack, use the stats for Penitent Mutt on p. 201 of *Monarchies of Mau*. Remember, the cats are outnumbered severely, so the dogs in the warehouse will attack in waves, with the others forming a ring around the cats and taunting them. The characters might be able to get a few licks in, but the fight is interrupted by the arrival of Sandy Golden-Labrador before the cats are genuinely hurt.

If they choose to hide, allow them to get closer to the warehouse so they can see the following through a large, dirty window:

You see a dog with gleaming golden fur walk into the warehouse from a back door, chin held high, with a small entourage of cats in tow. She's tall, nearly six-and-a-half feet, and wearing a set of blood-red robes covered in intricate embroidery. The cats with her are mancers, cloaked in dark purple robes.

A successful Wisdom check at difficulty 15 will indicate they are all members of a cult thought long forgotten, The Consistory, whose members believe the Old Ones were destroyed by dogs and cats. If the player characters uncovered the scrap of cloth from the crime scene, a second Wisdom check at difficulty 10 tells the characters the cloth is from Sandy's robes; they can see a small tear at the back when she turns around, and the embroidery matches.

If the characters kept themselves hidden, they witness a short ritual. Several bodies are rolled out of storage lockers while Sandy Golden-Labrador takes a small amount of familiar-looking black dirt and wipes it on the mouths of each body. A few moments later, they rise as zombies.

If the player characters try to engage with Sandy, smooth talk won't work, as she will immediately demand the player characters be tied up, and the dogs who weren't fighting will close in to follow her command. Many dogs leave after this (or after the ritual, if the cats decide to stay hidden) except for Sandy and her mancers; she looms

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over Tyler, the young family member tied up with the other dogs, and mocks him openly, launching into the monologue below.

However, if the characters end up being caught, they are directly included in the monologue. Most of the extended family will leave after apprehending the characters. The monologue should touch on these key points.

- Consistory members seek the eradication of Pugmire and the monarchies because they exalt the Old Ones.
- A small family of cats within the Shadow Bloc (Sandy never says explicitly which one) are involved in the cult and are close to arranging a major event which will lead to the monarchies' implosion.
- Killing Conroy was essential to starting a new war between dogs and cats. Even now, the royal family of Pugmire is learning a group of cats (the player characters) were involved in killing the mercantile ambassador.
- Dog assassins are en route to the monarchies to kill several major figures.
- Sandy will reveal her name and drop hints that the cats she is working with have spotted coats. The mancers with her have such markings, as well.

Here's an example monologue that you can adjust as needed. Sandy speaks with a low, threatening growl, only raising her voice as she becomes impassioned about her cause.

"Oh, thank goodness I discovered you, Tyler! You could have put our plans into disarray. The Consistory would not have appreciated such a faux pas now, would they? Our spotted friends in the Shadow Bloc would have been particularly miffed with me. You are a foolish dog with your belief that Man loved us. They hated us. They hated the cats, too. They hated all the beings they abused for years. It was us who overthrew them and took our world back. Soon, soon the Consistory will strike at the heart of the monarchies. Right now, our assassins are en route to strike. Conroy was just the start, and you'll take the fall for us! This is the

start of our plot to take down Pugmire and the monarchies. They will all fall before us, soon. I swear on my name, Sandy Golden-Labrador, the Consistory will rule all!"

Sandy dramatically stalks away and out the back door, ranting about how Tyler (and the characters, if present) will be sacrificed when the sun rises. This is an opening for the characters to swoop in and free Tyler if they were hidden, or to escape themselves. The dogs who caught them tied them up, yes, but the knots aren't as tight as they should be, as the dogs aren't used to dealing with more agile and flexible cats. The players should all make Dexterity checks. Allow the highest roll to be the cat who gets free first, slipping their bonds and untying the others. If they don't untie Tyler initially, he'll refuse to answer questions until they do, and then will be more reticent and a bit surly with his answers. If they untie him immediately with the other members of their party, he'll be grateful and helpful. When he is freed, he'll quietly speak.

"Thank you for saving me, I'm Tyler. Yes, I'm a Golden-Labrador, but I'm not like the rest of them. I'm certainly nothing like Sandy. Can you please get me out of here?"

The Guide should ask a few questions to help steer the conversation with Tyler as they flee the warehouse, building up a list of known and unknown quantities, filling in any gaps with knowledge the characters should know (but players may have forgotten) or from Tyler's guidance. Below are some questions Tyler can ask, and then he'll provide feedback and suggestions.

- "Can you run by me again who killed this Conroy and why?"
- "Okay, why did you come all the way out to Houndton?"
- "Who is this Hook guy and why do you trust him, exactly?"
- "What do you know about these zombies?"

Eventually, Tyler will offer up his side of the story, either out of gratitude or frustration with the gaps in the player characters' knowledge, depending on how quickly he was saved from the warehouse.

“Well, let me tell you what I know, okay? Sandy usually lives in the monarchies. She’s holed up in a town called Cailen, do you know it? Once she found us missing, I bet she high-tailed it straight back to Cailen. That’s where she meets with the cats in the Consistory. We’ve always had a weird relationship with this von Oicat family. They’re a weird bunch; beyond the spots, they act a lot like dogs do, very straightforward and quick to get into trouble, but also very likely to stab someone for looking at them wrong. I discovered shipments of these zombies a few weeks ago. When these bodies are revived they stop rotting, but still, it’s a disgusting thing to do to people! This whole business is a mess, and I’m glad I found out about what my family has been planning. As Sandy said, Conroy is the first one to fall in a plot to kill a lot of cats. You know what might be a good place for us to look? I’ve got an address to the warehouse in Cailen we should track down. You up for this?”

Tyler also suggests they look for Hook to fill him in and get his thoughts on the matter, as he hired the cats in the first place. He might have valuable information for the characters.

The characters should now go back to Cailen to stop Sandy and clear their names. Feel free to rush the travel if you want to get to the climax of the story, but if you want, use the means of travel from Scene 4 they didn’t use before. This allows the players to experience both means of travel. If they came to Houndton by boat, perhaps this time there isn’t one going back quickly enough, or the characters might be put off by sea voyages after the pirate attack, so they opt for the land route.

If they traveled over land before, this time they might decide speed is of the essence and want to take a ship back. Whichever means they choose, they end up back in Cailen after a few days and attempt to meet up with Hook.

SCENE 6: WHO IS THIS DARN CAT?

- **How did the player characters get to this scene?** They traveled back to Cailen after deciding on a plan with Tyler.
- **What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene?** They need to learn

the identity and motivations of Satari von Oicat.

- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** Satari doesn’t want to see her family harmed and is reticent to share information.
- **What scene or scenes should logically happen next?** Scene 7: “Well, This is a Fine Mess, Isn’t It?”

You’ve made it back to Cailen in record time. The city is filled with more of that dense, wretched fog again. You’ve spent the last few hours looking for Hook, and finally you’ve had to give up. The last time he was seen was two nights after you left for Houndton, and no one knows where he went. Was he kidnapped, or did something else happen to him? If the Consistory has Hook, things could be grim. Though Tyler says most zombies aren’t freshly killed, you can’t assume this is always true.

As you step onto the streets to head for the Oicat warehouse, you notice a slight figure standing on a street corner a couple of blocks away, lingering and staring after you.

A streetlight illuminates the figure, who is wearing a tailored overcoat with a wide-brimmed hat pulled down tightly over their head, concealing their features. The fog shifts around, but if you move toward the figure, they can see you well enough to begin to quickly retreat into the mists.

Whoever rolls the highest on a Wisdom check can confirm it’s the same slim figure seen running from the scene of Conroy’s murder. Chasing down this cat, Satari von Oicat, shouldn’t be easy. Describe the series of alleyways and obstacles the characters face. Eventually, the cat they are chasing runs into a dead-end alley and the characters have caught her, at last.

Trashcans litter the alley. As the cat you are chasing speeds past, she knocks several over to create a diversion.

Finally, you corner her.

The cat turns on her heels and whispers urgently, “Damn you, you fools! I’m trying to do what I can to save Hook, to save the monarchies, and to put all this nonsense to rest. Leave me be!”

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She stops and glares peevishly at you, furious to be on her way.

If none of the player characters do so, have Tyler Golden-Labrador ask the cat who she is, as she's clearly trapped in this alley.

"I'm Satari von Ocicat. I was adopted into the family as a kitten, and though I certainly don't support everything they're doing, I don't want to see my family hurt. That's why I hired Hook. I wanted him to discover who had killed Conroy and to take it out on the Golden-Labradors! They're the ones who keep pushing this thing. Sure, the Ocicats believe in the Consistory, but they want to be in charge of the monarchies, not destroy the world!"

She waits for the players to speak, ask questions, or interrupt. If the players ask her about the Consistory's values, she admits that she does not fully support their beliefs but is struggling to see the Old Ones as anything important to her life. She's quite clearly having a bit of a crisis of faith with both her family and herself.

"Fine, let me take you to Hook. He's in the Ocicat office. I don't have a key, so you'll have to find a way in, but at least I can show you how to get there. This whole thing has gone off the rails, anyway."

Satari doesn't want her family hurt and will angrily attempt to storm off if violence appears likely. If pressed, she'll fight using magic (see character details, p. 8) but will attempt to incapacitate her family members rather than outright kill them. She still wants to make sure Hook succeeds in the end and that Sandy and the Ocicats' plots don't come to fruition.

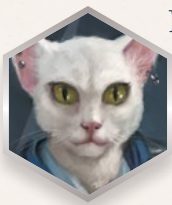
It is likely the characters go with Satari to the warehouse. If they don't, they'll have to decide what to do with her. Will they arrest her? Will they knock her out? Will they let her go?

Night has descended fully over the city, and thick fog has enveloped its streets, muffling the movements of friend and foe alike. You've got a choice to make: investigate the warehouse or try to rescue Hook.

As you make your way along the streets, you try to stay to the shadows. It's late, but you have to avoid two guard patrols of three cats each. Being careful is important, but a great deal of tension hangs around them. The guards seem nervous; they know something bad is amiss but can't put their paws on what's going down.

The players should all make Dexterity checks at difficulty 10 to avoid being spotted by a guard patrol, with the lowest check counting for the whole group. If the guards catch sight of the cats, they will recognize them from their previous encounter and ask what they're doing out so late. They will also be curious about Tyler's presence. The cats or Tyler can bluff them with a successful Charisma check at difficulty 12. Either during the talk with the guards, or, if the Charisma check is unsuccessful, after they've made it away from the patrol, read the following:

From somewhere nearby, you hear a soft, shuffling moan rumble through the fog.



Regardless of where the characters choose to go, they will be intercepted by zombies created by the Consistory. The city is flooded with them, and they are ordered to seek out the party.

A group of zombies (*Monarchies of Mau*, p. 209) attacks the characters and any guards who are present. There should be almost twice the number of zombies as there are player and non-player characters present. The guards will help fight, but are quickly overwhelmed or knocked out. (For the guards, use the stats for Hired Killer on p. 195 of *Monarchies of Mau* if needed.) As the zombies are defeated, they crumble into dark dust, the same sort of soil used to animate them.

Though the characters may wipe out the first wave of zombie assailants, more and more appear

until it becomes obvious to the characters that in order to survive, they will have to flee. However, as they try to do so, they become overwhelmed by the horde of zombies and knocked unconscious.

SCENE 7: WELL THIS IS A FINE MESS, ISN'T IT?

- **How did the player characters get to this scene?** They were knocked unconscious and brought into the bowels of the hidden temple.
- **What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene?** They need to fight their way out of being sacrificed by the Consistory.
- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** Sandy Golden-Retriever and a group of mancers are trying to kill the characters.
- **What scene or scenes should logically happen next?** Epilogue: "Harmful Secrets."

As you slowly awaken, you realize your arms are tied behind you. You're back to back with one another, chained to a central pole that connects everyone's bonds. You're groggy and at first it's hard to see, but slowly, the room slides into focus. A large brazier a few feet away throws shadows off of distant vaulted ceilings and illuminates six mancers in deep purple robes who stand on a raised, golden dias. Sandy Golden-Labrador lingers directly behind you, smiling evily as you awaken. A tall, sleek, spotted member of the Oicat family, Liam von Oicat, the head of his house, accompanies her. The weapons each of the player characters had on them are in a small pile close by, but out of reach. Indistinct figures move about, preparing to enact some grand ritual.

Sandy says, "Oh my, little kittens, you thought you could get away with thwarting the plans we've been building for centuries. How little you understand and how little chance you have of stopping us. Liam, my love, let's take care of these cats and be done with things, shall we?"

Liam leans in, "Yes, dear, let's put them out to dry." He chuckles to himself as Liam and Sandy



go back to the dais and their preparations, leaving you a few scant moments to decide on a course of action.

ESCAPE OPTIONS

- There's a splinter of metal on the floor, or a character has lock picking tools. To successfully pick the lock requires a Dexterity check at difficulty 15.
- A mancer who looks nearly identical to Satari shuffles by, dropping a key quietly in front of Hook.
- The chain holding the group is not well forged. A well-timed Strength roll, difficulty 12, from the characters working in unison will break it.

However they pull off their escape, the player characters will have to launch quickly into an attack. Prior to doing so, Liam and Sandy both make a few pronouncements.

"Oh, my dears," Sandy says with a growl in her voice, "You think we'll let you get away with stopping us? There's no chance you can prevent us from enacting our plans!"

"Sandy, stop toying with the help. We need to get to work," Liam purrs at Sandy. "We're about to set the world in motion, the way it was supposed to be decades ago. Let's get the circle completed and get on with the sacrifice."

Once one is captured, incapacitated, or killed, have two of the mancers join the fight. The mancer who looks just like Satari will flee immediately at any sign of battle, taking her sister – the actual Satari – with her if she is present. Use the statistics for the Insane Mancer on p. 195 of *Monarchies of Mau* for the various mancers in the room. It is recommended to lower their challenge rating by removing at least one spell and dropping their proficiency bonus to +2. The statistics for Liam von Ocicat and Sandy Golden-Labrador are provided on pp. 7-8. If both are killed or captured before any of the mancers, the remaining mancers will scatter, fleeing for their lives.

If required to ramp up tension or if the characters are having too easy of a fight, Sandy or one of the mancers can call zombies into the battle at will. If possible, capturing the two major figures of this cult and knocking the other cats unconscious is a better outcome than slaying them all without mercy, but allow the players the freedom to decide.

If killed, Liam's last words are, "Put down by our own, you'll see someday. You'll see..."

If captured, the two might continue taunting the group. "You'll never stop the plans we have in motion! You can put me in chains, but you'll never stop the Consistory!"

Epilogue: HARMFUL SECRETS

Having defeated the Consistory leadership, there are still several threads to wrap up. The Ocicats are a major political force in Korat and are working to become one throughout the monarchies. Will the player characters spill the beans on their activities, will they keep this secret to themselves and attempt to blackmail the Ocicats, or will they try to track them down and eliminate them?

Further, there are assassins supposedly poised to murder the various leaders of major houses in the monarchies. Who should the characters alert to this situation?

Hook and Satari, along with her sister Masoto who has had a change of heart regarding the Consistory, suggest speaking to the Monarch of Korat, Dynast Kyr von Korat, and begging her to investigate the plot the player characters uncovered. Once they do so, she will pardon them for the murder they didn't commit and grant Hook a commendation, bringing him back into good graces with the city guard. She will also alert the Ruling Council. Before she does so, most of the Ocicats escape into hiding, leaving behind hordes of zombies inside the environs of Cailen that need cleaning up. Extra guards are needed as the dynasts seek out extra protection, and even major nobles hire bodyguards for several months. As time goes by, it appears the threat of assassinations was simply a threat, but seeing as the Consistory is a secret cult that has hidden within the monarchies for centuries, it's unlikely this incident will eliminate them permanently.

FUTURE STORIES

Characters should gain a level, perhaps two, for completing this adventure, depending on how many side avenues they've explored. Guide them through the advancement process. Then, make sure to ask your players what they enjoyed about the game and what could be improved in the future.

After this adventure is complete, there are quite a few plot threads left dangling. Are Satari and Masoto off the hook? Will someone attempt to take action against them for siding with Hook against the Consistory? Will the assassinations Sandy threatened occur, perhaps years later? The characters could engage in court politics, trying to expose the Ocicat family and bring them down. Or perhaps they return to Greyhoundton and expose the Golden-Labrador family?



THE LOST LIBRARY OF AMOSEN

The stranger wandered into Siberian territory on a moonlit, snow-silent night, a scholar by the looks of it, ice-choked and frozen, nearing death. The delirious cat was rushed to the Sweetling Meadery and made comfortable in its upper rooms under the watch of the ministers of House Siberian. The cat wore markings and crests of the south, House Angora, but she had come from the north, far beyond the Last Pass, or so her journal claimed.

House Siberian was as cautious as it was prepared. Concern fell both for the mysterious cat and for the house she represented. Healers were brought from far and wide to treat the snow-rot and blindness known to afflict those lost in the winter mountains. At the same time, a carefully crafted missive was dispatched to Angora noting that an unknown member of their house had been found, sick and alone far into Siberian territory, and was under the guard of the royal House Siberian. Such was the protocol.

But the message did not mention the journal.

The stranger's journal was ravaged. Wet and filled with ruined pages of scribble, burned sections, and worse. But it held a single, untouched map tracing a place past the Last Pass, the Deep River, a place purported to be the ruins of Smilodon, and even the mysterious Ashlands. It claimed that beyond all of these, to the far north, there is a larger mystery still, a ruin built in ancient times by the Old Ones: the Lost Library of Amosen.

You have been chosen by House Siberian to travel north, to find this library, and to secure it – if possible. The way to it is said to be hidden or obscured, after all. But isn't the house motto of Siberian "Always Revere the Past?" Who better to restore the lost antiquities that might be found there – and to control its secrets? If set loose for all, the powers of the Old Ones hidden in such a place could tip the scale of the already volatile monarchies toward war.

"The Lost Library of Amosen" is a story for third-level cats. Before play, the Guide should read the entire story and become familiar with it. This does not mean it is immutable; instead, the Guide should work to make the story fit their player characters and chronicle in the best fashion possible.

CHARACTERS

BLANITH VON SIBERIAN (THE SIBERIAN MINISTER)

Tall, thin, and elderly, with mottled white and gray fur, Blanith wears the white robes of a Siberian minister. He is a clerk, functionary, and facilitator for House Siberian. He often deals with groups like the characters' party, and is known to them as a cat of good breeding and station. He is known throughout his house and even within the monarchies for one thing most of all: his word is above reproach. If Blanith promises it, it is so. Blanith has been in charge of the mysterious traveler from House Angora, Teylu Skey, since her arrival. He is eager to get a group out to the ancient ruins to make certain it poses no threat to House Siberian, and to do their best to obscure the way so others cannot find it.

TEYLU SKEY VON ANGORA (THE SICK SCHOLAR)

Frail, sickly, and lapsing in and out of fevered nightmares about the lost library and the horrors she witnessed there, Teylu is bedridden and incoherent at the beginning of the story, but she is also the target for Angora assassins who wish to silence whatever secrets she may hold. There's no way she could survive a journey to the north anytime soon, but she *might* wake and disclose some fevered remembrances of the ghastly circumstances she endured.

KYLA GLACEE (SPY FOR ANGORA)

Short, lithe, and gray-furred, Kyla has secretly served House Angora for years (she keeps her allegiances out of her name), counting House Siberian military positions and strengths, locations of weapons and valuables and more. Her greatest find was a book she believed to be from House Smilodon called "Maps North of the Mountains," which traced various routes through the Ashlands to secret Old One ruins beyond. She met the Angora team and helped them cross Siberian territory when they traveled north, and Teylu and Ubo are known to her. Kyla is a strong believer in knowledge and unlocking the secrets of the Old Ones; this drives her secret loyalty to house Angora. She will do anything for her cause.

KYLA GLACEE

CR 1

Defense: 15 (scale mail)

Stamina Points: 14

Speed: 30 feet

Proficiency Bonus: +2

THE LOST LIBRARY OF AMOSEN

Abilities: Strength +2 (14), Dexterity +0 (10), Constitution +1 (11), Intelligence +1 (12), Wisdom +1 (11), Charisma +2 (13)

Skills: Sneak, Intimidate, Traverse

Attacks: Hooked Blade (+5 melee, 1d6 + 3 piercing), Shortbow (+3 ranged, 1d6 + 3 piercing)

Secrets: Darkvision, Precise Attack

EBB BLACKBACK

(Kyla's Scout)

Lanky and strongly built, Ebb has served on various missions for Kyla in the past, though he does not know her true allegiance. Blackback has no house allegiance. Ebb is a wanderer, born in Siberian, but he has ranged far and wide in his time. Quiet, dire, and full of judgment, Ebb is secretly in love with Kyla, and will do nearly anything for her. Still, a deep fear of the Unseen haunts him, and is more likely to make him turn tail and flee than stand his ground. How Ebb reacts to Kyla's secret remains up to the Guide to decide.

EBB BLACKBACK

CR 1

Defense: 14 (leather armor)

Stamina Points: 22

Speed: 30 feet

Proficiency Bonus: +2

Abilities: Strength +3 (16), Dexterity +0 (11), Constitution +0 (10), Intelligence +0 (10), Wisdom +0 (10), Charisma +0 (10)

Skills: Sneak

Attack: Dagger (+5 melee, 1d6 + 3 piercing) or crossbow (+2 ranged, 1d6 piercing)

Secrets: Darkvision

- **Battle Frenzy:** Ebb makes two dagger or crossbow attacks with one action.
- **Sudden Strike:** Ebb does an extra 1d6 damage on any target on which he has advantage.
- **Prime Target:** Ebb gains advantage on any opponent in a combat who has not yet taken an action that round.

THE GREAT UGART

(The Badger Prince)

Huge and monstrous, the Great Ugart is the genius leader of the Deep River Red Badgers, a northern offshoot of Badger King Kebu the

Red's tribe. Scarred and powerful, the Great Ugart brooks no questions or insults, and answers many problems with violence. Most cats consider badgers barbarians, but Ugart's people are threatened by the power of the Unseen just as House Siberian is, and a strange alliance may be struck between them by adventurous yet careful cats.

UBO VON ANGORA

(The Mad Guardian of the Library)

Large and powerful, but also quite mad, Ubo was once the stalwart leader of the Angora expedition to the Library. Now, he is its insane sentinel. He subsists on rodents and scraps of other food-like substances, drinks from the black waters that flow through much of the library, and fills his mind with forbidden knowledge at the strange, oblong "skrees," that mark the corridors within. Ubo knows Teylu Skey escaped, and is taking no chances. He has prepared the Library against intruders and will do his best to kill them all when they come. The outside world must never lay claim to the secrets hidden here.

The Double

(An Unseen Awoken in the Library)

While cats often speak of the Unseen as a real and powerful force, only a very few times has that presence made itself known. Once, it was in the subjugation and destruction of House Smilodon. Some cats believe that House Smilodon was infected by dark forces, and finally overcome by them.

Ubo has stirred such a force in the darkness of the Library, a power he calls the Double, an Unseen power that can copy and imitate any living thing as it works towards its own inscrutable, bizarre ends. It, of course, does not care for Ubo's worship, but it cannot feed on Ubo's deranged mind. It seeks new, sane cats to torture to the brink of madness and only then kill and consume – before they go "bad" with insanity. Such is its sustenance.

THE DOUBLE

CR 7

Defense: 20 (eldritch force field)

Stamina Points: 72

Speed: 30 feet

Proficiency Bonus: +5

Abilities: Strength +0 (10), Dexterity +0 (10), Constitution +1 (12), Intelligence +2 (14), Wisdom +1 (12), Charisma +1 (12)

Skills: Notice, Search, Sneak, Survive

Attack: Unseen force (+7 melee or ranged, 2d6 + 2 bludgeoning)

Secrets: Resistance to all damage (except attacks with silver weapons, which count as a weakness), Darkvision

- **Duplicate:** In a flash, the demon can take on the form and voice of any target it can see. A Wisdom check at difficulty 12 is needed to tell the difference between the demon and the target it has duplicated.
- **Absorption:** If the demon is successful with a melee attack against a target with spellcasting ability, it can force the target to make a difficulty 16 Intelligence saving throw. If the saving throw fails, the target expends 1d4 spell slots and the demon regains stamina points equal the lost slots.
- **Reflection:** When the demon successfully saves against a spell, they may copy that spell and hold it in reserve. The demon may cast the spell as an action against an opponent. If the demon is targeted by a spell while it has one in reserve that it successfully saves against, it may choose which spell it holds.

SYNOPSIS

Two years before our story begins, an Angora spy in Siberian – Kyla Glacee – discovered a book from the lost House Smilodon, a people who vanished after becoming infected by the Unseen. The book traced a secret trail north into the mountains beyond the territory of House Siberian. Angora dispatched a team of 12 of their best cats to find it, and what lay beyond it. They snuck through Siberian during its brief summer, crossing the Last Pass silently one night. Beyond the mountains, past the edges of Smilodon, they found a sprawling, ruined complex of the Old Ones, larger than any seen before, filled with forbidden knowledge.

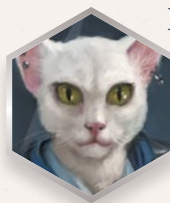
Half the team was certain it was this knowledge which had infected and brought about the end of House Smilodon, but the others maintained that the library held the secrets of the ages. The leader of the Angora expedition, Ubo, was driven mad by the choice set before him, certain the ruin was filled with secrets cats were not meant to know. At the height of winter, one by one, he killed his compatriots. Only one – Teylu Skey – managed to hide in the huge ruins, dodging Ubo and other, unknown threats, to escape into the snow.

Despite the weather, Teylu managed to march south. Cats from Siberian found her, along with her journal which contained the map that tracks the Angora team's path through the Ashlands north of the southernmost Smilodon lands, though most of Smilodon still remains unexplored. Word of Teylu's sudden arrival at the gate has already been carried to House Angora, who have issued orders.

Now, the spy who found the original Smilodon book, Kyla Glacee, has learned of Teylu's return and has set plans in motion. First, a group of assassins will attempt to kill Teylu so the secret of the library dies with her. Then, Kyla and her scout companion Ebb Blackback will lie in wait past the Last Gate to trail any who might move north to locate the Library. Once they know the way, they will attempt to pick off the team members so the secrets of the Old Ones remain firmly in Angora hands.

INTRODUCTION

While wandering about in the Siberian capital, a steely-eyed Siberian guard captain delivers a note to the party members. Within, they find a summons from Minister Blanith von Siberian, a vassal of House Siberian, calling the party to come to the Sweetling Meadery. At the Meadery, they are to report to the upper floor, left hallway, red door on the right. The mission set to them is one that may make their reputations in Siberian. They will learn of its details when they arrive, but they should be prepared to travel.



Blanith von Siberian should be perceived as a trusted ally. A previous relationship between a single character and Blanith will help ease naturally suspicious players' minds. The Guide should tell this player that he is beyond reproach, serves the upper echelons of House Siberian, and is always as good as his word.

SCENE 1: THE JOURNAL AND THE STRANGE PRIESTS

How did the player characters get to this scene? A Siberian guard captain found them and delivered a note from Minister Blanith, summoning them to the Sweetling Meadery where Teylu Skey von Angora is recovering from her ordeal, still unconscious.

- **What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene?** Uncover the assassins sent to kill Teylu Skey, save Blanith, and gain possession of Teylu's journal and map.
- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** The Angora assassins.
- **What scene or scenes should logically happen next?** Scene 2: "The Last Pass and the Way North."

The last snows fell two weeks before, and the cobblestones are finally starting to peek out from beneath the stuff for the first time in months. The low-slung, wide bottomed stone buildings of the Siberian capital have their shutters open and doors thrown wide. Roaring fires burn everywhere. Children wander about without their huge coats, boots, and gloves, and icicles drip, quickly dissolving off the edges of every roof in the warm sunlight.

You approach the Sweetling Meadery, a huge structure on the edge of town. It has hundreds of rooms, and holds thousands of secrets. Not quite an alehouse, not quite a merchant hall, and not quite a spy den – the Meadery is the center of commerce and power in the kingdom. The doors open wide as you approach.

Deleah Unk, one of the house runners who makes the Meadery tick, grabs the player characters as they arrive and whispers to them, "Blanith waits for you up above," indicating a grand staircase that winds up from the huge, cat-filled common room to the darker recesses of the Meadery.

Down an out-of-the-way, wood-paneled hallway on the uppermost floor of the Meadery, you find the red door, just as described. Beside the door, someone has draped a huge flag for House Siberian over a long, wide table, the edges of which nearly reach the ground.

Blue-white sunlight streams out into the hall through the door, which was left ajar. The characters can make out faint, mumbled conversation within.

Characters with a military background, or those who have spent time in service of House Siberian can make a Wisdom check, difficulty 11, to note that the flag on the table is very strange – it should not be there. Looking closer, characters will see three crimson drips of blood on the end of one corner. Beneath the flag, under the table, are the two bodies of hastily hidden Siberian guards, each dispatched with a sword hit to the midsection. These cats were once Blanith's personal guards.

The conversation happening within the room remains muted, subdued, and difficult to follow. A character might hear mention of "a journal," "the library," and "Ubo." If the characters spend any amount of time in the hallway, the door suddenly shuts, but the talking inside continues. Those who make a Dexterity check, difficulty 12, can move close to the door without being noticed. Those that do this successfully hear "Captain Ubo, where is he?"

The room is huge, with gable windows that show a snow-bright sky outside. The roof, once covered with snow, appears to have been recently cleared. Four cats stand in the room: three odd priests in bulky red and gold cassocks, and one cat who's known to you, Blanith von Siberian, wearing his ministerial white robes and the sigil of House Siberian. A bandaged cat with a thin face is tucked under plush blankets, asleep in the large bed next to the fire. Her face twitches now and then as though she's trapped in unpleasant dreams.

Near the window stands an elaborate bronze base with an empty flagpole. The priests shift to consider you, roused out of their conversation with Blanith. The room falls silent.

Those who enter casually will be met by smiles and silence from the priests. Blanith, however, will act strange and distant, hesitant to say why he summoned the player characters, even going so far to suggest they are mistaken; he did no such thing.

Clever players might note the empty flagpole, and the flag on the table outside. Others might at-

tempt to communicate with Blanith using codes or subtle plays of words. It remains up to the Guide to decide when the Angora assassins spring into action.

The “priests” fling off their bulky vestments, revealing armor and weapons beneath. These three assassins are skilled killers and now set upon their task. Use the Hired Killed stats on p. 195 of *Monarchies of Mau* for the assassins.

First, they attempt to kill any threat in the room (the characters). Only once the threats are neutralized will they return their attention to Teylu Skey and Blanith. If they are reduced to a single assassin, that assassin smashes a glass vial on the stone floor, topped with a flint, which explodes into flame. These flames lick at Teylu Skey’s blankets, threatening to immediately engulf her bed. The assassin then leaps out onto the roof beyond the window (it’s how they entered) and attempts to escape across the snow-covered roofs.

Those characters that pursue the assassin out on to the rooftops of the Meadery will find the path challenging. The hammered tin rooftops of the dozens of gables, rooms, extensions and halls of the Meadery make a maze-like run of difficult, dangerous angles. If that wasn’t bad enough, almost all are covered in rapidly melting ice and snow.

Those hoping to pursue and catch up with the assassin must complete the following: the assassin and the player character must each make a Dexterity check, difficulty 14. If both succeed, the chase continues. If the assassin fails, they slip and fall, clutching onto the roof’s edge in a last-minute grab, and they may be hauled up and captured. If the character fails, they must make a Dexterity saving throw at difficulty 14 to avoid falling and smashing to a roof below. If they fail, they take 1d6 bludgeoning damage and lose the assassin.

Possible Outcomes:

- **Saving Teylu:** If the characters manage to save Teylu, particularly if they manage to stop the fire from engulfing the bed and consuming her, she might stir and speak to the characters.
- **Saving Blanith:** Blanith is an important minister in Siberian, and his well-being is worth a great deal to his house. He will not forget such actions, particularly if char-

acters go out of their way to defend him. When the fight is over, he reveals Teylu’s journal, which he had the presence of mind to hide within a secret pocket in his voluminous sleeves.

- **Catching a Live Assassin:** Difficult, but not impossible (see above for more details).
- **Losing Teylu:** If the characters do not immediately deal with the fire put to Teylu’s bed, she will be consumed in flames nearly instantly, and killed.
- **Losing Blanith:** If the assassins see an opening, they might attack Blanith or take him hostage to turn the tables. If Blanith is “lost,” assume he is fatally wounded, living long enough to reveal the secret location of Teylu’s journal and the map inside it.
- **Gaining the Journal:** In any case, the party should leave the room with Teylu’s journal and the map to the Lost Library of Amosen. No matter what, even if Blanith is “lost,” he manages to get out the gist of the mission and hand off the journal to the player characters.

If the Guide wishes to up the drama or foreshadow the horror, Teylu can wake after the commotion. Though she is far too sick to travel, and her eyes are still half-mad with fever, she will recognize the journal and ramble about certain subjects:

- **The Map:** If shown the map, Teylu will grab for it wildly. The character holding the map must make a Dexterity saving throw at difficulty 10 to prevent Teylu from grabbing it and ripping it up, shrieking, “Don’t go there, no, no, no!” before collapsing, exhausted. In any case, the map is easily mended back together.
- **The Mission:** If prodded about the mission to the north for House Angora, she’ll only say that, “Once we got there, it wasn’t easy. If knowing something gives you power, what does knowing everything give you? They were everywhere.”
- **The Ruins of Smilodon:** Teylu claims she never believed — *really* believed — in the Unseen before entering the village that used to belong to cats from Smilodon.

THE LOST LIBRARY OF AMOSEN

It was empty, flanked by dark towers and crisscrossed in sand-covered streets. She and her companions could feel eyes on them the entire time they were there. They fled along the secret path north, leaving Smilodon behind them as quickly as they could.

- **Ubo:** If asked about who she went on the mission with, Teylu's eyes go wide in fear. "Ubo... he's *still there*. He's *waiting for us!*" She can give little else in the way of coherent comments, only to indicate that she and Ubo are the only ones still living. If asked how the others died, her eyes go wide and her jaw slackens. She refuses — or may be unable — to speak about it.
- **What Haunts the Library:** Her eyes narrow to slits. "Ubo is alone in the library, but he's not alone! No one who enters that place is alone! No one!"

SCENE 2: THE LAST PASS AND THE WAY NORTH

- **How did the player characters get to this scene?** They were sent on this mission by Blanith, the Siberian minister.
- **What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene?** Travel across the mountains to the north of Siberian to the Deep River.
- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** Several mundane threats.
- **What scene or scenes should logically happen next?** Scene 3: "The Badger Camp on the Deep River."

You're prepared for your journey into the mountains. The weather is clear as spring approaches, and everywhere, green pokes through the white snow. Here, at Siberian's northernmost point where the roads end and become a trail into the snow-capped mountains, is the Last Pass.

According to the map, you must travel from the Last Pass to the Deep River in the mountains, then north to the edges of Smilodon, and then along the secret path to the Library of Amosen. If luck is on your side, you should find yourself at

the Library in under two weeks. Though there's no way of saying what the snow is like up in the mountain passes...

Traveling into the mountains, the stone path from Siberian slowly becomes covered in snow once more. Still, it is marked by ancient stone cairns showing the way north — the path that the cats of Smilodon took ages ago.

During the day, the sun is bright and the air is brisk. Small game is everywhere as spring approaches. At night, the cats light fires to stay warm and safe, as the temperature plummets and sometimes yellow and red eyes can be spied, stalking around the edges of the camp.

The path to the Deep River should take the group less than a week to travel. They can encounter any or all of the following things along the way. The Guide should stagger these encounters over those seven days, to give the players a feeling of travel and progress.

THE TOPPLED CART

One day, the characters come upon a large, toppled wooden cart in the middle of the mountain path. The cart is built like a small one-room house on enormous spoke wheels. It was once drawn by animals — now long gone. Many of the cart's contents have been scattered far from the wreck on the path by animal action. Casks of foodstuffs have smashed and split, pieces of meat and half-eaten fruit are scattered, and sections of canvas have been torn and dragged away. As the characters approach, birds scatter.

Inside the cart sleeps a well-fed, moody, brown bear who will not take kindly to being disturbed. Anyone coming within a few paces of the cart who makes an Intelligence check at difficulty 10 hears the rumbling snore of the brown bear squeezed inside the cart, sleeping.

Anyone who attempts to search the cart or who does not make a wide berth around it without using the Sneak skill wakes the bear, who attempts to score a few more snacks — the cats — before going back to sleep. Fire, or reducing the bear to fewer than 10 stamina points, will drive it off.

For the bear, use the Bear stats on p. 191 of *Monarchies of Mau*.

ASHLANDS

LIBRARY OF AMOSEN

ABANDONED VILLAGE

BADGER CAMP

SWEETING MEADERY

SIBERIAN



Many in Siberian know of the haunted mountains, but few know the secrets of Smilodon, the lost house. Of how House Smilodon marched north through them to found their dynasty centuries before. Of how that dynasty toppled due to the influence of the Unseen. The mountains and valleys once inhabited by cats of Smilodon are now considered tainted by this darkness, and few doubt that horrific things wander them still.

Few cross the Last Pass to venture into the mountains if they can help it, and nearly no one travels into Smilodon territory or the Ashlands beyond. Those that do keep a close eye on one another and stay close to camp. Still, cats disappear from time to time, never to be seen again.

The mood in these mountains should build tension. A hard trek is interspersed with strange and sometimes dangerous encounters. All cats on the mission should know in their bones that something is wrong there, and danger could strike at any time.

THE ABANDONED CAMP

The characters come upon a snow-covered camp in the middle of the path. This camp has been here for some time, and consists of water-logged cots, a damp, long-dead fire surrounded by stones, several split and rotten packs, and even a pair of aged, snow-filled boots.

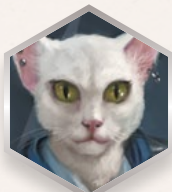
Searching the scene uncovers a single, odd brooch showing the symbol for House Smilodon, which the cats recognize only from Teylu's map. The food and water in the packs seems new and fresh (and is safe), though, for some reason, animals avoid the camp. The scene is shrouded in an eerie silence, as if it has been there – and will continue to be – for hundreds of years.

THE RUINED BRIDGE

An old, crumbling, snow-covered bridge spans a crevasse that has opened in the mountain, bisecting the stone path. The crevasse plunges into darkness, the bottom perhaps hundreds of feet below. The bridge was poorly built; despite this, it has somehow withstood collapse. It is clear to any cat that sets foot on it that it is unsound. It can only be traversed in a single-file line.

The first cat to cross does so without difficulty. The second must make a Dexterity check at difficulty 10. The next must cross at difficulty 11, and so on. The first to fail falls through the rotten bridge and must make a Dexterity saving throw at difficulty 13. On a failure, they tumble into the rotten wood struts below, suffering 2d6 points of damage. With assistance, they can be fished out with rope, or they can very slowly climb out with a difficulty 10 Strength check. If the Guide is feeling particularly punishing and a cat fails *this* check, they must make a Dexterity saving throw at difficulty 12 or plummet into the crevasse below, never to be seen again. Of course, this is optional.

Crossing the bridge with a gap in it by jumping is a Dexterity check at difficulty 15. Those that fail must make the saving throw or suffer the consequences listed above.



Remember, you're free to make character death optional in *Monarchies of Mau!*

Depending on what the Guide and players want, any situation can become more or less dangerous.

THE GOAT-THINGS

Fifty or so horrific goat-things haunt the mountainside here. They are misshapen and strange, with dozens of eyes and tentacle-like suckers in place of their mouths. Their skin is furless and covered in oozing sores. Still, they scale the mountainside just like any other goats. When they see or smell the characters, they rush down and cluster around them by the dozens, but they are essentially harmless (though terrifying to look at). They pose no real threat. If attacked, they flee, bleating, and will only fight back if cornered. (See "Minions" in *Monarchies of Mau*, pp. 210-211.)

Curious cats who follow the goat-things' trail back into a canyon find that they all congregate and seem to drink from a deep pool of still, black liquid that looks like oil but smells like rotten meat. This fluid issues from a fissure in the mountain. From there, the black liquid trickles out of the canyon and into the valley below along many small streams, where it eventually joins the Deep River far below. This black canyon is the source of the threat of the Unseen that haunts the Red Badgers of the next section. The canyon, and this liquid, is only accessible through a single, narrow opening in the rock. This might easily be closed off by causing a landslide on the mountain above, cutting off the black liquid flowing to the Deep River below.

Any cat that drinks this substance suffers 2d4 + 4 points damage and is haunted by horrific nightmares for two nights. In these visions, they see themselves reflected in a mirror. As they approach the mirror, the double in it suddenly reaches through it and begins to strangle them. They wake up throttling themselves.

GOAT-THING

CR 1

Defense: 12

Stamina Points: 12

Speed: 40 feet

Proficiency Bonus: +2

Abilities: Strength 0 (10), Dexterity +1 (13), Constitution +2 (15), Intelligence -4 (2), Wisdom +1 (12), Charisma -1 (8)

SCENES

Attack: Horns (+5 melee, 1d6 + 2 bludgeoning)

Secrets: Low-light Vision, Scent

The Figure

One night, the camp is suddenly startled awake by the sound of someone shouting. Cats following the sound find a strange orange cat unknown to them, clad in an oversized coat, standing on the mountainside looking north.

“Come and see!” the cat is shouting with his back to the player characters. Climbing the snow-covered hill to the cat is difficult and tiring. Those that do so must make two Constitution checks at difficulty 10 and 12. Failure indicates the cat in question needs to collapse and regain their strength before pushing on. Those who manage to arrive at the top of the ridge find they are alone. There’s no cat up here at all, and no footprints save their own.

Those watching this from the valley suddenly lose sight of the stranger. Whether he moved over the ridge or simply evaporated into the air is impossible to say, because the change was so abrupt.

At the top of the ridge, the cats can see the Deep River in the valley below. Pinpricks of warm light are visible there, alongside the bright, moonlit water. The river winds to the north, weaving through snowy mountains.

The Spies

One night, one of the cats sees green cat eyes in the dark. Pursuing this figure leads them on a mad chase through the snowy wooded mountains. The pursuer must make a Dexterity check at difficulty 12 or fall flat on their face into the snow, losing their quarry in the process. If the pursuer makes two of these checks, they manage to grab and pull loose the intruder cat’s cloak, but loses the intruder in the dark. The cloak is made from fine Siberian wool and has the initials “E.B.” stitched in the hem.

If the pursuit fails, following the intruder cats’ tracks until they end brings the pursuer to a tree, and from there, pristine snow in all directions.

The Storm

In the middle of a clear day, within minutes, dark clouds congeal and blot out the blue sky. A



wind builds from the north, whipping down the valley. Snow begins to fall at a 45-degree angle to the ground, and a blizzard comes howling in. Visibility drops to zero. Lightning crashes overhead.

The wind is so extreme and sudden, cats can't hear each other without shouting. Several inches of snow build over just a few minutes. Those cats watching the perimeter notice strange silhouettes evident with each lightning strike. Huge, humanoid cat forms seem to stand guard on either side of the path to the north. Each stands perhaps 20 feet tall, but its features are lost in the snow; only its shape is visible with each lightning strike.

Then, just as suddenly as the storm appears, it vanishes. Within 15 minutes, the sky is an unblemished blue. No sign of the giant cats can be found.

THE VALLEY OF THE DEEP RIVER

The player characters finally arrive at the low valley through which the Deep River flows. Here, the path again clears of snow, and trees are rapidly emerging from their wintery covers. Grass can be poked through here and there, and the underbrush teems with small game.

The valley continues downward in a slope towards a meandering, blue-green river to the west. The cairn-marked path here is interspersed with strange, barkless segments of tree limbs hammered into the frozen earth and topped with red rags.

SCENE 3: THE BADGER CAMP ON THE DEEP RIVER

How did the player characters get to this scene? The player characters have traveled through the mountains to the Deep River valley.

What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene? Either to gain access to a Badger boat to parlay with the Great Ugart, or to gain safe passage through Red Badger territory without giving up the secrets of their mission or getting killed.

Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it? Ugart, the badger prince and his badgers that rule the Deep River.

What scene or scenes should logically happen next? Scene 4: "Smilodon and the Ashlands."

Badgers. Dangerous. Barbaric. Or so you've been told. Yet they are everywhere ahead of you. Beginning at the Deep River and the entire valley north are dozens, no, hundreds of badgers, all wearing red or flying torn red flags.

The center of the camp seems to be a large, two-level log barge on the river which flies a giant red flag marked with a "U" drawn in a scrawl. So far, none have seen your party, but if you continue on your journey, it will only be a matter of time before you're discovered.

Players have several options in dealing with the badgers:

SNEAK

Cats hoping to sneak through badger lines as a group must do so at night and must make three Dexterity checks at difficulty 11. Even worse, the character with the *lowest* Dexterity must make the check for the group. Failure indicates the group is confronted by a group of Badger Headsplitters and Slashers (*Monarchies of Mau* p. 193). Those who succeed find themselves just north of the Badger encampment after a harrowing night of almost-discovery.

WIDE BERTH

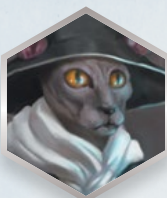
Those player characters that try to skirt the badger camp find it much more difficult than they imagined. At intervals all along the heights of the valley, small groups of badgers haunt dug-in positions, waiting to sound a horn if they spy any intruders. Treat this attempt as above, except the cat in question must make five Dexterity checks at difficulty 11. Once a horn is blown, two cadres of badgers close on the player characters' position nearly instantly.

FIGHT

If the player characters are foolish enough to attempt a frontal assault, have them confronted by Badger Headsplitters and Slashers (as above) but keep adding another combatant every three rounds of combat. The badgers will soon demand surrender. Those who refuse are killed. The rest are stripped of weapons and dragged off to see the Great Ugart.

PARLAY

Wise player characters will seek to parlay with the badgers. Few badgers speak the language of cats and dogs, but they have needs cats can easily



Are Badgers Barbarians?

The short answer: No, they are not. “Badgers” in Pugmire and Monarchies of Mau are the collective name for any uplifted animal from the polecat family, from badgers to weasels to ferrets and stoats, so badger tribes are quite diverse places!

Badgers may be seen as violent barbarians by most cats and dogs, but the truth is far different. Some are physically imposing — much bigger than the average cat, and they speak their own language that sounds like grunts and barks to cats and dogs. They seem to demand, question, and threaten in single and double-word commands. (“Why cat!” might mean, “why are you here?” for example, though that’s largely due to a quirk in translation. Badgers use fewer sounds and words to express things than cats or dogs, and tend to be taciturn.)

Because they live in more dangerous parts of the world, they are usually ready to fight for their territory. To cats and dogs, their level of force in response to a threat or a social slight is occasionally well out of proportion to the inciting action. This is largely due to cats and dogs not always understanding the culture of the badgers. They are a proud people, and do not like to be made fun of.

Badgers can be deeply superstitious. Like cats, they fear the Unseen, but unlike cats, nearly any bad luck can be filed away under that heading — bad weather, a rumbling in the forest, the loss of a favored weapon, or the death of a loved one.

Though it may seem the obvious choice to make the badgers in your game hulking brutes with few manners, badgers have a rich culture of their own, with several tribes united under one legendary king, Kibu the Red. Guides are encouraged to try out different things when portraying badger characters; perhaps one has studied the cats’ and dogs’ languages for years and is something of a scholar. Maybe another is motherly, taking the characters under her wing and making sure they have food for the journey. Remember that just because the characters in the game may not understand the badgers, they have hopes, dreams, stories, and culture like any other people.

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fulfill, such as food, weapons, or plastic. If they offer these things, the cats will quickly be surrounded by a group of 20 badgers and ushered off to the Great Ugart.

BRIBE

Even wiser cats might attempt to bribe only when they are confronted by Badger Headsplitters and Slashers. This requires a Wisdom check at difficulty 10 to achieve, as long as the item being offered is of significant value. If it's a weapon, add +1 to the check. If it's a decent amount of food, add +2. On a success, the badger group lets the "weak cats" go.

TO THE RIVER

Clever cats may sneak to the Deep River by making two Dexterity checks at difficulty 11. Those that succeed make it to the water. From there, swimming downstream is a possibility in the large, relatively mild river. This requires two Constitution checks at difficulty 11 to skirt north, dodging debris in the wintry runoff without getting swept under from exhaustion. Even so, a badger sentry is granted a single Intelligence check at difficulty 10 to spot the party as they move downriver. If they're spotted, four cadres of badgers descend on the characters the moment they make landfall.

You're captured and dragged down towards the log barge, surrounded by dozens of large badgers. The two-story log raft with several simple rooms on it is hung with a red flag marked with a rust-brown "U" in the center. When you're pushed into the main room — the throne room — you are surrounded by nearly 50 badgers. They're all gathered around a large open space in front of a fur-covered throne crafted from bear bones.

On the throne sits the Great Ugart. You're face-to-face with this imposing leader of the Red Badgers. He wears a leather jerkin made of bearskin, and a necklace of long bear claws. His face is a mess of scars where he was raked by those same claws. His mouth is always set in a broad, bored grin, though his eyes are calculating and intelligent. He carries a giant greataxe, which you heard badgers refer to as the "head remover." It's so large any one of you would have to drag it like a plow, but he hefts it easily over one massive shoulder.

He smiles wide, revealing sharp teeth. "Cats! Speak! Now!"

Ugart speaks much of the common language but does so with badger sentence construction: "Cat think fool Ugart. What cat bring today?" But nothing is beyond him — he understands nearly anything the characters say, though he may play stupid to see if they speak out of turn in front of him. It's one of the reasons he is in charge; even taking into account how wily most badgers are, Ugart is a genius.

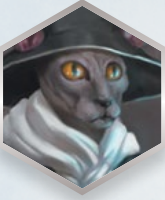
Ugart's motivations are complex, though they can easily be misunderstood. Like the cats, Ugart is concerned about the Unseen encroaching and taking over the mountains and with them, his people's territory. Of course, he won't come right out and say this. Instead, he will interrogate the cats, hoping to discern their mission in the mountains. He and his crew have no interest in traveling to the ruins to the north, and are content raiding settlements south of the mountains, so the secret of the library is of little interest to him. Still, the "black water" creeping into the valley fills him with fear for the future. The cats, he is certain, hold the answers.

The main things Ugart is looking for is: that the cats show polite deference to his station, and that they don't hide anything from him. If the cats are respectful, Ugart's tone quickly shifts to that of a beneficent, all-powerful leader *permitting* the cats to persist in his territory. A single poorly-worded comment is enough to have Ugart turn on the player characters instantly, to save face before his court.

For the Great Ugart, use the Badger Chieftain stats on p. 193 of *Monarchies of Mau*.

Cats that throw themselves on the mercy of the Ugart find him a forgiving host. After making an announcement in Badger that the cats don't understand, he commands the cats, "Stand!" When they do, he announces that he, the Great Ugart, welcomes the cats as his guests. All badgers present then begin to lower their eyes when confronted by the cats, respectful of their leader's hospitality.

Cats that attempt to stall for time will find Ugart is incredibly clever, impressively so. He quickly turns their reasoning back in on itself. It is important to Ugart that all cats present — if they had taken him for a fool — are quickly stripped of this misconception. Ugart ends their attempts to stall or bamboozle him with the comment, "Maybe one no-head cat means clearer speak." He is very, very, serious.



Player characters should be outgunned and outnumbered at the Red Badger camp on the Deep River. It is up to the Guide to build the tension and make it clear that the cats' situation likely can't be solved through violence; they'll have to talk their way out of this one.

Resolving the situation will require cats to think on their feet, watch for cues, and puzzle out the Great Ugart's secret motivations. If the cats are forthcoming and fearful of the Unseen threat, they are well on their way to securing Ugart's trust. If the cats reveal the rough location of the goat-thing canyon of the black pool, and even better, offer the suggestion that the liquid could be "dammed" by causing a rockslide on the canyon entrance (and Ugart believes them), Ugart will help them along their journey once that deed is done, declaring them "friends of badgers." If they manage to earn such distinction, each cat is given a single token of delicately hammered, shining metal in the shape of an X. Showing this token to a badger — any badger — resets any negative disposition to neutral. It's not a "get out of jail free" card, precisely, but something which will at least allow the cat in question to get a word in before badgers decide to attack.

Cats that lie to Ugart must make an Intelligence check, difficulty 14, to spin some tale that survives Ugart's clever cross-examinations. If this check is a success, and especially if the cats are deferential to Ugart, the cats are declared guests and are permitted to relax — somewhat. Ugart, in private, will later speak to them of the "black water of the Unseen."

Intimidation is likely to fail, though there is a single path to success possible here. If the cats target one of the servants of Ugart and successfully intimidate them (Strength check against difficulty 10), this pleases Ugart, who declares the cats "strong!" Ugart is much more likely to believe a story spun by a "strong" cat. The difficulty to Bluff Ugart after this is reduced to difficulty 12. However, those cats foolish enough to attempt to Intimidate Ugart will be met with a sly smile, and then a very serious wrestling match. Ugart will contort, twist, pin, flip, and slam the offending cat until they are so exhausted they can't move. Those that

fight back should be permitted to go blow-for-blow against Ugart (without weapons). Usually, Ugart will win such a battle; if he does not, he breaks it off and declares the cat "strong!" as above.

TRADE

Ugart is always in the market for weapons, particularly finely made ones from the monarchies. Those who offer to trade weapons for freedom are met with smiles and nods. When the deal is cut, Ugart takes the weapons and smiles and barks something in the badger tongue. Then in the common language, "Ugart thanks cats for fine gift." Whatever deal the cats might have thought was on the table, Ugart ignores it as if the trade never happened.

UNSEEN

If the cats bring up the Unseen openly, Ugart becomes somber and silent, listening intently. After a few moments, he sends his badgers out. Food is served by a lone servant. Ugart reveals the encroaching black water that is finding its

way to the Deep River and the valley, as well as the “things” seen in the mountains. Cats that do not lie and who discuss their mission, especially those who reveal that they are hoping to contain the Unseen, are treated as allies under the protection of Ugart. He will assist them in any way possible (most likely, by outfitting them with food, packs, clothing, and other goods).

Once this exchange begins, Ugart will reveal the problem. A black liquid of the Unseen is contaminating waterways used by the Badgers, poisoning them, and even the Deep River itself. The problem is getting worse over time. Cats that saw the goat-things’ canyon and the black pool there will recognize the description.

Particularly forthright cats are granted a badger scout called Heeg, to lead them to the ruins of Smilodon.

HEEG

Forthright cats will find themselves with an added ally in the mountains, Heeg, a badger tracker known for her prowess in the wilderness. Heeg is a loyal, clever badger, much like Ugart, and will serve the cats tirelessly after being ordered to do so by her great leader. Heeg’s mission is to deliver the cats safely up the Deep River to the haunted ruins. She’s an excitable young badger who loves to regale the party with tales while on foot by day and over campfires by night, while in places of relative safety. Cats can learn a lot about badger culture, language, and history from her, if they care to ask.

For Heeg, use the Badger Slasher stats on p. 193 of *Monarchies of Mau*.

SCENES ALONG THE WAY

Either with Heeg or without her, as the player characters move along the Deep River north, they spy the following:

The Poisoned Badger

The cats come upon a dead, desiccated, almost mummified badger on the side of the river. It is untouched by predators or bugs. If the badger is touched, it and all of its belongings collapse into gray dust interspersed with black, crystal sand. If Heeg is present, she identifies the badger as Uhto, missing for weeks from camp and a “drinker of the black milk,” something some foolhardy badgers in the camp do from time to time.

The Ward

As the mountains slope toward a hazy plain to the north, the characters find their way forward blocked. Sigils, bones, and wooden pickets mark a strange, magical ward. Who or what erected it is difficult to say, though it appears primitive.

Those who step around the ward (this is easily done) begin to feel an oppressive, ever-present feeling of being watched. This feeling persists as long as the cats remain north of the ward. Unfortunately, their goal is far north of this ward.

SCENE 4: SMILODON AND THE ASHLANDS

How did the player characters get to this scene? The player characters have traveled through the mountains to the southernmost edge of what once was Smilodon territory.

- **What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene?** To transit the abandoned Smilodon village without rousing Smilodon’s Shadow, an Unseen creature that haunts the old city.
- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** The Unseen creature known as Smilodon’s Shadow that hunts the ruins of the village.
- **What scene or scenes should logically happen next?** Scene 5: “The Lost Library.”

ANCIENT SMILODON

All cats know the story of lost House Smilodon, though no one ever seems to talk about it. Whispered rumors say they were a powerful lineage, but a pact with dark forces cast them down, leaving only abandoned territory on the northern edge of the mountains. There’s no question the forces of the Unseen manifest here.

Still, the mission of the player characters draws them inexorably through these haunted hills. Travel through the edge of the territory and an abandoned village to the secret entrance to the library will take two days of normal movement, or a single, breathless day of running full-tilt through the countryside on a successful Constitution check at difficulty 12. Those that fail are exhausted and may get left behind or slow the entire group down.



Entering the village should be a terrifying prospect. The threat of the Unseen feels very real here and for good reason. The ruins are haunted by a ghost-spirit, a being known as Smilodon's Shadow. This being feeds on fear and despair, and will, at first, follow the cats as they make their way through the village, hoping to draw off and separate them. It will attack those that find themselves alone relentlessly, in an attempt to subsume them quickly.

Clever cats will stick together and make their way through with all haste. Those caught there at night are in for a prolonged assault, as Smilodon's Shadow does its best to destroy the group.

Guides who wish to throw in a plot twist can have Ebb Blackback and Kyla Glacee (who were shadowing them) turn up in the village, pursued by the same creature. The spy and her guide might team up with the player characters to save themselves, at least until they escape Smilodon lands.

The Guide should build the tension and relieve it. Once Smilodon's Shadow really reveals itself, it should relentlessly pursue the group. It will down stone and timber from ruined buildings to

block in or cut off cats from their group, and then circle back to feed on the stragglers.

If the cats have the brooch from the Abandoned Camp in the mountains and present this to Smilodon's Shadow, it glows with a power the shadow cannot approach. Still, this protective shield is small and flickering, and the monster still nips at the group's heels as they move through the city, manipulating their environment and toppling structures to stop them.

The pursuit will work well if it's structured in the following manner, one type of encounter leading into another, as the pace of the threat increases.

- **What Was That?:** The cats hear rocks toppling in distant structures, or perhaps far-off footsteps in the supposedly empty village.
- **Shadows and Movement:** They spy silhouettes in grimy windows, or across the town moving at the edges of their vision, but these phantasms are only visible for a moment. The shadows look like cats, but... who knows?

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- **Strange Biddings:** Individual cats hear their name called or whispered from nearby doorways. Those that follow the call are attacked by Smilodon's Shadow.
- **Attacks:** Smilodon's Shadow freezes and subsumes the target with visions of death — their party turning on one another in a frenzy of bloodshed. These visions are like seizures, starting and stopping at random intervals.
- **Pursuit!** Once Smilodon's Shadow is revealed, it appears fully to the group, and begins a full-bore assault on them, trying to cut off escape routes by tumbling structures, or getting ahead of the group to prevent them from using particular alleys and streets.
- **What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene?** Enter and then *rapidly escape* the tunnel that leads below into the Library of Amosen.
- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** Survive an attack by Kyla Glacee and Ebb Blackback, as well as Ubo and the Double.

What scene or scenes should logically happen next? "Epilogue: What Comes Next?"

THE TOWER AND THE TUNNEL

The ruined, sand-cut tower points like a finger into the ash-filled sky to the northwest of the ruins of the village. Next to it, a circular, 45-degree tunnel twists down into the earth. The walls of the tunnel are tiled in strange colors, and a cool air emits from it, causing the ash to stay outside. It is immaculate.

Inside the tunnel, footsteps and voices somehow echo and fall flat at the same time. Below, in the darkness at the bottom of the tunnel, tiny, unnatural, blinking lights of red, green, blue, and yellow can be spied. The map indicates that this is the Library. The cats have arrived.

INSIDE

The tunnel ends on a large, metal walkway with strange mechanical boxes on either side of it. Standing on the edge of the overlook, a cat is greeted by a huge drop. Every level is a mile-long walkway, at least, covered in small, flat, glowing boxes which look like windows to the outside, but are not; they show strange colors and letters the cats cannot recognize. Chattering, strange voices emanate from below. The voices are gurgling, plaintive, and totally alien, unlike anything the cats have heard. The feeling of the structure is of a vast storehouse of information, alive with magical energy.

ATTACK!

When the moment is right, Kyla and Ebb will attack the group, hoping to subdue or kill them quickly. They attack the first round from surprise and with advantage. If the Guide finds the enemies are defeating the characters too easily, the Guide can introduce either the Double or Ubo here as well.

THE RUINS

The abandoned village is ancient and dilapidated with two crumbling guard towers, collapsed houses, and crooked, scattered cobblestone streets. The village is bereft of anything living. Still, it is occupied.

Smilodon's Shadow — an Unseen-infected ghost — persists within, and it does not welcome intruders.

Smilodon's Shadow

This inhuman power hunts the ruins of the village, feeding on fear and despair. As such, it likes to work its targets up into a frenzy of terror before finishing them off and will never simply attack. See Smilodon's Shadow stats on pp. 206-207 of *Monarchies of Mau*.

THE ASHLANDS BEYOND

Outside the village's borders, where Smilodon's Shadow will not pursue, are the legendary and seemingly endless Ashlands: hundreds of miles of rocky landscape covered in thick blue-gray soot. Simply walking kicks up cloud of it, and wind draws down drifts of the stuff on any who hold still.

The map indicates the player characters must make for a distant, barely-visible, half-collapsed tower at the far horizon.

SCENE 5: THE LOST LIBRARY

- **How did the player characters get to this scene?** The player characters have traveled through the ruins of Smilodon and the Ashlands.

In any case, this tangle with Kyla and Ebb should be enough to illustrate that they are the same cats that sent the assassins to the Meadery, they want the map, and they want the characters dead.

UBO AND THE DOUBLE

It remains up to the Guide when Ubo reveals himself. One way he might do it is to shout to interrupt the fight between Kyla, Ebb, and the party. Those who look find Ubo standing a level below, across the way, next to one of those colored window-like boxes.

“No one must find this place. It dies with us!” he shouts, and puts his hand on the box. The room shakes, and above, at the top of the tunnel, darkness begins to close over the sunlight pouring in from the top of the hole.

Kyla might beg Ubo to come with her back to Angora (in turn, revealing to Ebb her secret allegiances).

ESCAPE AND COLLAPSE

Wise cats will beat paws up the tunnel back to the entrance, but there, they will meet the *other* Ubo: the Double (see pp. 26-27).

“My friends. Help me defeat that monster. You can stay with me and learn the secrets the Library possesses,” it says in a low, calm voice. Although it looks identical to Ubo, it is clearly not the cat on the lower level they just saw.

As the giant door closes, any cats who attempt to run past this Double find that it is not Ubo at all; it is a *demon*. In 10 rounds, the door to the Lost Library closes forever, and those trapped within it are lost to the demonic forces there. If the players are fine with character death, no rescue is possible; otherwise, they can scramble out an unseen, ancient air vent and barely escape.

The Double does its best to persuade, harass, knock down, hold back, or otherwise detain the cats.

REVELATION

At some point during the fray, Kyra might spill that she’s a spy for House Angora, stunning Ebb, who has no idea of her true allegiances. Which way Ebb jumps – toward the player characters or to-

ward Kyra – will depend on the characters’ ability to convince him of the evil contained in the library.

SACRIFICE

Ebb may sacrifice himself to save Kyra and the group, tackling and wrestling with the Ubo Double, which mutates into something horrific. This battle should be fast and tense, with the Double doing all it can to keep the cats from leaving.

EPILOGUE:

WHAT COMES NEXT?

When the tunnel closes, the secrets of the Library are lost forever. Not even the shaft below remains, completely collapsing into the dust. But that is not the end of the mystery. Cats may discover a bizarre map, book, or sculpture in the ruins outside the shaft that indicate more secrets might be found in the north. One might even get the feeling that *something* wants them to continue the search to unlock the secrets of the Old Ones.

The party might be able to capture Kyra or Ebb and bring them back as prisoners. In either case, with the closing of that door, the threat of the secret Library of the Old Ones has been extinguished... for now.

FUTURE STORIES

Wise cats will make for civilization, to resupply at the very least before going back out into the wilds to find more secrets. Those crossing back through the mountains might encounter a great many things, not the least of which might be that the black pool from the mountain has finally found the river, poisoning it. Few of the badgers remain, scattered. Any who are still sane enough to give aid warn the cats – even if they were once enemies – that the black poison is now heading south on the great river, toward the monarchies.

It is only a matter of time before the darkness comes.

Characters should gain at least one level for completing this adventure, depending on how many side avenues they explored. Guide them through the advancement process, then make sure to ask your players what they enjoyed about the game, and what could be improved in the future.



A LIZARD'S TALE

Aditya, a lizard from the vast desert expanses east of Angora, has come to Trillani's Trailblazers for help. His family is supposed to travel soon to an annual lizard gathering, and Aditya was tasked with guarding the edges of a dangerous, monster-filled salt pan along their path. His failure to do so cost him his pride as well as the family's treasured artifact: the Tail of Wind's Strength.

The trailblazers will be asked not only to help Aditya recover both, but to begin forging a powerful and lucrative alliance with the lizards along the way. The salt pan is the site of an ancient ruin of the Old Ones, potentially holding reserves of plastic wealth and masterworks previously unknown to Man... or to Pugwire.



In the Monarchies of Mau and in Pugmire, the term “lizard” applies to a broad range of uplifted animals, and includes turtles, geckos, and serpents. Some time in the past, “lizard” became the blanket term for these species, as “badger” applies to members of the polecat family.

Lizard society is sorted into nomadic “families,” and those families can include a range of lizard types, as well as birds or other animals they’ve chosen to join them.

“A Lizard’s Tale” is written for adventurers of fifth level and above, so it’s best for those who have had some experience playing *Monarchies of Mau* before. In fact, it’s meant for characters who are members of Trillani’s Trailblazers, so it’s advisable to create a scenario or backstory ahead of time for those characters not yet involved with the organization.

CHARACTERS

All the information the Guide needs to know about the non-player characters important to the adventure is presented below. Should the player characters decide not to allow the Pugmire representatives (Basil and Reece) to come along on the expedition, the Guide can always decide that they show up in a later adventure or replace them with additional lizards (helpful or antagonistic) that the Guide would like to introduce instead.

LIZARDS

Not much is known about lizards in the monarchies, aside from interactions with the seagoing merchants or traveling storytellers and alkalists who wander through town and countryside. They dress to acclimatize themselves, choosing light and loose articles of clothing when it’s hot and closer-fitting, heavier clothing when it’s cold. Typically going about veiled has lent them a mysterious air, and their quick fighting styles, wild tales, and unusual use of magic makes them appear at times to cats and dogs as romantic adventurers.

The truth about them, as revealed in this adventure, is more pragmatic. Lizards are loyal their

chosen family above all. They also have a much more developed sensitivity to the Unseen than cats or dogs, and other senses such as smell, taste, touch, and hearing are highly keyed to sensing danger as soon as it arrives.

This informs every aspect of their culture. Veiling is meant to confuse the Unseen or other enemies. Thus, typically if a lizard unveils, it means they trust the other person or people to whom they show their face. Traveling in family troupes makes it harder for the Unseen or territorial predators to follow and attack a singular lizard, and additionally takes them to new territories, merchant bazaars, salt pans, and so on. Lizards called alkalists use salt and salt magic most often because salt is protective and purifying against the Unseen.

Combat is also keyed toward survival. Lizards can be quick and deadly fighters, some of them applying toxins to their weapons. Duelists accumulate honor and reputation as a bulwark against potential deadly enemies, puffing themselves up to scare antagonists away. Some maneuvers are meant to help the lizard hide or retreat as fast as possible. A lizard would rather run than face a long, extended fight he has little hope of winning.

Finally, lizards have little to no feeling regarding Man or the Old Ones, except to be suspicious that Man might have unleashed the dangers that lurk around every shadow. This can put them at odds with faithful characters should they ever share their beliefs. Instead, they venerate the sun, salt, and wind: the sun keeps them warm and exposes darkness, salt is their armor and weapon, and the wind brings stories and warnings.

ADITYA VASHUCHILDE

Aditya is a small, green gecko with powerful legs and feet. While in Angora, he dresses in a flowing, long-sleeved shirt and equally long pants in bright colors. Out in the desert, he opts for a dune-colored sleeveless shirt and shorter pants with lots of room for his legs to properly maneuver on the sand.

Aditya's role in his troupe is a guardian. This sometimes means he fights, but more often, he is set in a region to scare away smaller enemies or predators, or to watch and warn of dangers he senses. He is known among other lizards to have a keen, sometimes overweening, sense of pride in his abilities. When the player characters meet him, however, he is upset to the point of crying about his woes. The whole matter has deeply shamed him, and he is desperate to recover the Tail of Wind's Strength to restore his status.

The Thousand Oath Duelist (*Monarchies of Mau* p.203), with the addition of a crossbow, can be used for his abilities..

BASIL STAFFORDSHIRE

Basil is a stout, well-groomed dog with black fur who is in Angora in a more or less ambassadorial role through the Royal Pioneers. He always has his ear to the ground for opportunities to increase his fortunes, as well as to advance Pugmire's interests in the *Monarchies of Mau* and beyond. When he gets wind of Aditya's need for help and the story behind his circumstance, he asks the trailblazers to allow Reece and himself to accompany them. He will go as far as fabricating official documentation to support his argument, if necessary. If Basil can steer the lizards to favoring dogs over cats, all the promising wealth will funnel to Pugmire instead.

The Guide can use the Stubborn Sentinel template from the *Monarchies of Mau* core book (see p. 201) and shift a point of Constitution to Charisma instead.

REECE WOLFHOUND

Reese has faithfully supported his friend Basil for many years, even when Basil's career with Pugmire's Royal Pioneers blossomed and left him playing second fiddle. He's energetic, enthusiastic, and thoughtful about everything, but particularly brimming with excitement to meet lizards and make

friends. He truly believes in helping Aditya and the lizards as a purely good act and is unaware that his friend is manipulating the situation for his personal gain, even though Pugmire will benefit greatly.

The Guide can use the Penitent Mutt template from the *Monarchies of Mau* core book (see p. 201) and adjust CR ratings and abilities (including increasing his Dexterity) accordingly for this adventure.

SYNOPSIS

The trailblazers, relaxing in an Angora lounge after the completion of a prior adventure, happen across a distraught lizard, Aditya. Aditya, who was supposed to guard a treacherous salt pan in the desert on his family troupe's path to an annual gathering, lost his family's artifact when he barely escaped a dangerous creature's attack. The trailblazers discover that not only can they help the lizard regain his honor and secure safer passage for his family, but also uncover a set of perilous ruins that promise a wealth of plastic and artifacts for the kingdom that secures the lizards' favor.

INTRODUCTION

Sunny's Watering Hole, normally quiet, resounds with Aditya's harrowing tale. The lizard, stationed at the edges of a great salt plain filled with the Old Ones' ruins, narrowly escaped an enemy straight out of legend. Shamefacedly, he adds that he lost a precious artifact as a result, thus why he is unveiled and pleading for help. Since the trailblazers cannot go questing without asking permission anyway, Aditya urges them to consult with the castellan so they can get back to the salt pan before his troupe migrates.

SCENES

The following scenes make up the majority of the adventure. The Guide can rearrange, tweak, or omit scenes to better suit the story; they do not need to be run entirely in order if the flow works better another way!

SCENE 1: THE PUGMIRE AMBASSADOR

- How did the player characters get to this scene? They are enjoying some time off

and decide to stop into Sunny's Watering Hole for refreshment.

- **What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene?** Meet and agree to assist Aditya, then decide whether to accept the help of Basil Staffordshire and Reece Wolfhound.
- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** Natural distrust of dogs, any current political disputes, and the trailblazers' perception of exactly how dangerous the venture may be.
- **What scene or scenes should logically happen next?** Scene 2: "The Oasis."

SUNNY'S WATERING HOLE

The player characters are relaxing at Sunny's Watering Hole, a lounge that welcomes everyone – a comfortable neutral meeting ground to sun, drink catnip tea, or do business. They are enjoying a vacation of sorts after a successful adventure that led them to Angora, perhaps even awaiting word of where the trailblazers will be sent next. After some time, however, the more perceptive player characters notice a downcast, unveiled green lizard seated not far away, morosely pushing his cup on the table. When the lizard notices he is being watched, he becomes anxious and soon bursts into tears.

When one or more of the player characters greet the lizard, he first tries to cover his face and then drops his veil again, making him more upset. With patience, the player characters can calm him down and ask him about his troubles. Still wary, he tells them his name is Aditya and that his family troupe has ordered him to come to the Monarchies of Mau, unveiled, and seek help. With encouragement, he further explains he failed to guard known dangerous territory and also lost a precious family artifact while escaping a giant, burrowing worm and other monstrous enemies. (He goes into great detail about his fight, creating a gripping if somewhat fanciful tale of what happened.) Going about unveiled is his punishment for those failures, and so he is terrified and deeply ashamed.

As soon as the player characters reveal that they are members of Trillani's Trailblazers, Aditya's sorrow turns to joy.

"Oh, please, you must help me," Aditya begs, his eyes luminous with hope. "Will you ask your...whom did you say? Your... castellan, will you ask your castellan for leave to come with me and retrieve the Tail of Wind's Strength? It's not just my own poor reputation that will come to harm, but my family's. We cannot become vulnerable to the Unseen due to my foolish mistake."

Sensing your hesitation, Aditya leans forward and whispers, almost at a hiss, "While there is danger, we believe there is a great trove of undiscovered secrets and treasures beneath our sands. We know your love of secrets and pretty things, and my family would surely be willing to let you find them at your leisure in the years to come."

Aditya responds well to sincerity and kindness, and he is dismissive of any mention of the Old Ones. He, like most lizards, is afraid of the Unseen and any similar terrors. Sudden or loud gestures frighten him, and he seems happiest in and around sunlight and warmth. Once the player characters agree to help, he is effusive and loud in his gratitude, and urges them to see the castellan as soon as possible. He tells the player characters where he intends to stay, when he hopes to leave for the desert, and similar details as he leaves.

Finding Castellan Tabitha von Angora in her office is easy, as she is writing reports on their last mission and its outcome. After listening to Aditya's story and why the trailblazers were asked to involve themselves, the calico smiles warmly.

"Of course you should go. We have been hoping to establish a...friendship... with the lizards for some time now. How many tales have they spun about the secrets the Old Ones have left behind in ruins in those inhospitable deserts? This is a marvelous opportunity for us both. And if you should happen upon anything more substantial... well. This may be beneficial beyond anything we have ever hoped for."

The castellan's office is located in a large, public office building full of other civil servants. Though Tabitha von Angora is the castellan in Angora, if the Guide has an established castellan to use instead, they are highly encouraged to use that non-player character if it makes better sense. Otherwise, Tabitha von Angora is said to be

a friend to the Dynast Priscilla von Angora, and sees the Trailblazers in her care as a political tool. She is still quite warm and genuine in her interactions with the trailblazers, and does care for their well-being, but her political affiliations are one of those secrets everyone pretends not to know.

She wastes no time in helping the trailblazers make plans and gather supplies for a caravan out to the deserts. She entrusts them with a bag of plastic to make all the essential purchases needed, such as hiring mounts, buying casks of water, and the like, and then sends them on their way.

THE AMBASSADOR'S OFFICE

Closing the door behind you, you take several steps down the corridor before a lean, somewhat shaggy gray wolfhound emerges from another corridor.

"Trailblazers! Oh good, I was hoping to find you. Do you have a moment? I work with the Pugmire ambassador, the Honorable Basil Staffordshire, and we were interested in speaking with you on an urgent matter." He smiles in a friendly fashion and bows low. "I am Reece Wolfhound. If you will follow me?"

Reece Wolfhound really does just want a moment of the trailblazers' time, if the player characters seem hesitant. If they follow him, he takes them to Basil Staffordshire's office. It's not very comfortable by cat standards, but the dogs seem content. Inside, the cats find it to be clean, orderly, and full of proud displays of the awards and honors Basil has won over the years. A large portrait of Basil has pride of place over his desk, and a closer look around the room shows a small sketch of what appears to be Basil and Reece when they were younger, both happy and smiling with Royal Pioneers insignia on their clothes.

"Thank you for coming. If I may be so crass as to get straight to business," Basil says, after introducing himself politely and offering seats, "a friend of ours overheard the story with your friend the lizard. We were touched and hoped we might offer assistance."

Basil Staffordshire is a dignified dog, and though not as openly friendly as Reece, he still

exudes a generally trustworthy air. Any cats who are suspicious — after all, they only recently learned Aditya's troubles, how did the tale spread to the dogs so quickly? — can perform a Wisdom or Intelligence check against a difficulty of 15. A successful result means the cat can tell there is more hiding behind Basil's offer than simple goodwill, although what it might be is not immediately obvious. Attempts to question him further are met with genial stonewalling and restating his desire to help (he is an ambassador, after all), although smart cats will be able to discern his desire is more politically motivated than he lets on.

Basil offers some plastic to help with supplies for the trip, with the caveat that he and Reece accompany the trailblazers on their quest. His duties in Angora are currently very light and can be put in the care of a clerk, if asked. Additionally, he claims that opportunities for outreach and travel are in his unofficial duties, and he is happy to provide proof at a later date if he is pressed. In truth, he will need time to manufacture such documentation. He has enough seals at his disposal to allow him to do so, and his documentation can pass muster among cats not skilled or experienced enough to tell they are forgeries. (If the Guide had the trailblazers embroiled in any political intrigues in the past that might affect the current status of the monarchies and Pugmire, Basil claims he is not worried about them and believes those matters are "well in hand.")

Even if the player characters believe in Basil's good intentions, Aditya's thrilling tale of escape and hiding may have convinced them that the trip will be too dangerous for any ambassador to handle. In response, Basil points out the sketch in his office and tells them that he and Reece came up through Pugmire's Royal Pioneers, and though the desert would be new to them, they can otherwise handle themselves just fine.

Reece truly believes Basil just wants to help, and he is enthusiastic about helping Aditya and Aditya's family. He becomes downcast if the trailblazers turn down their offer, and both he and Basil wish them luck on their adventure. Before the player characters leave Angora, they will make another overture in hopes of changing their minds. Basil will abide by their wishes, but he will listen very closely for any news afterward on what hap-

pened. He will find some way to turn it to Pugmire's advantage, if he can.

If the player characters accept Basil and Reece's help, Basil puts the coinage he offers into Reece's paws and bids his friend to accompany the trailblazers to the markets to make their purchases. He hopes Reece will win the player characters over with his friendliness and learn more about them, as well as any additional information Reece might be able to gather about Angora, Aditya, and where they are going. Reece admits general ignorance about the desert and needs guidance as to what to buy (aside from water for their journey).

SCENE 2: THE OASIS

- **How did the player characters get to this scene?** From Scene 1, with or without the representatives of Pugmire, after the journey is underway.
- **What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene?** Meet Aditya's family, learn about lizard society, and get a better sense of the dangers they will face.
- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** Basil, if allowed to come, subtly undermines the trailblazers' diplomacy and turns anything they might learn to his advantage. The player characters themselves could also fail at diplomacy.
- **What scene or scenes should logically happen next?** Scene 3: "The Salt Pan Ruins."

After the trailblazers have gathered all the equipment they need and are ready to proceed into the desert with Aditya, read the following.

"I must earnestly warn you, dangers lurk everywhere," Aditya's pleasantly sibilant voice drifts over the assemblage. "The desert is deceptive, like the Unseen, but still has its marvels and beauties. Do not let them fool you. Trust in Mother Sun even when She burns the sand at your feet, and keep salt about you when you must hide, for the Unseen and other enemies will strike when you are most vulnerable. Let the wind, not your eyes, be your guide."

With that advice, the gecko strides confidently eastward into the scrub that soon morphs into miles of golden sand, his posture vigilant.

Although Aditya warns the player characters (and Basil and Reece, if they come along) to bring enough water for themselves, he isn't seen with any about his person. If asked, he touches the amulet he wears, explaining it allows him to gather sufficient moisture from the insects and flora he eats. It is an artifact his people pass among them when one goes on a long journey, to make for lighter packing. He supplements the hydration that the amulet provides with sips of any morning fog or dew he gathers from his skin in his daily grooming ritual.

Characters who do not keep adequately hydrated begin losing stamina points in the desert. It's up to the Guide and the player characters how they wish to account for this – anything from a simple statement that they drink a quart of water every hour to tally marks on a sheet, as long as it doesn't interrupt the flow and fun of gameplay! The intent is simply to underscore how dangerous this terrain is to characters unused to it, player character and non-player character alike. Those with the Survive skill could be assumed to already know how to take care of themselves in this situation, or they could receive an advantage to dice rolls if stamina loss becomes a problem.

Aditya also makes it plain along their journey that, while he means no offense by it, he does not fully trust any of the characters accompanying him. Although he is unveiled, it is not by choice; his discomfort grows every hour he goes without wearing his veil. Trust must be earned in his society, since even demons can lurk for a while behind a friendly face. He was sent to the monarchies not just because they were neighbors, but especially because it's widely known they fight the Unseen. Because the dogs have a similar edict regarding the Unseen, Aditya also welcomes the presence of Basil Staffordshire and Reece Wolfhound if they come.

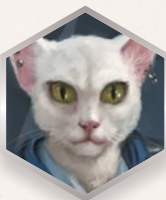
It's a good idea to insert many opportunities for either the trailblazers or the dogs to earn Aditya's trust along the way! Pointing out potential dangers he doesn't sense first is one way, and standing watch when he is vulnerable (e.g., sunning himself to gather energy, or when he is sleeping) are just two examples he appreciates. Like many lizards, he loves songs and stories, and will listen avidly to any characters who share tales of adventures from their pasts.

WIND SONG OASIS

Although traveling for several days in Aditya's company provides a fair amount of insight into lizards and lizard culture, the arrival of the group at Wind Song Oasis reveals so much more.

Wind Song Oasis is nestled in a rocky portion of the desert, the lowest end of a chain of little hills and valleys that meander northeast to join up with the mountains. You understand how it got that name as the wind blows sweetly downhill and water burbles up from its underground spring.

As you approach, you see tent-like encampments all around the palm-fringed lake. Some lizards resemble Aditya. Others are turtles, their hard shells gleaming in the sunlight, and a few slither quickly across the sand on their legless tails, their strong arms carrying bundles or young ones. Although they do not interact with each other much, they still seem to work alongside each other harmoniously. All of them, when they see you, veil themselves and find other tasks to busy themselves with.



Aditya's blood relatives are not the only residents of the oasis, as lizard families are chosen and made up of several types of lizards, including geckos, turtles, and serpents. When a lizard speaks of their "family," they mean any and all they've chosen to live alongside.

As Aditya leads you toward a large white tent decorated with colorful banners that stream in the wind, two veiled lizards carrying spears and wearing light armor approach.

"Aditya. Shadewalkers. The matriarch waits," one of them says. They flank Aditya and urge you to follow.

A larger gecko in bright-colored, flowing garments, and golden armbands waits in front of the white tent. Her mouth opens and her tongue kisses the air in front of Aditya's face.

"The wind brought us news of your return with the shadewalkers, Aditya," she says, her eyes flicking rapidly as she assesses you. "Take salt with us, so we can cleanse the way." A smaller lizard child appears and offers a plain basin filled with the mineral to you.

Aditya and the trailblazers are expected to each eat a small pinch of salt, along with the matriarch of the family, in a quasi-religious hospitality ritual. The lizards believe the Unseen cannot stand the taste of salt, and this establishes some baseline level of trust with the newcomers. Even afterward, if the player characters participate, the lizards around them will remain veiled. The trailblazers are now simply accepted as visitors and not potential enemies.

If Basil and Reece are present, Basil will position himself in such a way that a player character might accidentally trip while reaching for the basin of salt. That player character will need to make an Intelligence check at difficulty 15; then, if they fail that, they will need to make a Dexterity check at difficulty 12 to avoid insulting their hosts. If confronted afterward, Basil apologizes for contributing to the character's clumsiness and Reece is confused at the allegation of malicious intent on Basil's part.

If the player characters refuse to take part in the ritual or otherwise mess it up, it is seen as an insult. From then on, the matriarch only addresses Aditya, refusing to acknowledge anyone else's presence. In that situation, anyone wishing to replenish their water supplies at the oasis must ask Aditya to do it for them. He does so but is terrifically displeased.

Once the group has been accepted, they can learn more about where the matriarch and the family are going and why. Inquiring about the artifact, the Tail of Wind's Strength, unlocks a fanciful and entertaining tale about where it came from and what it can do. If the group fails at diplomacy with the matriarch during the ritual, the trailblazers are permitted to establish their camp away from the main camp. There, Aditya glumly explains his family's situation as best he can after explaining why it was important to gain the matriarch's favor. Only a paraphrased or summarized version of the artifact's story is told if the trailblazers ask, and Ad-

itya stresses how vital it is to the family. No other information is provided.

Helia was a small one, always needing to hide from her enemies. The wind always knocked her aside when it blew past. One day, tired of crouching and hiding, Helia addressed the wind.

"Hello! I am a small one, and I am tired of being so rudely knocked about," she said, raising her head high enough so that both sun and wind could see her.

"Make yourself bigger," the wind laughed, and kept blowing.

"How can I do that?" Helia said. "All that I am is in this body, which cannot grow."

"Look: Mother Sun makes you bigger when you lift your head," the wind said, pointing to Helia's shadow. And the wind was right.

"To make myself even bigger, then, I would need to lift my body. I am not strong enough for that," Helia replied.

Amused, but seeing Helia's plight, the wind relented. "Then I will make your tail stronger so you can," the wind said. And so the wind gave Helia some of its own strength so she could sit up and resist the wind's playing and some of her enemies alike. She was grateful and danced for the wind ever after.

In technical terms, what the artifact does is grant +2 to Strength when worn, and Aditya was the last lizard attuned to it. He was granted use of the artifact when he was sent to the salt pan ruins, knowing he might need to withstand some enemies until the family safely passed by.

Asking for more information about the salt pan ruins and what the trailblazers will face yields the following.

"This salt pan has long been a part of our heritage," the matriarch says. "We have always made pilgrimage to gather some of its bounty. But while we are certain the Unseen cannot and do not live there, we do know something was disturbed there over the years and now all manner of dangerous creatures prowl the ruins. We have spied decayer beasts, corcoranites, and possibly giant worms!"

The matriarch scowls directly at Aditya at the last words and shakes her head as if she doesn't

quite believe it herself. "The ground sometimes shifts and becomes treacherous, and the whole area attracts lightning and dust storms. What is left of the Old Ones pokes up out of the sand like bones that have not yet completely worn away. We go there when we must, and for no other reason."

"Also, and this is important, the last time we were there, one of our alkalists accidentally released some sort of tainted fog while foraging for her ingredients. Though it seems to be safe to stay in the ruins for a day or so, it eventually corrodes whatever it touches, including plastic and flesh."

She gestures to a turtle with part of the edge of her shell eaten away, to stress the danger.

If Basil and Reece hear the information regarding the fog, they will realize it is of the utmost import to their goal to get as much treasure out as quickly as they can, and will rush the other characters a bit so they may take the riches before they are too far gone to be salvaged.

If asked why it's important for this particular area to be guarded, the matriarch reiterates that the edge of it is along the family's path to an annual gathering. Speaking with the other lizards at the oasis reveals that they, too, are preparing to go. It's a Grand Bazaar, held at the nexus of several "territories" and near some traditional spawning grounds. It's a cultural tradition unbroken for many years, and it's implied that if Aditya and the trailblazers cannot adequately secure the salt pan ruins, the family will lose some honor or status in lizard society and another lizard family will take over yearly stewardship.

For the length of their stay at the oasis, if Basil Staffordshire has been allowed to come, the Pugmire representative tries to speak privately with Aditya, the matriarch, or other members of the family and make all sorts of insinuations. Basil implies the player characters look down on them, they are only there in pursuit of wealth, and he and Pugmire are the only ones who will make true allies to the lizards.

Any character already suspicious of Basil may try to stealthily follow him (a Dexterity check at difficulty 10) or otherwise keep him company to keep an eye on what he's doing. If actively confronted about what he is doing, Basil claims he is simply hoping to make friends. Otherwise, if Basil is successful at his whisper campaign,

the player characters notice that the lizards around them begin to eye them suspiciously. Undoing Basil's damage is difficult, requiring repeated Wisdom checks (difficulty 15) as the player characters talk to the suspicious lizards.

Otherwise, the player characters can make friends on their own merits. The lizards are generally verbose and interested in trading. Some have plastic items in their possession that they have no use for but know the cats (and dogs, if there) value, looking for anything useful (e.g., tools, stories, songs, magic, or artifacts) in exchange. The Guide can decide whether to include a masterwork item for trade – this may be a good opportunity for a player character who “forgot” to bring an item they wanted. Consult Chapter Seven: Masterworks (p. 182) of *Monarchies of Mau* to select or create your own masterwork.

Like Aditya, the other lizards of his family eat mostly spiced plant and insect dishes, and foodstuffs consisting of one or both are offered to the player characters. This is a good opportunity for a Constitution check, difficulty 10, if any of the player characters feels squeamish about the dishes offered.

Depending how events transpire at the oasis, the whole group may either be well-supplied along with many wishes for their safe return, or unceremoniously encouraged to leave as soon as possible with little to no additional supplies secured for the trip to the salt pan ruins.

SCENE 3: THE SALT PAN RUINS

- **How did the player characters get to this scene?** By traveling from Wind Song Oasis or traveling directly from Angora if the player characters pushed straight to the ruins.
- **What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene?** Finding a safe place inside the ruin to gather once they've evaded the initial dangers.
- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** The terrain of the ruin itself is treacherous and monstrous enemies prowl it constantly, including the massive, terrifying underground worm that attacked Aditya to begin with.
- **What scene or scenes should logically happen next?** Scene 4: “Below the Surface.”

The closer the group gets to the ruins, the greater the chances for a dust storm to arise. The Guide may choose to have a storm blow up, if the adventure has otherwise run too smoothly for the player characters. Players should make Constitution and Wisdom checks, at difficulty 12, to weather the storm and not lose supplies. The Survive skill will also be very useful. Should any player characters do something as foolish as not hunker down, they are separated from the group and need to roll to see if they become lost (see p. 102, *Monarchies of Mau*).

When the storm blows over, or if no storm happened in the first place, read the following.

When you finally arrive at the edge of the vast salt pan, it seems to ripple in the harsh sun, foreboding and bleak. The golden dunes have bleached to a gray-white, and they ripple in no recognizable pattern. It would appear entirely barren were it not for the ruins as the matriarch described, pitted and corroded fingers of metal or stone poking out at odd angles into the fathomless blue sky above.

There seem to be no signs of life: no scavenger birds, no witless insects going about their business, no sign of any creature or their burrows at all. As you watch, you think you see a brief spark low to the ground.

“Ground lightning,” Aditya whispers. “Watch your step. The vibrations tell me the ground is loose and hungry today.”

As the player characters move closer, even those who are less perceptive can tell the ground is softer and more giving than it should be. The sand here stings the eyes worse than usual and it is unmistakably salty.

There is at least one Decayer Beast (p. 200, *Monarchies of Mau*) taking shelter in what little shade the bits of masonry and metal provide. If Basil Staffordshire and Reece Wolfhound are with the group, an additional Decayer Beast can also lie in wait. If the Guide feels this will not be challenging enough, a second or third Decayer Beast could be added. When members of the group get within 20 feet of one of the larger pieces of ruins, that is when the enemy or enemies will emerge and attack.

Sometime near the end of the fight, or sooner if the fight is not going well, Aditya dives into the sands in a hiding technique he may have revealed



to the player characters before. It is how he escaped from the decayer beast or beasts when he was driven off from the salt pan. A round after that, or when the fight is over, read the following.

Fighting in this terrain is deadly, the salt sapping away your sweat as soon as it forms. Your footing is treacherous, so you are hot, dry, panting, and you stumble often. You do not relish trying to find Aditya. But as soon that thought is chased from your mind, the ground beneath your feet rumbles, cracks, and sparks.

You never would have believed it without seeing it yourself, but now you have: a giant, sparking worm bursts up from the ground, its thick, segmented sides glowing with strange light. As it comes for you, you feel the ground finally give way beneath your feet, and you're sucked below the sand.

The player characters can still attempt to avoid being sucked under the sand, using any remaining

actions in a fight to move out of the way, making a Dexterity saving throw to dodge both the giant worm and the shifting sand (difficulty 15), or any other reasonable action. If they do, they still need to contend with a rampaging giant worm trying to find them on the surface. It responds to vibrations in the ground, and it can smell them. If they can manage all of that, they still need to find Aditya and try to find the lost artifact afterward, which requires finding a way down into the rest of the ruins (which are below ground).

THE CAVERNS

Falling characters, unless a mancer casts a spell to slow their fall or individual characters have secrets to mitigate or negate falling damage, will fall approximately 20 feet below the surface into the caverns that form the top layer of the ruins.

Some sand will continue to sift and shake down into the caverns as the giant worm thrashes and rumbles by on the surface. It gradual-

ly stops after the giant worm moves on. Now that the player characters are on more solid ground, it'll be a little more difficult for the worm to detect the vibrations of their movements.

The air tastes stale, only somewhat lightened by the influx of air that came rushing in after the sand stopped dropping into the cavern where you now stand. Everything still feels so dry, but now at least it's cooler. You can hear your companions moving nearby, but it's dark. Without a light source, you cannot see where they are. Listening a little harder to the ambient noises, you think you may be in a small place right now, but the echoes of your own movements suggest that there may be a way forward.

Artifacts, spells, or other tools (such as a makeshift torch) that produce light or let one see in darkness will quickly reveal that the trailblazers are in an irregularly-shaped 20'x20' space with one exit. With none of those things available, a careful search by touch will reveal the same over time. (It will not reveal much more, as the walls are mostly packed dirt and sand hardened to stone over time. There is nothing else in the room.)

Leaving the room, the corridor slopes up and down irregularly, and light begins to filter in. With the light, the characters notice a yellowish haze hanging in the air, not unlike pollen. This is the corrosive fog the matriarch mentioned, and anyone who stays in the ruins longer than a day begins to lose stamina points at the rate of 1 per hour. Though it's possible to heal the damage, the fog can leave permanent scars.

A methodical search of the branching corridors brings Aditya to the player characters — he began looking for them as soon as he was convinced he was safe enough. A more random, wandering search finds him at the narrow end of a similar room the player characters ended up in. The lizard is fine, if shaken, and he apologizes for hiding again.

"I found something you might like," Aditya says with a shy grin. He presses something into your paw. It's an old, scarred plastic disk worn grainy-smooth.

"Perhaps there are more of these? With the Tail?" He sounds hopeful and excited. Turning up nothing else in these caverns, you hope he is right and select a way down further into the ruins.

There are at least two ways further down into the ruins that the group finds. One is an actual spiraling corridor with a steep descent that provides the characters with glimpses of pitted metal through the dirt of the floor and walls. The other is a hole in the floor of one of the rooms that drops straight down another 10-20 feet. The air gets cooler and mustier, regardless of which route they choose.

SCENE 4: BELOW THE SURFACE

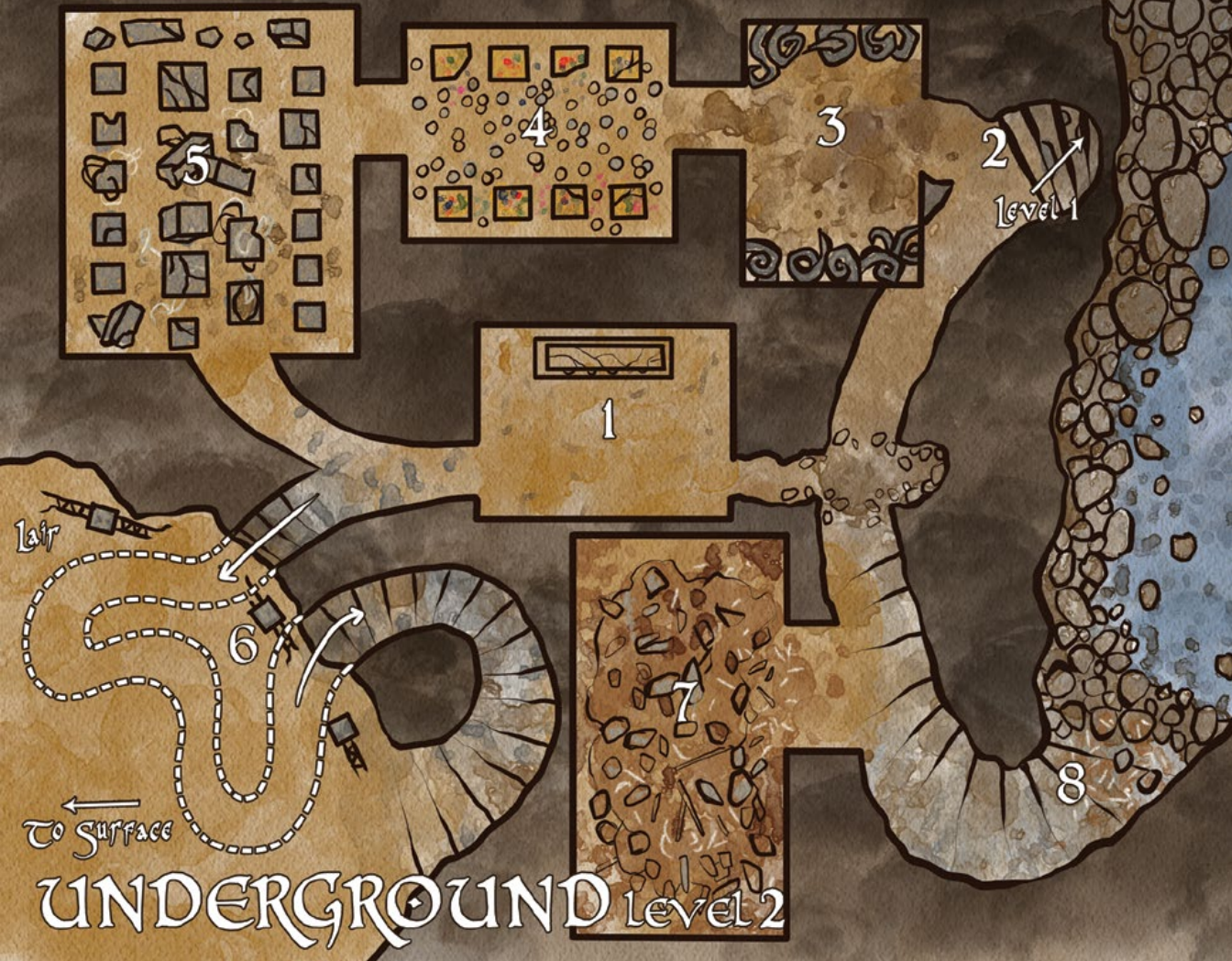
- **How did the player characters get to this scene?** By finding each other again after slipping underground.
- **What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene?** Finding and avoiding or slaying the dangers of the underground portion of the ruins while looking for the Tail of Wind's Strength.
- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** The ruins are labyrinthine, and the artifact is in a particularly dangerous location: the worm's primary nest.
- **What scene or scenes should logically happen next?** Scene 5: "What's Wrong?"

Depending which route the characters (player characters and non-player characters) took to descend further, they end up either in the Entrance or the Corridor Entrance.

I. ENTRANCE

When the characters drop down from the hole in the ground — via any rope they have on themselves, a spell, or a careful jump with assistance — they find they are in a room with a relatively smooth floor, encrusted with many years of dirt and sand. Scratching away at the floor reveals something that looks like large, brightly colored mosaic tile. The whole room, which is approximately 50 feet x 20 feet, has what appears to be a long, raised dais on the side. It is collapsed or perhaps rotted in several places with puzzling and irregular bumps on it. Any attempts to clean it to discern its purpose make it crumble further. Spells of detection reveal nothing about it.

Sifting through this, however, yields several unidentifiable slivers of plastic. There is also what's left of a destroyed, ancient artifact, a small plastic cube. Pressing into a hole on one side of it makes it erupt



into a thin, wheezing sound before it becomes inert again. Repeating this action does nothing.

The floor on the other side of the room drops slightly, and it looks as if at one time the room was half exposed on each side. One side is collapsed, with some recent disturbance having pushed a hole through it. The other side is still more or less intact, with glimmers of corroded metal showing through dirt. It provides a relatively easy path out, which forks after approximately 30 feet. The right path leads to the Treasure Vault, the left curves off further downward. If the player characters are careful, they might be able to follow the strange, corroded curves of metal as they twist and turn up and down for a fair distance in a labyrinthine mess to the Witch Worm's lair.

2. CORRIDOR ENTRANCE (FROM LEVEL 1)

Following the path down into the next level of the ruins leaves Aditya even more skittish, and he pats at a bag of salt he keeps at his waist.

"I do not feel the presence of the Unseen," he says when you voice your concern, "but there are certainly things here I am nervous about meeting. Do not mind me. The salt comforts me."

Coming down to the next level after a careful climb down the spiraling path, the way forward splits ahead. To the right is a more regularly-shaped room (Trap Room), its floor a little buckled but covered in layer of dirt and loose stone. To the left (toward the Storage Room and the Collapsed Rock Tunnel), the path continues but in a much gentler slope downward. Far off in the distance is the faintest sound of water dripping or lapping, along with even mustier smells and a gentle rustling noise. Loud noises, stomping, or dropping anything heavy makes the rustling increase slightly in volume and frequency.

3. TRAP ROOM

Characters entering this room should make an Intelligence check against difficulty 12. If

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they succeed, they can discover a magical trap that triggers when they step between two metal boxes affixed on either side of the entrance and go approximately five feet inside the room. Disabling the trap can be accomplished by smashing both boxes from behind. Any other method of disabling would require spending some time figuring out how to remove the ancient cover and divining how its interior works (Intelligence check, difficulty 14).

If the Intelligence check or disabling the trap fails, read the following.

Stepping inside the room, you see strange, twisted, corroded metal columns on both sides. They contort in fantastic configurations that confuse the eye.

Before you get any further, however, a very loud and distorted warbling noise blares from all sides. After a minute of this, the ground rumbles – the giant worm is back, and it's headed in your direction.

A second Intelligence check (difficulty 10) allows the characters to discover the source of the noise: four cone-shaped objects attached into the uppermost corners of the room, approximately 20 feet from the ground. Destroying them will eliminate the noise, but not before the sound has summoned the attention of the Witch Worm (see below).

All characters should make a Constitution save (difficulty 12) against the blare of noise or be Stunned for one round.

If the Witch Worm is summoned, it uses the connecting, spiraling passages the characters walked from the Entrance room or Corridor Entrance (from Level 1) to reach them.

The characters may find some more slivers of plastic scattered deep in the dirt floor, anywhere from five-20.

4. LESSER TREASURE ROOM

This room has a wide corridor connecting it to the Trap Room and the Treasure Vault, approximately 15 feet wide, allowing the player characters to see (if they have produced some light) somewhat into either room. Stepping closer toward the Treasure Vault (the next room) triggers a scraping, slithering noise that dies down if the character or characters move away.

This room has two ranks of ancient, yellowed but translucent columns on either side, some of them heavily cracked and some half-shattered. A mixture of plastic discs and metal discs litter the floor, potentially causing a tripping hazard. Little piles of jewelry of low quality, colorful and flexible balls, one tiny, plastic sail boat amid other unidentifiable shapes, small rotted books that crumble away, and other treasures are heaped within the columns. It's possible for multiple wonders or fixes (p. 188, *Monarchies of Mau*) to be found here with enough dedicated digging, but many will be broken, expired, fouled, or otherwise unusable.

Basil Staffordshire and Reece Wolfhound both react with different variations of astonishment and glee at the amount of wealth in this room (as well as the next room). Basil makes it loudly clear that anything he picks up is solely for the benefit of Pugmire and the nascent friendship between Pugmire and the lizards.

5. THE TREASURE VAULT

This room is enormous with rank upon rank of ancient, shattered columns, some holding treasure (see the Lesser Treasure Room), as well as other thick metal columns in various states of evident disrepair. Some columns have been fully knocked over, some have been strangely warped, and others have massive holes in them with loops and silvery coils hanging out.

As soon as characters fully step into the room, all the silvery coils come slithering and tumbling out to attack. These coils are etherkesh (p. 201, *Monarchies of Mau*).

Otherwise, this is the motherlode of treasure, and with very little searching, Aditya finds the Tail of Wind's Strength. How it ended up here is not clear, but it does appear as if the etherkesh attempted to probe it. Aditya is jubilant and immediately puts it on, informing everyone it appears to be in good working order, aside from its strange journey.

6. THE WITCH WORM'S LAIR

Following the spiraling, winding tunnels through the ruin (sometimes going down, sometimes up and twisting around) from the Entrance eventually leads here. Conversely, if the player characters managed to avoid falling into the ruin in the first place, this is where they find a way in from the very surface. (Meaning, this is always the way out when the characters are ready to leave.)

The tunnel opens wider as you travel up the winding path, revealing a largely earthen cavern with a few tall, crumbled pillars and a small web of corroded metal branching away from you. Following that path with your eyes leads you straight to the giant worm that attacked on the surface. Its massive head and foresection rear up, scenting you. Lightning energy begins to crackle around it and on the webbing in front of it.

WITCH WORM**CR 6****Stamina Points:** 66**Defense:** 18 (thick hide)**Speed:** 20 feet/40 feet burrowing**Proficiency Bonus:** +3**Abilities:** Strength +3 (16), Dexterity +2 (14), Constitution +3 (16), Intelligence -2 (6), Wisdom -1 (8), Charisma 3 (5)**Attack:** Maw attack (+5 melee, 2d6 + 3 piercing)**Secrets:** Immunity (Electricity), Resistance (Acid), Scent, Vibration sense (worms always attack characters who have moved the most)

- **Burrow:** Once per round, the worm may either come above ground or burrow below ground. It must be above ground or in an otherwise unimpeded, large open space to use its maw attack. When burrowing underground, it disturbs the ground where it moves. An opponent may attack the worm while it is burrowing, at a disadvantage.
- **Acid Spit:** Once per battle, the Witch Worm can spit up to three globs of acid at its enemies. Globes that hit their targets immediately do 4d4 damage, and an additional 2d4 damage at the end of the target's turn. If the target makes a difficulty 14 Dexterity saving throw when hit by the spit, the acid does 2d4 damage immediately and no additional damage thereafter.
- **Lightning Web:** Once per round for up to three rounds before it must sleep, the Witch Worm can emit a crackling web of electric energy from its head. Targets caught in the web's area (approximately 10'x10') can make a Dexterity check, difficulty 12, to dodge or otherwise make a Constitution saving throw versus being Stunned. Stunned targets also take 2d6 damage. Targets that successfully save will avoid being Stunned and take 1d6 damage instead.



Shards of plastic litter the floor unevenly, along with a random assortment of broken and acid-riddled artifacts and wonders. Off in one corner is a heap of shattered white bone shards with jewelry, some broken and a few intact fixes, and another layer of plastic and metal discs.

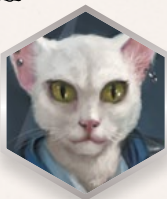
7. STORAGE ROOM

The player characters follow the tunnel until it branches. To the right is a somewhat regularly-shaped room (Storage Room), much like the one that the characters passed on the way here. To the left, the tunnel continues, the water noises getting a little louder. To the right is where most of the rustling noise is concentrated.

Whatever used to be in this room before has been irreparably smashed or twisted into irregular piles on the floor. The scent of mildew and mold lingers in the air. There are more slivers of plastic everywhere, along with shards of something white. You think you see remnants of destroyed artifacts, but it's difficult to tell in these conditions. In addition, you think you see movement, possibly the source of the noise you heard on the way here.

The white shards on the floor are bone, and if player characters are not careful, stepping on one results in a loud crunching noise. This is the final trigger that sets off a swarm (5-10) of Bone Burrs (p. 194, *Monarchies of Mau*).

If the player characters choose to poke through what's left when the fighting is done, they can collect a sizable number of plastic discs and five pieces of ancient and tarnished jewelry.



Just in case your players think they're filthy rich now, a helpful guideline in this treasure trove is that spending a scene gathering plastic shards takes a cat with no plastic to "a few coins," and if all slivers are gathered, it takes a cat with "a few plastic coins" to

"some coins." It would take all the plastic in here to move one cat from having "some plastic coins" to "many coins." Even with the stipend given them by their castellan, if the cats are sharing with each other, none are independently wealthy just yet. See *Monarchies of Mau*, p. 155, for more on currency in the monarchies.

8. COLLAPSED ROCK TUNNEL

Taking the left branch of the tunnel from the Corridor Entrance, the characters descend a little deeper into the ruins. Water and rustling noises come from this direction, and they get louder as the characters make their approach.

The strange pitted and corroded metal comes to an apparent stop, and ahead lies a thick bed of pebbles, rock, and white shards. Approximately 10 feet into this rock bed is the edge of a shallow pool of water. Light sources used on the sides of the tunnel reveal that, at one time, this pool might have been a little deeper and began at the same place as the rock bed. Looking much further down the tunnel reveals a small cluster of stalactites, which is the source of the water drips, and a wall of rock and other unidentifiable chunks of metal and abraded masonry. The tunnel comes to an end there.

Once again, as in the Storage Room, any additional noises in here from the characters will arouse a swarm of 5-10 Bone Burrs – the source of the remaining rustling noises. A few scattered plastic discs might be found in here, but otherwise, there is nothing of interest.

SCENE 5: WHAT'S WRONG?

- How did the player characters get to this scene? After leaving the salt pan ruins when the artifact is recovered.
- What do the player characters need to accomplish in this scene? Wrap up their business with Aditya and his family, as well cementing diplomatic ties.

- **Who or what is keeping them from accomplishing it?** Basil and Reece may scuttle the diplomatic negotiations.
- **What scene or scenes should logically happen next?** The player characters go back to Angora.

Having successfully retrieved the Tail of Wind's Strength, Aditya and the player characters leave the ancient ruin. Any enemies the group did not encounter, or a new enemy attracted to the noise of battle, can appear on the surface or chase the characters out of the ruin if the Guide wants to underscore how dangerous the salt pan ruins are. (More perceptive characters are easily able to tell there is more to the ruins than what they had explored, and so other enemies could be lurking in the unexplored regions.)

An encounter can happen right before or right after Aditya happily observes he can fulfill his duties as guardian once more. This is an excellent opportunity for the player characters to offer their assistance, especially if they are hoping to make up for their diplomatic errors at Wind Song Oasis. If the player characters do not offer, then Basil (if present) speaks up and makes an offer to help Aditya, instead. Whoever offers first earns the little lizard's gratitude.

"Mother Sun shines on me! I will be glad to have you at my side," Aditya says, throwing up his arms in a small, impromptu dance. "But first, we return to the oasis before the wind spoils our good news!"

He helps collect scattered supplies, treasures, and belongings, eager to leave as soon as possible. "This is a cause for celebration, and I hope you are ready to dance!"

The return journey to Wind Song Oasis is a good opportunity for the player characters to learn about any fixes, wonders, or masterwork relics they found in the ruins. (Guides can refresh their memory on how cats learn about masterworks on p. 182 of *Monarchies of Mau*.) If their supplies are running dangerously low, the Guide can decide if one of the fixes they found can supplement or replace anything lost.

RETURN TO WIND SONG OASIS

When the characters return to the oasis with Aditya and the artifact, his family greets them with

a warm welcome. Another hospitality ritual is offered as part of the welcome and also to give the characters a second chance. If the player characters ask to take the ritual before it is even proposed, the matriarch is pleased. If Basil and Reece are present, Basil does not interfere in any way, knowing it will arouse suspicion if he does. Another refusal of the ritual earns disapproval.

"Wind Song welcomes you, shadewalkers, and rejoices at the return of our kin and our artifact," the matriarch declares. She gestures, and several lizards scurry to present food and retrieve musical instruments.

"We invite you to eat, rest, and celebrate with us! Tell us your tale, so we may give it to the wind in thanks."

This is a final opportunity for the player characters to earn favor with the Wind Song family. Sharing in the foods and entertainment the lizards bring out counts as rest for the party, as well.

If Basil and Reece are present, Basil highlights every positive action he took at the ruins and encourages Reece to boast as well, hoping to hold on to all the favor he has earned with the family. He doesn't disparage the player characters, but in conversation, he subtly downplays their contributions when possible. If Basil can, he encourages Reece to mingle with the other lizards so that Reece is not present to correct his claims. The Guide can also decide to keep Reece near Basil – if so, Reece notices what Basil is doing and is confused, but he may decide that Basil is simply overexcited. This is important when confronting Basil and Reece later on with evidence that Basil has been trying to undermine the player characters and their standing as erstwhile ambassadors for the Monarchies of Mau to Aditya's family.

One or two player characters who are suspicious of Basil can sneak off for 10 minutes or so at various times during the celebration. Basil's focus is on talking with as many high-ranking lizards as possible and on spreading a favorable opinion of himself, Reece, and Pugmire, so his tent and belongings can be searched for clues or evidence. A successful Dexterity (difficulty 10) and two successful Intelligence checks (also difficulty 10) allow a player character to get where she wants and find at least two things carefully secreted in Basil's

A LIZARD'S TALE

belongings: a half-written letter to Basil's superiors back in Pugmire, talking about forging an alliance with the lizards before the cats are able to, and a very small journal documenting their travels, his distrust of one or more player characters, and Basil's plans to ingratiate himself to Aditya. If the player character is particularly shrewd, she can make a Wisdom check (difficulty 15) to discover that any ambassadorial papers Basil produced in the past to get them permission to join the group are forgeries. The Guide can decide if there is any further evidence, based upon character interactions, for the player character to find with an additional Intelligence check.

If the player characters allowed Basil and Reece to come, and if they found the above-detailed evidence of diplomatic sabotage, read the following.

Bringing the evidence you have found, you seek out Reece in the celebrations. The wolfhound has been happily listening to music and drinking water. His smile disappears as you show him what Basil has been planning.

"I can't believe it. Basil is a good dog! Why would he do this?" Reece exclaims, agitated and mournful. He has believed all along that Basil came for the adventure and to help Aditya because it was the right thing to do.

"I have to make this right again," he says, sad and determined.

Reece goes straight to Basil and gives the ambassador an opportunity to explain himself without embarrassment, but the cats can persuade Reece to bring the issue to the matriarch as well on a successful Intelligence check (difficulty 10). If persuaded to go to the matriarch, Reece explains what happened and apologizes profusely for Basil's subterfuge. The matriarch is upset, and while she thanks Reece for his honesty, she also requires that he and Basil move their camp to the outskirts of the oasis. Any goodwill toward Pugmire rests solely

with Reece, now. If Reece never speaks to the matriarch, she and the rest of the family retain whatever good opinion Basil encouraged, and it weighs against the family's opinion of the player characters and the Monarchies of Mau.

During the adventure, the Guide may keep a separate tally (on paper, with tokens, anything that works) of when the dogs or the player characters earn respect and goodwill with Aditya and his family troupe. (Aditya freely and happily shares stories of all the times either have helped him.) Using this as a guide along with excellent roleplay can help render a final decision as to whether the Wind Song Oasis lizards will ally with Pugmire or the monarchies or remain neutral (or even hostile!) to both.

Characters who offered to help Aditya guard the edge of the salt pan ruins can go back out to the desert when he does in a day or two, with the remaining characters acting as additional guards or escort with the troupe as it passes by. All the characters can return to Angora after that, along with the lizards' blessings and thanks.

FUTURE STORIES

Regardless of the outcome, Basil Staffordshire and Reece Wolfhound can appear again in future stories with political matters involving both Pugmire and the monarchies, in joint exploration forces elsewhere, or even a in new matter that crops up with the Wind Song lizard family. Both Pugmire and the monarchies are keenly interested in all the plastic and relics the characters found at the salt pan ruins and hope there might be more – especially if any of them give clues about the Old Ones!

More interactions can happen with the lizards, particularly for stories involving the Unseen, finding mysterious relics, or forging additional alliances with other lizard families, friendships with lizard merchants, establishing regular trade (and thus spy networks!), and more.

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MONARCHIES of MAU

ADVENTURES FOR CURIOUS CATS

Adventures for Curious Cats is a collection of three stories for *Monarchies of Mau*, ranging from an introductory story, “Murder Most Foul,” wherein players unravel a possible conspiracy threatening to undermine the monarchies, to “The Lost Library of Amosen,” an eldritch tale of mystery and Unseen abominations, to “A Lizard’s Tale,” in which players accompany a gecko companion to ruins of the Old Ones for treasures, glory, and allegiances.

Adventures for Curious Cats includes:

- Three all-new, ready-to-play stories set in and around the Monarchies of Mau
- Advice and guidance on how to run these particular stories
- Antagonists and plot hooks for Guides to explore in their own future chronicles
- Adventures for characters level 1-5

