

# Against the Grain (A Matter of Honor, Part 2)

by Bob Dushay

*After the summer solstice, Jakallans hunker down for the annual food riots. But this year, the clan has a special reason to protect its warehouse. It could be a long and bumpy week...*

*An adventure set in the world of the Empire of the Petal Throne, using the Gardaijal rules. Sequel to A Matter of Honor; it is recommended, but not required, to have played that adventure. All materials provided. Beginners welcome, but this game features adult themes. This is not a master-bash; strong roleplaying required.*

## Author's Introduction

This adventure is designed as a follow-up to *A Matter of Honor* using the same characters. I don't think this scenario would work as well without the conflicting goals of the group. If other characters are to be used, this scenario might lose a lot of tension without some Sarku worshippers and Diamelish worshippers. Notice that Adler's promotion-hungry attitude is usually a better hook for Sidla's message than Shemek's fanaticism. The two mercenaries are helpful as mystery men, and if this scenario is being played with a group of players that is used to role-playing, it might be better to make the mercenaries NPCs. Good work-plotting on the part of the referee is also demanded, because the succession of women looking for the grain is likely to be barred from the warehouse without a strong push on the part of the referee.

In play, this tends to be a wild and woolly game. Visan always wants to let the women in, and there's always at least one player who strongly opposes this disruption of military security. The Sarku types usually support the military, until Sidla shows up and forces them to change their minds. The mercenaries are drawn to distraction by the rumors, and there is usually a tense, sweaty atmosphere long before the riot actually begins. This game works much better for those who like to get into their character.

Incidentally, in one version of this game, Visan was an Aridani, in which case the stream of women was modified as a string of 'boy-toys'. In this game, the referee used all ten of the mercenaries' rumors, driving everybody frantic.

## Referee's Introduction

This adventure is set during the food riots and mob violence orchestrated by the Temple of Sárku in Jakalla in early Langála, 2366. [Notice that Langála 3 is the date of the summer solstice, which is celebrated by feasting all over Tolváni. Missing this feast is likely to make party members glum, so assume the adventure begins after this date.]

As in the last game, each character has individual, secret goals. This information should be passed on to the appropriate players, and not shared unless the player chooses to divulge it. Unlike the previous adventure, some players may have to choose their loyalties. Depending on their choices, it may not be possible for all players to accomplish their goals.

### 1. Nyelme ("Illusionist") Adlár hÍKhursa, a 4th circle sorcerer-priest of Sárku Cousin to Shémek.

You are an ambitious careerist, and want to advance your prospects as far as possible. With a strong representative of Sárku on the Petal Throne, people like you are being appointed to powerful positions throughout the Empire. If your superiors in the Temple feel they can trust you, you may go far indeed.

Prince Reseshqála, although powerful in this city, is no friend of his brother, the Emperor. If you can find a way to interfere with the Prince's plans (without bringing shame to your own clan), your superiors in the temple may reward you, and maybe reports will reach the Emperor! You could be appointed to a powerful position in less than a year!

However, Prince Reseshqála might retain his wealth and power. If you serve him well (almost certainly against your Temple's interests), you may also gain—and two of his agents are in this warehouse! Of course, the Temple of Sárku will not appreciate having a Reseshqála-supporter in their midst, which means the end of your magical training and your temple career, so a switch to Reseshqála only makes sense if it is going to be very well rewarded.

You possess an *Amulet of Resolve Against The Powers*, a silver half-moon the size of a dime you wear around your neck. It supposedly increases your ability to resist hostile magics. Referee only: He is thus protected against spells as if he were a 10th level mage. If he fails to protect against a spell, it will burst in a puff of yellow smoke, during the weaker damage on Table A). You would love to collect other magical devices, if possible.

Your personal goals for this adventure are (in order):

- Preserve the honor of the clan.
- Preserve your own honor and advance your career.
- Be sure reports of your helpful activity reaches the right ears and not the wrong ones.
- Use this rare opportunity to practice sorcery against live, unsuspecting targets. Cast as many spells as possible.
- Incenseance Reseshqála worshippers as much as possible.

### 2. Nyelme ("Illusionist") Chúrísan hÍMrelsa, a 4th circle sorcerer-priest of Belkhánu.

Nobody knows this about you, but you have a phobia about being buried alive. You are ashamed of this unwelcome trait, and you must not let others learn this. You must not allow yourself to be in a dark, enclosed space if you end up in this situation, you must roll a d10 every 10 minutes. If you roll a 4 or less, you will panic, needing immediate help (either a light fire or cast a spell). Any activation of Self spell will prevent this fear for as long as the spell lasts. You may add a +2 to the die roll if you are choosing a friend. (Crouch another player's arm. TELLING OTHER PLAYERS ABOUT YOUR PHOBIA MEANS THEIR CHARACTERS KNOW IT.)

You genuinely love your city, and hate the annual riots. You don't want to see property damaged and people to die. As a sorcerer, you may be able to reduce bloodshed. Further, as the only resident priest of Belkhánu, you are responsible for making sure that any dead are treated with respect.

You are learning the spell *Alleviation*, which neutralizes poisons. Your studies must not be interrupted, so your teacher gave you a scroll with the spell on it, and you must study it for at least four hours daily to make progress. If you can study for three more weeks, you will know the spell.

Your personal goals for this adventure are:

- Preserve clan honor.
- Preserve your own honor.
- Do not let anybody else learn of your shameful phobia.
- Study your spell.
- Your lineage has a long-standing feud with the Marássu lineage. If there are any Marássu in the party, be sure everybody sees their faults.
- Incenseance Change-worshippers as much as possible.

### 3. Gayán hÍTessuken. Cousin to both Tosdlán and Zagár. Now a 4th circle bureaucrat in the Glorious Palace of War.

You will miss your wife, Talodé hÍMarássu, while you are stuck out here. Perhaps you will find an opportunity to reunite this guard duty to a story about your bravery. It might make a more interesting story if you embellish what really happened. What if some of the warehouse defenders were actually a member of the Omnipotent Azure Legion, the Tolváni secret police, to lead an keeping eye on the grain? If everybody believes your embellishments before you go home, it will be easier to tell an exciting story.

While you are trapped in the warehouse anyway, you may be able to win some gold Káltars by gambling. It would probably be ignoble to take money from your Chaqotéi clan-cousins (and in their case don't have much, anyway), but the mercenaries should have money to spare.

Your personal goals for this adventure are (in order):

- Preserve the honor of the clan at all costs.
- Preserve your own honor.
- Get home alive and unbound.
- Win at least 10 Káltars at gambling.
- Try to incenseance Change worshippers, and don't be caught by their tricks.
- Be able to tell a good story to mean this mission when it's over.

### 4. Shémek hÍKhursa, Kási of the Battalions of the Seal of the Worm, on leave. Cousin to Adlár.

Ever since your capture by the Sa'a Allaqiáni, you have had terrifying nightmares about being taken alive by the Hús—a horrifying prospect for anybody, but it would also mean no lifeline for you in service to Lord Sárku. Your nightmares have affected your ability to concentrate (like a Vietnam vet with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), and this is probably why you have been put on extended leave from your beloved legion, the Battalions of the Seal of the Worm.

This is not exactly a combat assignment, but it is a chance to command, and perhaps you can get reports of your performance here to reach the ears of powerful patrons who can compel the legion to bring you back duty. The best patron, of course, would be somebody who reports to the Sárku-worshipping Emperor Dhič'Uné, 'Eternal Splendor'.

You are a big supporter of the Emperor. His rivals should be sacrificed to the Gods, as honor and tradition demand. Your personal goals for this adventure are (in order):

- Preserve clan honor, and your own honor.
- Protect to yourself you can still be a good officer, and be sure others know it—especially powerful potential patrons.
- As a fanatic of the Worm-Lord, you have little use for Stability worshippers. Due to atrocities you witnessed in the army, you don't like Flame worshippers (Vómúšlá, Chínéq ether, even if they are on the side of Change.
- To incenseance all of these misguided people as much as possible without jeopardizing your other goals.

### 5. Tosdlán hÍTessuken. Cousin to Gayán, brother to Zagár. A former Kási in the First Legion of Ever-Present Glory, now a 5th circle bureaucrat in the Palace of the Realm, under clan-brother Diamláz.

Protecting grain for Prince Reseshqála, this might be an opportunity to obtain the thanks of a powerful prince and possible candidate for the Petal Throne, depending on how things work out. (An Emperor Reseshqála will be a thousand times better than the Sárku-worshipping Emperor Dhič'Uné!) If the mission is successful, and the Prince's agents think you are responsible, you may gain one of the best possible patrons for your career! Of course, you must be certain that your clan brothers not screw things up with undisciplined behavior.

It would be good if you can get some good credit for your kid brother Zagár with the Prince, too. Zagár is unlucky, and needs your help.

Your personal goals for this adventure are (in order):

- Preserve the honor of the clan at all costs.
- Preserve your own honor.
- Be sure you have an important role in this assignment, and do a good job at it. See to it that that good reports about you get to Prince Reseshqála.
- Keep an eye out for your kid brother Zagár, the "black Hmá of the family". He seems to have a lot of bad luck. Help him out however you can.
- Be sure Change worshippers don't get credit for this assignment, and be careful of their tricks.

### 6. Visán hÍMarássu. A foppish dandy, worshipper of Diamelish.

You savor each experience for whatever pleasure it can offer. The less real work you have to do, the better. You would find it so much more pleasant to manipulate others into doing whatever is needed instead of dirtying your noble hands.

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