

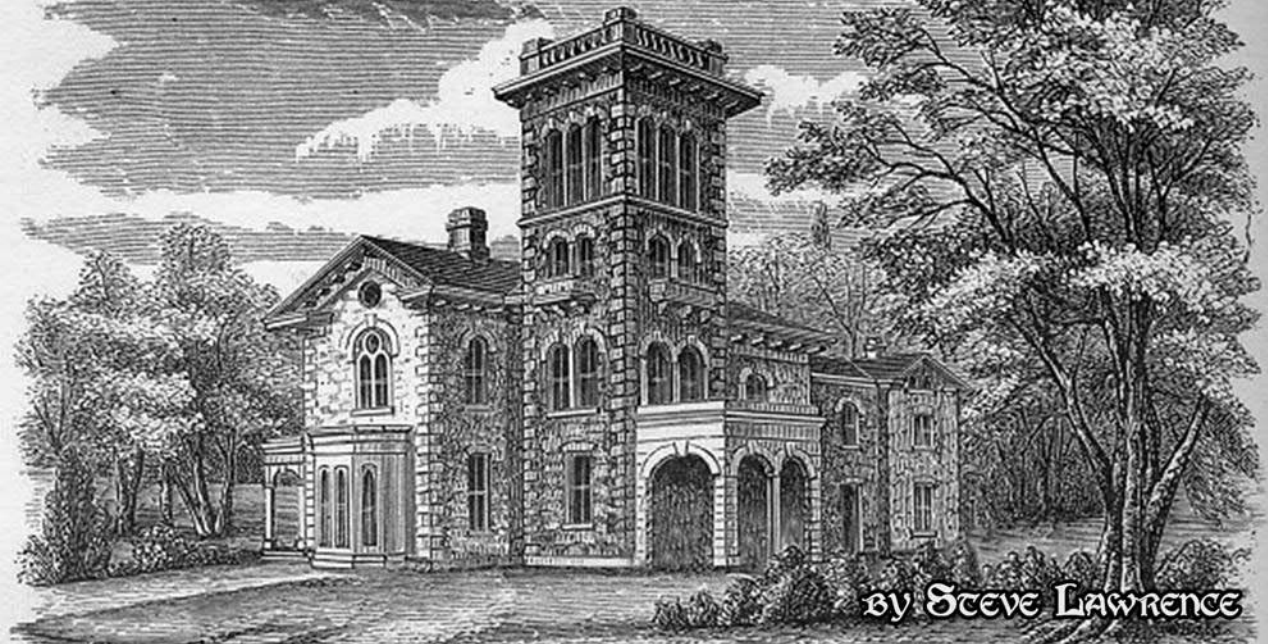
HackMaster



RAKTAVIRA'S VILLA

by Steve Lawrence

RAKTAVIRA'S VILLA



Raktavira's Villa is an adventure for 7th – 9th level characters. Given the nature of the opponents, it is strongly recommended that the prospective characters include at least one Mage with a good offensive spell repertoire and a competent thief or other similarly stealthy individual. The scenario is very freeform and a variety of solutions can be employed to overcome the challenges presented. Though a good deal of tactics are presented, you as GM must be prepared to react to the unexpected and improvise as necessary.

BACKGROUND

Many unsavory creatures find themselves in Dorndern either to find their fortune or hide from their past. One such creature is Raktavira, the rakshasa. Hunted by assassins for the horrendous murders he has committed across the length and breadth of Tellene, he now hides in Dorndern, pretending to be a wealthy merchant.

Raktavira is forced to move often because of his undying obsession with humiliating any who consider themselves to be his social "equals." Because Raktavira is a genius when it comes to economic ventures, however, he is easily able to fund the expensive relocation efforts, maintaining a large staff of servants and mercenaries as he goes.

After Raktavira moves to a new area, it isn't long before the most prominent members of the merchant class begin suffering family tragedy after family tragedy. Raktavira delights in slowly upping the ante with these murders, gradually becoming less circumspect as he tortures, kills, and eats the loved ones of prominent rivals. By the time Raktavira decides to relocate, he has already reaped a bitter harvest on the merchant families he targets, using murder and exploitative business practices to utterly ruin them.

Raktavira began making preparations for a move to Dorndern almost a year ago when his flesh-eating proclivities became too difficult and expensive to hide. The rakshasa needed a new place to hide where no one had ever of the merchant Raktavira or the strange rumors that seem to follow him. Raktavira chose Dorndern for his new home because it was remote, but not destitute and because of its unique economic situation. He immediately purchased land in the city and sent out plans for the construction of his new villa. Near the end of the construction, the rakshasa ventured out into the mountains in search of the orcish tribes that live there.

Dorndern exports a great deal of iron and copper to the south, but most of its natural resources are buried beneath mountains that teem with orcs and other humanoids. Human mines exist, but are few

in number and located nearer to the city as a matter of security. When the mines cannot fulfill quotas, merchants from Dorndern are sometimes forced to conduct business with the orcs of the mountains. The amount of extra capital necessary to maintain security (during what should be routine business interactions) makes these dealings expensive, dangerous, and unattractive to investors regardless of the vast mineral wealth beneath orkin territory. Raktavira knew he could exploit that wealth in a way none of his soon-to-be competitors could possibly replicate.

Just before his arrival in Dorndern, Raktavira took a wide detour around the city to trek into the mountains with his mercenaries and seek an audience with the orcish shamans who lead the various mountain tribes. The tribes had dealt with human merchants before and entered into parlay with the well-armed force. Raktavira, in the guise of a human merchant, told the assembled orcs in no unclear terms that they were now exclusively providing his business with iron and copper ore. The orcs laughed at such an absurd request and offered Raktavira the same lopsided terms given to other lowland merchants. Raktavira laughed along with them for a few moments, letting the orcs think he had been dissuaded by their mocking tone. The orcs' guffaws were cut short when Raktavira transformed into his true form and immolated most of the collected shamans together in a swirling ball of flames. After a brief skirmish (in which it became apparent that none of the orcs' weapons could wound Raktavira), the rakshasa had cowed the remaining shamans and secured exclusive access to their mineral rights. In mere months, the mysterious new merchant had undercut all competition in Dorndern and carved out a comfortable niche for himself. It was about then the rumors started.

Although few in Dorndern would suspect there was anything particularly unusual about Raktavira, suspicions have begun to circulate that something isn't right in his villa. An extremely private individual, guests in Raktavira's villa are uncommon. Combined with his meteoric rise as an exporter of raw iron and copper, all sorts of rumors and suppositions have begun to crop up to explain the new arrival's success. The few disappearances that took place around this same time were largely ignored. After all, Dorndern is a dangerous town.

Lately, however, a new disappearance has caught the attention of the local authorities. The children of notable local merchant Fodol Nund never returned from a celebration held in Raktavira's villa. The brother and sister are known dilettantes and have each disappeared on their own before, only to

surface days later booze-soaked and dazed from their benders. They currently languish in Raktavira's dungeon enduring his cruel ministrations as the world continues on, oblivious to their plight. Their father, however, is unconvinced that this is a normal disappearance and has decided to take matters into his own hands.

Suspicious are growing and there are those in Dorndern who want answers-- and are willing to pay handsomely to get them. The characters can either investigate the villa and bring in the authorities or take a more direct approach. Either way Raktavira will be ready for them.

DORNDERN

The town of Dorndern is in the northernmost part of Cosdol, on the very edge of civilization. Although known for its famed library, Dorndern feels very much like a frontier town due to its location and the ever present threat from the orcs of the Krond Heights, raiders from the northern hills, and the odd owlbeast that wanders north out of the Voldorwood. The current Lord Mayor of Dorndern has been successful in keeping the orcs of the heights through a combination of diplomacy, trade, and, when required, assassination. There are many half-orcs in the region and it is not uncommon to have orcs or other humanoids visit the town to trade or for tribal shaman to visit the library.

Although there are shrines to many of the gods in Dorndern, the Face of the Free is by far the dominant faith in the area. Slavery is outlawed and those violating this particular edict are put to death after a quick trial. As a rule, justice is swift with the punishment immediately following trial. There are few jails in Dorndern.

A surprising amount of trade passes through Dorndern. Orcs from the Krond Heights bring down fairly large amounts raw, high quality iron and copper ore to trade for weapons and other goods. Also, expatriates from many kingdoms on Tellene have found their way to Dorndern to escape whatever fate is pursuing them. Those with wealth still demand the finer things and many luxury goods are brought up from Cosolen to trade for the hard coin these foreigners have brought with them.

The fact that there are no taxes on trade within the city walls has also encouraged merchants and traders to make the journey to this remote place.

The peasantry and craftsmen of Dorndern are given special protection under the law. Abusing them in any way will lead to serious trouble with the town guard and has on more than one occasion resulted in an on the spot, impromptu sentencing and execution of a serial offender.

Rumor Table (d10 roll)

1. *I heard tell that the merchant Raktavira made all his money by getting in bed with those mountain orcs—literally! I tell you it's true! There ain't no way a person can get that kind of deal without giving something up. Now, I bet what he's done is taken an orkin bride! Probably the daughter of one o' their powerful shaman types. That's why he's so secretive—he just can't take the shame. All for a little money.* **[FALSE]**

2. *It doesn't matter that Raktavira is trading with the orcs—that ore is lousy anyway. What I find really interesting is that he's getting such good material out of it. They say he's got a specially trained "chef" or something down squirreled away in his villa. I wouldn't be surprised in the least if the man's a damn alchemist, transmuting that pig iron the orcs sell into decent metal. With a man like that in his employ, Raktavira is set for life!*

[FALSE], the ore from the mountains is high quality and Raktavira's cook is no alchemist]

3. *[a drunken lout begins to murmur] Damn merchants comin' up from the south. This city used to stand for... something. Damn all their eyes. It's a plot, I tell ya, a plot to drain this whole town dry—bring us under Eldor's boot heel once and for all. Well, I'm not going to stand for it!* **[FALSE]**

4. A man clothed in rags approaches you from the crowd. The rough looking beggar grabs your arm with a surprisingly strong grip. "Please, I have watched you and I know you are the one who can help me. He's here. He's here! I've finally found him! Please you must help me! He is not what he seems! He has everyone fooled!" The beggar devolves into ranting hysterics before he is either chased off or arrested by the city watch. If pressed for a name, the beggar will hit his head and cry, unable to remember.

[TRUE], the beggar cannot remember, but he is referring to Raktavira]

5. *I heard Fodol Nund's children are still missing, probably drunk in a ditch somewhere. When is that old fool going to cut them off? Did you know the city watch isn't even looking for them? What an embarrassment for him.*

[PARTIALLY TRUE], the adult children (Olennor and Aldus Nund) are missing, but they are currently imprisoned in Raktavira's torture chamber and not off on a bender]

6. *These rich merchant types think they can do anything. That young fool Maldern took a bunch of his father's money and went up into the mountains last week to negotiate his own trade deal with the orcs. He only took four guards with him. Poor bastard is dead for sure.*

[TRUE], Maldern thought he could negotiate a similar deal to the one Raktavira got for himself and was killed]

7. *Full moon's coming up in a few days. I bet there's going to be quite a crowd in front of Benren's cell to see what happens. You mean you never heard what happened? Well, about a month ago during Gruthal's birthday celebrations Benren went mad and bit a chunk out of his friend Coldon's neck! They found him the next day in a field, naked and covered in blood! All during a full moon. I'll tell you this much, I'm sure glad he'll be behind bars this month, if you know what I mean.*

[FALSE], Benren got incredibly drunk at the birthday celebration and bit his friend on the hand as they argued over a girl. He ran away after the fight, stole and ate a raspberry pie, stripped nude, and then passed out in the grass. Benren can't remember what happened that night and is starting to believe he may actually be a werewolf. If asked whether this sort of thing has happened to him before, he'll reply "Yes! All the time!" The next full moon is in three days. It will come and go without incident and Benren will be released from the city jail where he is being held without fanfare. PCs are free to visit him in his confinement.]

8. *Hmph, I know why people disappear in this piss-pot town. It's obvious if you know the signs to look for. It's fish people, plain and simple. They take on human form, come out of the water at night and lure the weak-minded away. You won't catch me down by the river at night, no sir.* **[FALSE]**

9. *[You approach a thin man with lank black hair carrying a bloodstained sack. He seems agitated by your questions] What do you want? Leave me alone! I don't anything about any missing persons—mind your own business!*

[This man is simply a very private, but suspicious-looking local. His bloody sack contains a severed boar's head which he plans to prepare for dinner. His tone is defense and a little jittery because the butcher he bought it from accidentally gave him too much change and the suspicious man thinks he's getting away with a crime]

10. *My cousin spotted a corpse in the woods when he was out mushroom hunting. It had been stripped of its flesh and there was a curved knife just laying there in the grass next to it. All the signs point to a ritual sacrifice. With the full moon coming up, I'd stay indoors if I were you.*

[FALSE] The corpse was that of an old man who suffered heart failure while out hunting. His body was stripped of its flesh by scavengers and the "ritual knife" is just an old hunting knife.]

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

Dorndern is a city alive with whispers of all sorts of strange happenings. GMs are encouraged to use the rumor table to allow their players to organically explore different leads around. Several of these “leads” are in fact complete red herrings, but can provide excellent opportunities for impromptu roleplaying. If you find your players getting frustrated by the thrill of discovery, then you can always feed them the “correct” adventure hook.

The information found on the rumor table (see previous page) can be found with Glean Information checks or by simply roleplaying conversations with NPCs in Dorndern. Whether that means your PCs are listening in on peoples’ conversation in a tavern or striking up a conversation in the market is entirely up to you.

SCOUTING THE VILLA

Once the characters have decided that they need to enter the villa they have several options to gain entry or gather intelligence.

There are no visible guards from the outside of the villa except around the entrance during the day when the front gates are open and there is activity typical of a shipping / receiving operation. There are always at least 5 mercenary guards around the courtyard and barn whenever laborers are present and 1 standing outside the entrance to monitor who comes through the gate. At all times there are 3 mercenary guards wandering the veranda to make sure nothing is out of place. One is always in the dining room (Area 18).

GameMaster Advice: This scenario is unlike a ‘typical’ kick in the doors and kill things dungeon adventure. Players wed to that style of play and unable to *think outside the cave* may be frustrated. This is perfectly acceptable as it will force them to employ tactics and strategies they may hitherto have been unable or unwilling to consider. The end result is that they will gain invaluable practical experience by delving outside their comfort zone.

Since this is not a linear adventure, much more is expected of you as GM than merely tossing out adversaries as the PCs advance from room to room. It is essential that you thoroughly read the adventure so that you are prepared to react dynamically to player actions. The solution(s) your players devise to break into the villa will undoubtedly vary and cannot be fully anticipated. As such, it is impossible to provide you with a “one size fits all” script to referee all such instances.

Intuitively, this is a scenario that demands stealth. As such, it provides an opportunity for thieves and their ilk to play a leading role. It is entirely possible that a thief and a mage/thief acting alone could

enter from the top of the tower, drive off the rakshasa and rescue Fodol’s children thus satisfying the core mission objectives. Alternatively, a full frontal assault may well result in the death of numerous inconsequential mercenaries yet provide ample time for Raktavira to slay his captives and make good his escape thus botching the whole endeavor.

Talking Their Way In... The villa is a place of business and it is possible for the characters to gain entry posing as anything from a trader wishing to do business to a common laborer looking for work.

Common workers will be hired occasionally but it will be difficult for the characters to pass themselves off without a successful average disguise or acting skill check. Laborers will get very little access to the interior of the villa and will be confined for the most part to the Courtyard and Barn (areas 2 & 3) although they may also carry goods to the warehouse.

Posing as a merchant or something similar to gain further access will require multiple Acting skill checks at a minimum and may require other related skills to demonstrate the knowledge that would be expected for a person in the specific profession.

The GM will need to adjudicate this as appropriate but keep in mind that the principal NPCs are not stupid and don’t just let anyone into the sensitive areas of the Villa. It should go without saying that anyone armed like they are about to fight an orc horde will not be allowed entrance.

Sneaking Their Way In... Except for the 40-foot tower, the walls of the villa are 12 feet high. The villa’s exterior is constructed of brick, thus any unaided climbing attempts are Difficult. An initial skill failure implies that the climber ascends only one-quarter of the wall’s height before encountering difficulty. He may continue the climb or descend and possibly try again. In all instances of an initial failure, the climber must attempt a second skill check at three-quarters height and falls if this check is unsuccessful (*e.g. a climber may not descend and then promptly ‘try again’ five feet away and thus avoid the consequences of his initial failed check*).

The ground surrounding the villa is comprised of cobblestones. Falling from the wall (9’) inflicts a d6p-1 wound while falling from the tower (30’) results in 3d12p damage.

A successful climber may readily locate an anchor point to attach a rope for subsequent climbers.

The building roofs inside the villa will support weight up to 200 pounds before tiles begin to break loose causing the character to slip and possibly fall. Characters (with their equipment) exceeding this threshold have a 10% chance of tiles breaking loose for each 5 feet the character walks (jogging doubles

the chance and further speeds are impossible). If tiles break free, the character will need to roll a Feat of Agility (FoA) check vs. d20 to avoid falling and noisily sliding partway down the roof. A second check should then be made (again vs. d20) which if failed indicates that they actually slide off the side of the roof and land on the ground.

PCs may knowingly jump from the roof into the inner courtyard without sustaining injury.

Anyone falling to the ground – voluntarily or not – must take a three second action to right themselves before attempting any follow-on actions.

Tower Entry... Due to his absolute desire for privacy, Raktavira has not stationed a guard on the top of the tower. Mercenaries traipsing through his chambers on periodic guard shifts would force him to conceal his most pleasurable debaucheries. As such, anyone ascending the tower may prowl around with no chance of being spotted unless they take a foolish action to call attention to themselves.

A cursory examination will reveal a trapdoor set in the floor. Careful testing reveals that it is secured from the underside. The latch may be dislodged via an Average Difficulty Lock Picking skill check. Alternatively, it may be smashed open via a Feat of Strength (vs. d20+4). Note that bashing open the trapdoor will alter Raktavira and he will be awaiting intruders with spell components in hand. See Area 221 for details.

Espionage... If the players try to question, via kidnapping or some other means, any of the workers or inhabitants of the Villa, consult the “Inhabitants of the Villa” section below. In general, absences will not be noticed unless it is one of the principal inhabitants i.e. the Cook, the Captain, or the Manager.

Detection by inhabitants of the villa... The mercenary guards are competent watchmen and reasonably attentive to their duties. Pay heed to their listening and observation masteries as these may come into play during a surreptitious entry. Presumably said entry will not be attempted in broad daylight thus accounting for the mundane workers is unnecessary.

Note that 10 guards pull the night shift though each group has limitations as to what activity they may observe.

2 guards man the front gate (2) for the very infrequent nighttime caller or to raise the alarm should “something crazy” happen outside. Unless given a very compelling story (GM’s call), they will instruct callers to return during business hours. In extremis, one will fetch the Senchal to attend to matters while the other remains behind. In no instance will they open the gate. They are allowed a Listening check if someone scales the wall in this area. They gain an Observation check if they hear noise on the roof of the Barn (3) or Warehouse (5). They may also spot in-

truders in the courtyard (Observation vs. Sneaking).

4 guards watch the Warehouse (5). Normally, two are awake while the other pair sleeps. Their primary responsibility is to guard the merchandise stored here from thieves. They are permitted Listening checks if they hear anyone walking on the roof. If successful, they wake their comrades and then proceed outside to investigate. In case of a general alarm, only two of these guards will respond – the other two will not leave the building.

3 guards patrol the Veranda (7). They should be permitted opposed Observation checks (vs. Sneaking) to notice intruders in the main compound or on the roof. Falling roof tiles will induce them to grab torches and move to where they heard the noise.

1 guard stands watch at the base of the stairs leading up to Raktavira’s quarters. He will not leave his post unless summoned by the boss. Should he hear footsteps on the roof, he will call out to the veranda guards to investigate.

Situational Adjustments to Skill Checks		
Activity/Action	Listening Adjustment	Observation Adjustment
Dislodging tiles from the roof	+20	+15
Falling ‘on’ the roof	+35	+10
Falling ‘off’ the roof	+50	+25
Casting a spell with verbal components	+5	n/a
Casting a spell that makes noise or creates light	+20 (variable)	+20 (variable)

Tactics / Reactions...

- If the alarm is raised, guards from the barracks will emerge fully armed and armored. They will not come out all at once; 1d3 will emerge every 30 seconds beginning 1 minute after the alarm is raised. Keep in mind that the entrance to their barracks is hidden from anyone on the roof since it is set back from the roof over the veranda. Also, these are experienced mercenaries who have been working together for a long time. They will communicate the threat and act appropriately to secure the warehouse and the entrance to the Tower while searching for intruders.

- Sateru will emerge fully equipped from his room after 120 seconds. His principal intent is to direct the action of the guards so they can be most effective and to rally them should they break morale. He will not enter battle unless it is clearly obvious that there is a disaster afoot. If the fighting lasts for more than 5 minutes – or if he feels compelled to enter battle

personally, he yells at the servants cowering in their room to send two of their number to fetch the city watch. They will arrive in 10 minutes with a force of 10 constables. After all this is the villa of a respectable, if somewhat reclusive, merchant. Unless the characters have proof of Raktavira's activities at the Villa, they are simply breaking, entering and likely assaulting with deadly weapons.

10 Constables (30 EP ea): LN Brandobian human man-at-arms; HP 28; Init +4; Spd 10; Rch 2½'; Atk +1; Dmg d6p+d4p+1; Def +4; DR 3; ToP 9/7; Saves P: +0, M: +0, D: +0; Morale: Steady; Notable Skills: language (Brandobian 67), listening 20, observation 20; Equipment: studded leather armor, club, medium shield, whistle

• The kitchen help will scamper to the kitchen to take direction from the Cook. All of the servants will stay in their quarters and block the door with a large trestle table they eat on. Opening the door when blocked like this will require a Feat of Strength vs. d20+10.

• Any characters who are ToP'd will not be killed. They will be tied up and placed under watch in the barn and then taken to Raktavira once the villa is secured.

• In the event the players leave and then come back, the number of night guards will be doubled. Since this comprises nearly the whole contingent of mercenaries (or all of them if they sustained casualties), 12 additional men-at-arms will be hired to work the day shift. Use the entry for Human: Man-at-Arms on p. 185 of the *Hacklopedia of Beasts*. All will be equipped with longswords and medium shields.

INHABITANTS OF THE VILLA

THE MASTER - RAKTAVIRA

Raktavira is very old, very intelligent, and very evil. He is originally from Tarisato but has travelled to many lands over his lifetime. He has come to Dorndern to hide from the assassins his past victims have sent searching for him and will assume that is what the characters are, hired assassins who know who and what he is and are prepared to fight him. Close calls with assassins in the past have made Raktavira wary of them and he will seek to escape unless he is certain the characters can be easily defeated. He is smart enough to know that without the corpse of a Rakshasa to justify their actions, the characters have unlawfully broken into the villa of a local merchant and murdered his servants and guards. If he is able to escape his first action will be to summon the captain of the town watch. If the characters have fled before the city watch arrives he will track them down and 'finger' them for the authorities and place the innocent victim.

See *Denizens of Tellene* (p. 13) for stats.

THE COOK – PALAM BADI

Palem is possibly the most despicable human being alive. Thoroughly evil and amoral, he loves to torment and abuse any living creature, the more helpless the better. Working for Raktivira allows him to live out his most twisted fantasies. He is a giant of a man standing 6'6" tall with a large pot belly that is barely covered by his (blood?) stained apron. He is completely loyal to Raktivira and will fight to the death to protect him although he will try to escape a fight to warn him of danger if at all possible.

Palam Badi (167 EP): CE Kalamaran human male fighter 3; HP 35; Init +2; Spd 6; Rch 3'; Atk +5; Dmg 2d6p+4; Def +6; DR 0; ToP 14/9 (rolls d12 for Tough as Nails); Saves P: +4, M: +3, D: +5; Morale: Fearless; Notable Skills: Cooking/Baking 84, Torture 65, language (Kalamaran 73, Brandobian 42) Equipment: leather armor, apron, overly large cleaver sharpened to a razor's edge

THE CAPTAIN - SATERU RITU

Sateru Ritu has been the captain of Raktavira's mercenaries and his right hand man for over two decades. Completely loyal, he now acts as his Seneschal and even Palam the Cook will defer to him. Sateru maintains strict discipline within the villa and his men know that a lapse in their duties will result in a harsh punishment. Where Palam is sadistic, Sateru is cunning and careful. He knows that there must be no evidence of the truth about his master under any circumstances. In the event that Raktavira is killed, he will do everything in his power to destroy his body and maintain the story that he was simply a merchant and man of business.

See *Denizens of Tellene* (p. 14) for stats.

MERCENARIES

Raktavira's mercenaries have fought with him in many battles and have remained with him in hiding to protect him. Although they are loyal they are itching for a fight and do not hesitate to resort to violence if given the opportunity. They are known around town as a dangerous group and tavern owners are wary when they show up for a night of drinking in their establishments. They know that Raktivira is a magician and warrior who dines on human flesh but they won't give this information up easily. Even they do not know that he is a Rakshasa.

There are 22 mercenaries total at the Villa.

Mercenary (67 EP ea): LE Kalamaran human male fighter 1; HP 32; Init +3; Spd 8; Rch 3½'; Atk +3; Dmg 2d8p+3; Def +1 (+7 with shield); DR 3; ToP 11/7; Saves P: +1, M: +1, D: +1; Morale: Brave; Notable Skills: language (Kalamaran 70, Brandobian 23), listening 20, observation 20; Equipment: studded leather armor, longsword, dagger, medium shield (if not using bow), short bow, 12 arrows

KITCHEN HELP

The servants who work in the kitchen are true servants

of Raktavira. Many of them have traveled with him for quite some time and are fully aware of whom and what he is. They assist with preparation of his 'special meals' and other tasks that require discretion. The other servants see that the Kitchen Help get preferential treatment and some of them will strive to prove themselves worthy to join their ranks by working extra hard since they basically seeing it a promotion. Although on very rare occasions those who are found to be truly evil may become Kitchen Help, most of those who are too ambitious disappear eventually.

There are 12 kitchen servants at the Villa.

Kitchen Worker (0 EP): NE Kalamaran (and few Brandobian) human female; HP 20; Init +5; Atk: non-combatant; Def -1; DR 0; ToP 6 /6 Notable Skills: language (Brandobian 15, Kalamaran 70), Cooking/Baking 40+d20; Equipment: clothing, apron, knife

SERVANTS

These are commoners that do the drudge work around the Villa such as cleaning, gardening, etc. They do not work in the kitchens at all and are never allowed to enter Raktavira's chambers in the tower. They are not aware of Raktavira's true nature and indeed he often preys on them when he gets bored and needs a little amusement. Servants that begin to realize that something isn't 'right' with the villa usually leave on their own or just disappear if they voice their concerns.

There are 11 servants at the Villa.

Servant (0 EP): N Brandobian human female; HP 18; Init +6; Atk: non-combatant; Def -2; DR 0; ToP 6 /5 Notable Skills: language (Brandobian 70), Equipment: clothing

THE MANAGER – GRUTHA ORINDA

A pathetic failure as a merchant, Grutha was recruited by Raktavira to run the day to day operations of his trading operation. Grutha is a small, nondescript man that lives alone in a small apartment a short distance from the Villa. He has convinced himself that there is nothing unusual about his place of employment, deep down he knows that isn't true. Although he doesn't know the specifics, he does know the following:

- ▶ Palam is a sick bastard and Grutha is terrified of him. He also knows that Palam cooks special meals for the master but doesn't know what that means.
- ▶ He has never dined with Raktavira and only has business related conversations with him. They often communicate in writing.
- ▶ Raktavira is very secretive and paranoid but he doesn't know why.
- ▶ Some of the guards and workers have associated with the Master for a long time. He thinks they were mercenaries of some kind but at any rate they have traveled a lot and seem to be from somewhere in the old Kalamaran Empire.
- ▶ The business is legitimate. He has been working for Raktavira for about 3 years and everything is in order.

Grutha has no specific loyalty to Raktavira other than as his business manager. He will not risk his life for him. He isn't evil, just weak willed and tired of being a failure. If confronted with the truth he will act appalled and do whatever he can to appear to help while getting whatever loot he can and leaving town.

Grutha Orinda: N Brandobian human male merchant; HP 22; Init +2; Atk non-combatant; Def +1; DR 0; ToP 7 /5 Notable Skills Administration (34), Appraisal (51), Literacy, Persuasion (32), Resist Persuasion (17), Skilled Liar (19 Equipment: Merchant Clothes

DAY LABOR

During the day there are many laborers that come to the compound to work in the courtyard and barn loading and unloading wagons, caring for the horses, making repairs and that sort of thing. They have no idea what evil lurks in the tower, they just see this as a job. All Day Laborers are managed by Grutha Orinda who is responsible for running Raktavira's trading business. Grutha Orinda can be found in the office during the day and sometimes in the evening but he lives in his own apartment in Dorndern.

On an average day there will be 11 – 20 laborers at the Villa depending on the work to be done.

THE VILLA KEY

Keep in mind that although these are all detailed as separate areas, it is really a big open courtyard garden surrounded by buildings. People will be moving about during the day so GMs will need to use their judgment regarding how many guards are in a given area at a given time based on the notes above and what follows.

AREA 1: ENTRANCE TO THE COMPOUND

Encounter: 2 mercenaries and servants

Potential Yield: none

This is the only entrance to Raktavira's compound short of climbing the walls (see above) or sneaking in through the well (see area 14). There is a stout wooden gate bound in iron with a small peephole that can be opened or closed from the inside. There are always two guards on duty inside the door, although there could be more if Raktavira is alert to some potential danger. During the day it can be quite busy in this area as well and there will be other servants and followers in addition to any visitors to the compound. During the day one of the guards will go to fetch the Seneschal if there is someone seeking entrance that is not expected.

AREA 2: THE COURTYARD

Encounter: 4d3p human laborers

Potential Yield: none

This area is the focus of much activity during the day. Agents are constantly finding goods that can be exported and buyers for that which has been imported. Wagons are loaded to begin the journey south or arriving with new goods. There are often teamsters or laborers camped in

this area, enjoying their few nights in town before they set off on the road south again who will be up and about except in the wee hours of the morning.

On any given night there will be 4d3p human laborers here. They will fight if attacked but otherwise aren't really interested in the villa or its inhabitants.

AREA 3: BARN

Encounter: various animals

Potential Yield: none

The barn is large enough to house enough horses for 1-2 small caravans as well as the other typical animals that would be used by a household of this size. There are many chickens, pigs, lambs, and a couple of cows. Food for all of these animals is stored here also.

AREA 4: MAIN COMPOUND

The southern end of the main compound area is where most of the work is done. Laborers and most visitors are not allowed near the garden or on the Veranda unless specifically ordered to go there and anyone seen there will be challenged by one of the guards in that area. During the day there may be wagons or carts being moved through this area to the Warehouse (Area 5).

AREA 5: THE WAREHOUSE

Encounter: Several mercenary guards (day), 4 mercenaries (night)

Potential Yield: *Coffer containing 487 sp and 192 cp*

This is where goods are stored while waiting for trans-

port south or sale to local merchants. There are always several Mercenary Guards in this room, even at night 4 guards will sleep here, to ensure that all of the valuables are kept safe from thieves and the servants and laborers.

An iron coffer containing the funds required to run the business is kept here at night. It is kept hidden beneath the floor under one of the cots the guards sleep on. It can be located with an average scrutiny check if the beds are searched. The key to open the coffer is kept by the Seneschal who unlocks it each day for Grutha to conduct business. It is a very good lock and requires a difficult skill check to open without the key. The coffer contains 487 silver pieces and 192 copper pieces.

AREA 6: THE GARDEN

This pool and garden is very well kept and peaceful. The pond is only about a foot or so deep and is kept so clean that it shines in the sun. The statue at the head of the pond is a depiction of The Guardian. This is of course just to maintain the deception that this is the home of a simple businessman and merchant.

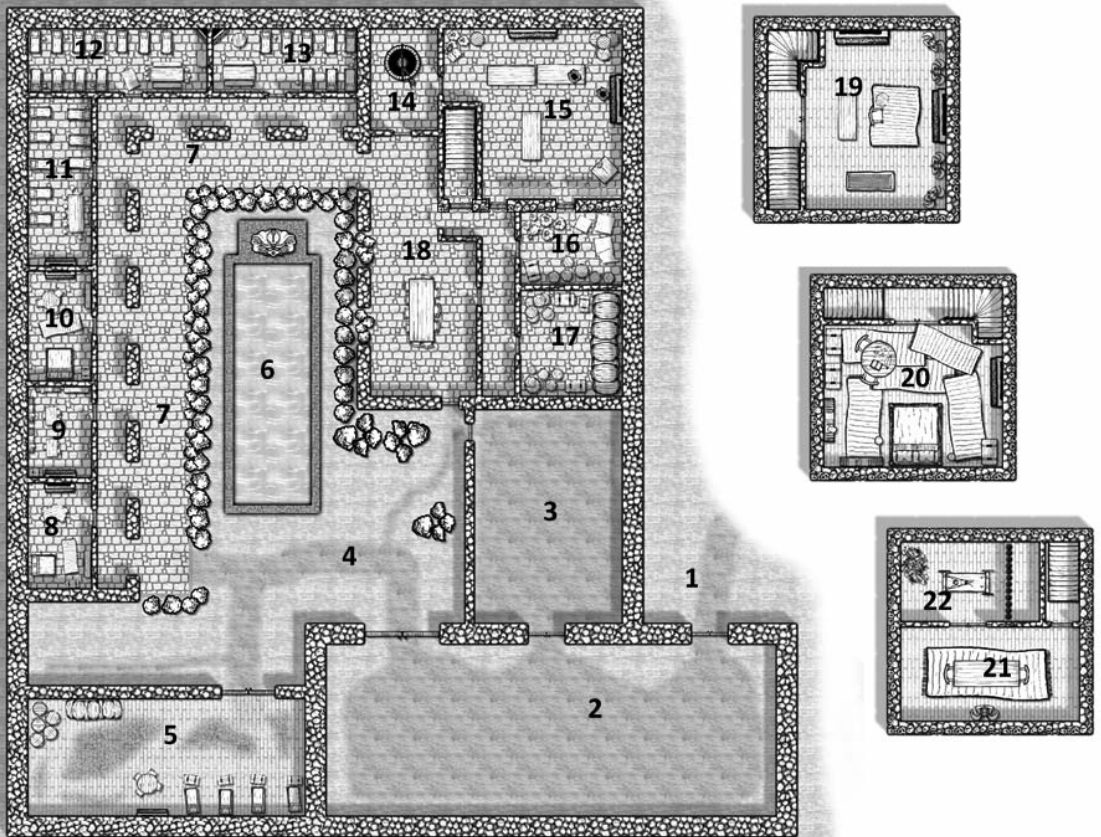
AREA 7: VERANDA

Encounter: 3 mercenaries

Potential Yield: none

This veranda surrounds the garden. It is basically a corridor with large 10ft wide archways every few feet to an extended patio with the Garden beyond.

All of the living quarters of the household are accessed from this corridor and the servants and mercenaries tend



to stay back in the shadows as they go about their daily duties. Generally only the master and his guests go on the veranda except to perform specific tasks. This has a tendency to make the area look quite empty most of the time.

There are always 3 guards patrolling the veranda. They are very aggressive about challenging strangers that stray to these areas and in particular will detain and question anyone in the Dining room without permission.

AREA 8: GUEST ROOM

Encounter: none

Potential Yield: *fine furniture (100 sp)*

The furniture in this room is all made from fine polished mahogany and the bed has real feather mattress pillows and is covered with fine linen sheets and good blankets. The fireplace is made of fieldstone and has a hook with a kettle for warming drinks over the fire. There is also a wardrobe along the wall but it is currently empty.

This well-appointed room is where the Rakshasa's important guests are quartered. Although there is a lock on the door that appears to only work from the inside, it can easily be opened from the outside by someone with the correct key (i.e. the Seneschal). There is no bar or other means of securing the portal from the inside. Also, there is a spy hole that can be used to listen in on and view the room from the Office (Area 9) next door. It is virtually impossible to find from this room since it is just a small crack between the stones (Difficult Scrutiny check and must be searching specifically to the right of the Fireplace).

The furniture is finely made and could be sold for 100 silver pieces for the bed frame table and wardrobe.

AREA 9: THE OFFICE

This room has two desks and is filled with scrolls and ledger books on shelves and in trunks. This is where the import/ export business is run from. During the day and sometimes in the evening Grutha Orinda can be found here but once he leaves for the day this room is locked securely. Only the Seneschal has a spare key which he keeps on his person.

There is no money stored in this room. The daily 'till' is a sturdy, well locked, iron box that is taken over to the Warehouse each evening where it can be guarded properly. The Seneschal takes profits out of it every few days during the early morning hours and delivers them to Raktavira in his study.

AREA 10: SENESCHAL'S QUARTERS

Encounter: Setiru Ritu (night only - during business hours he wanders the grounds overseeing operations)

Potential Yield: *30 gp, Chain Mail, unusual Light Crossbow, Longsword and Ranseur*

This is where Sateru Ritu lives. It has spartan furnishings but everything is well made. There are a few trophies from his mercenary days including his old armor and a few weapons taken from defeated enemies. Also, hidden under a loose stone near the fireplace is a pouch containing 30 gold coins (Average Scrutiny check to find).

The armor is a suit of Chain Mail and the weapons are a Light Crossbow that has silver bands etched with a dragon motif on the limbs (worth 70 sp), a Longsword decorated with dwarven runes along the hilt and blade, and a Ranseur whose blade is made of slightly red tinted metal and shaped like a jagged flame (worth 7 sp).

AREA 11: MERCENARY BARRACKS

Encounter: see below

Potential Yield: *none*

This is where the mercenaries that serve Raktavira live and it smells like it. There are always a few here since they have to rotate through different duties at the front gates, in the Warehouse, and patrolling the grounds.

Under normal circumstances there will be 12 mercenaries here at night. However, if there is any sort of suspected danger 6 additional guards will be posted so there will only be 6 here resting. Also, at least 2-3 nights a week 6-8 of the mercenaries will go drinking and carousing. It is left to the GM to determine when this occurs.

AREA 12: SERVANTS QUARTERS

Encounter: 2-3 servants (day), 8-10 servants (night)

Potential Yield: *none*

This large room appears to be a barracks or servants quarters. There are 11 simple pallets here with coarse woolen blankets and a rough cut trestle table.

This is where the ordinary Servants live. There are several pallet beds and a large trestle table. Normally during the day there will be 2-3 of the servants here taking a short break or eating at the crude trestle table. In the evening there will be 7-10 of them here sleeping, eating, etc.

There is little of value kept in here since these simple folk keep their meager possessions on them.

AREA 13: KITCHEN HELP QUARTERS

This area is similar to the Servants Quarters but it is clear that the furnishings are of a higher quality. Instead of pallets to sleep on there are beds with straw mattresses and nicer blankets. There is even a bowl of fruit on the table!

The followers of Raktavira who work primarily in the kitchen and serve him directly live in this room.

AREA 14: WELL ROOM

In the center of this small chamber is what appears to be a well with a winch and bucket for drawing water. There are several jugs on the floor here that could be used for carrying water.

This is the water supply for the compound. Also, a few feet above the level of the spring water, there is a locked door in the wall of the well (about 15 ft down the shaft) that allows entrance to the town sewers. Only Raktavira, the Cook, and the Seneschal know of this (and have keys to the door) and if needed they will use it to escape.

Entering the Villa this way is possible if the characters are able to learn of the existence of the secret passage from the Sewers. The only way to do this would be to get the information directly from one of the people that know about it which, it goes without saying, would be very difficult.

AREA 15: THE KITCHEN

Encounter: kitchen staff and chef

Potential Yield: *60 sp*

This is a bustling area from early in the morning until after dinner. The Chef sleeps here on a large cot and keeps the doors to the kitchen barred at night. He is a light sleeper and will be awoken if the door to the room is

forced open which requires a Feat of Strength vs. d20 +8.

Nobody is allowed in the Kitchen except for the Kitchen Help since it would not do for anyone to see what is actually being prepared.

The Cook has little interest in material wealth but keeps 60 silver pieces in a small pouch under his mattress. It is not really hidden well since none of the inhabitants of the Villa would dare touch it.

AREA 16: THE LARDER

Encounter: none

Potential Yield: *various foodstuffs*

This chamber is piled high with dried meats such as bresaola & prosciutto as well as staples like fava beans. Much of the latter are in boxes and bags clearly marked with the names of local merchants and vendors.

The non-perishable food in this room could be sold for 100 silver pieces.

AREA 17: THE BUTTERY

Encounter: none

Potential Yield: *various beverages*

This is where all of the beverages for the villa are kept. One wall is stacked floor to ceiling with kegs of ale and boxes filled with bottles of liquor and wine are scattered about the room.

The contents of this room could be sold for 162 silver pieces and notably includes several cases of Chianti (the master's favorite), 3 bottles of Finch-Yager, 2 pint bottles of Liver Squeezings, 6 bottles of Bitter-Korn Whiskey, and 2 bottles of Elderberry wine.

AREA 18: DINING AREA

Encounter: 1 mercenary

Potential Yield: *none*

This is a beautiful open air dining area. Gauzy white curtains hang in the openings in summer while heavier drapes are used in colder months. The Rakshasa does most of his public entertaining for business associates or guests here.

There is always at least one mercenary guard here making sure nobody enters the tower (first door inside corridor) or kitchen (second door). A bronze bell is affixed to the wall just above the doorway to the tower. Closer examination [easy Scrutiny – but only if directed at bell] reveals that a grayish cord is attached to the bell. This cord is attached to a pulley and enters the wall about six inches above the bell.

GM note: This cord runs up the interior wall of the tower and terminates in Area 21. The Rakshasa can yank the cord to summon aid unless the line is cut. The guards are all aware that this is an emergency signal that trumps their standard prohibition against entering the tower. Should the bell ring, the guard here will shout to those in the veranda (7) that Raktavira is in danger and to notify everyone to come at once. He will then run up the stairs arriving at Area 21 twenty seconds after the alarm sounded. The three guards from the veranda arrive after thirty seconds. Subsequent guards and Sateru arrive per the schedule under Tactics/Reactions.

AREA 19: PRIVATE STUDY

Encounter: see below

Potential Yield: *still life painting, onyx statuette, jade*

mortar and pestle, spell book, valuable books, fish tank

This is where the rakshasa spends much of his time. The room is hazy and smells strongly of exotic fragrances as he likes to burn incense and smoke his hookah while reading and studying. He will seldom entertain guests here unless he is trying to gain their trust so he can invite them to dinner. There are many trophies and souvenirs from his travels decorating the room including three crude statues wearing exotic ceremonial armor from around the known world and a large fish tank trimmed in gold and filled with colorful fish.

The following objects are noteworthy:

- An Oddly Accurate Still Life of a Kalamaran Noblewoman's Breakfast displayed in a large gilded frame (value 25 silver pieces to a collector)

- A small onyx statuette of a man being pulled down to hell by demons. (value 50 silver pieces)

- A jade mortar and pestle with intricate spider runes carved into it. (value 25 silver pieces)

- The collection of books is quite impressive and all of the volumes, 100 in total, would be worth 200 silver pieces to the Library of Dorndern or a collector.

- The Rakshasa's spell book. This tome appears to be a non-descript volume among the hundred on the shelves. For each volume examined by a mage, a result of 00 on d100 indicates that the particular book he holds is Raktavira's spellbook. Literate characters unable to cast Arcane spells will not recognize its significance.

- The fish tank is very bulky and weighs in at 200 lbs, but is worth 100 silver pieces.

- There is also a nice mahogany cabinet that is filled with well-preserved skulls. These are mementos from his most prestigious victims. He likes to take them out and drink wine from the various skulls as he remembers the occasion.

- The suits of armor (and accessories) are all replica display pieces meant for show. Both their historical accuracy and protective value are dubious. If worn, they function as poor quality armor (see *GameMaster's Guide* p. 123). They are valueless if damaged in melee.

- ▶ A successful Appraisal: Arms & Armor skill check [easy difficulty] will reveal that these are not battle-worthy. A successful Ancient History skill check [average difficulty] will reveal inaccuracies that clearly call their legitimacy into question.

- o *Chain Mail trimmed in Leather and Fur such as a Fhokki War Chief might wear.* A baldric with ornamental stitching lays over the shoulder holding a broad sword in a scabbard at the statue's side.

- o *A Lorica Segmentata and tunic of a Kalamaran Legionnaire dated from the Time of Misfortune.* Ornamental bronze Baltea hang from the belt as well as a Gladius type short sword. The statue holds a helmet in one hand and rests the other on a large body shield that bears the insignia of the 3rd Kalamaran Legion. (The armor is Banded Mail.)

- o *The Plate Armor of a Brandobian knight.* There is no shield as both hands of the statue are resting on theommel of a great sword.

The 'crude statues' [mannequins] are actually rattlebone mummies. These creatures will all animate and attack occupants should anyone touch the 'display'. (Raktavira cautions guests not to touch the armor claiming the ancient armor is fragile.)

The mummies cast aside any weapons and attack by flailing with their arms. They gain the dubious benefit the armor provides as indicated in the stat block. Mummies will not pursue anyone that flees the room.

Rattlebone Mummies: HP 32 ea.; Init *; Spd *; Rch short; Atk +6; Dmg 2d4p+4 (battering); Def *; DR *; ToP NA; Saves P: +5, M: immune, D: +4; Silver or Enchanted Weapons reduce DR by 7, full damage from any fire attack

#1 (chainmail): Init +6, Spd 9, Def -2, DR 15

#2 (banded mail): Init +6, Spd 8, Def -1, DR 16

#3 (plate mail): Init +6, Spd 9, Def -2, DR 17

Note that the room is also 'trapped' in that the incense permeating the study is a potent poison. It has no effect on the rakshasa but others that enter the room will find themselves getting light headed and will have difficulty concentrating. If they stay long enough they will decide to sit down and relax, eventually falling into a stupor. Even brief exposure may affect the senses to the point that initiative will be affected. Consult the following table:

Time in the Room	Effect
Entering the room	Initiative +2
1 minute	Initiative +4, Attack & Defense -2, unable to cast spells above 6th lvl
5 minutes	Initiative +6, Attack & Defense -4, unable to cast spells above 4nd lvl
10 minutes	Lose all sense of danger (automatically lose initiative). Must make a Mental Save vs. d20 +12 to leave the room. If attacked, PC may take actions once alerted but with penalties as noted in previous step
20 minutes	The individual forgets why he is here and will stare blankly at the various art objects around the room or sit in front of the fire to 'relax'. Individuals so drugged cannot defend themselves or take any actions

GM advice on handling incapacitating incense:

Requiring poison saving throws immediately will signal the players that something is up and likely tip them to the potency of the incense. It is suggested that you merely indicate that they are feeling lightheaded from the pall of fragrant smoke until such time as it matters (i.e. combat occurs). Only then should you pause and determine their degree of incapacitation.

Each step is permitted a save vs. Virulence Factor 16 poison. For example, characters that have dilly-dallied in the room for 20 minutes before getting around to disturbing the

armor displays must make 5 such saving throws with each failure advancing them one step in progressive sedation.

The sedation effect dissipates as fast as its onset once anyone leaves the room.

This 'trap' can be 'disarmed' by extinguishing the incense burner and waiting 20 minutes for the fumes to dissipate.

AREA 20: MASTER BEDROOM

Encounter: see below

Potential Yield: furnishings & fine clothes

This well-appointed bedroom could be described as decadent. A large canopy bed made from northern stone-heart oak dominates the room. Fine rugs cover the floors and fine silks cover everything else. Other furnishings include chests, trunks, wardrobes, and a small table with two chairs.

This room is the private sleeping quarters of Raktavira. He actually spends very little time here since he sleeps very little. The only items of value in this room are the furnishings and fine clothes that fill the trunks and wardrobes. It is all worth 200 silver pieces in total.

AREA 21: PRIVATE DINING ROOM

Encounter: Raktavira

Potential Yield: silver dinner set, Raton Draik's Monocle

In the center of this room is a large polished wooden table with a comfortable looking chair at each end. It is set for a formal dinner including a large ornamental candelabrum in the center of the table. The walls are covered with tapestries depicting scenes of battle and there is a suit of plate mail armor on a stand grasping a large battle axe, blade down as if at parade rest.

This is where Raktavira brings his special dining guests. Although sometimes small groups are invited, he will eventually try to lure a single 'favorite' guest here for an intimate dinner. He will ply them with wine until they are quite inebriated and then lure them into Area 22 to show them his 'finest treasure!'

Sitting at the far end of the table is Raktavira in his pretentious human guise – a monocle in his left eye, smoking his pipe and enjoying skulful of wine. He does not seem surprised by the entrance of the characters and will ask them to join him. If they are hungry and his cook is still alive, he will ask if they have killed him, he will send for him to bring food. He has been enjoying his time with his latest victim and having just stepped away for a little refreshment will not be aware of any ruckus the characters may have caused. The exception to this is if the Cook, Palam Badi, has come to warn him of danger. In this case he will react exactly as described above, he is supremely confident he has nothing to fear from the characters and wants to enjoy the evening with these unexpected guests.

Raktavira will engage the characters in conversation if at all possible. It will start very light and polite but once he has a chance to read their thoughts he will begin to tell them what he is going to do with their loved ones after he is through with them or maybe think out loud as he tries to determine which of the characters will be the most tender. He wants to drive them either to terror or impotent rage before killing them.

Should his guests impolitely bum rush him, Raktavira pulls a gleaming dagger and sighs, "This is most uncourteous behavior gentlemen. I do not wish to wantonly stab you. I may ruin the choicest cuts." He will then proceed to melee and relentlessly taunt every brave warrior ineffectually striking him while seeking to move to the southwest corner where he can pull a sash to alter the guards. (See Area 18 for details.)

He will not initially attempt to cast spells in battle as he is aware that this could very easily result in a spell mishap even if he sustains no damage from a blow striking him when casting (see Spell Mishap rules in Chapter 4 of the *GameMaster's Guide*). However, if he judges that his opponents are not holding their attacks waiting for him to cast, he may become emboldened and attempt some quick-to-cast magic. Under no circumstance will he reveal his true form.

However, if magic is directed at him – particularly damage spells offering no saving throw, his attitude changes. As both a spellcaster and a victim of an overamped *Magic Projectile* fusillade that ToP'd him years ago, he is keenly aware of his vulnerability. Perhaps owing to his near immunity to physical weaponry, he is ironically rather much a scaredy cat when presented with forces that *can* seriously wound him. He has absolutely no desire to hang around and take any actual risk beyond a minor incidental wound. Thus if he sustains a 12+ hit point wound delivered magically, he will immediately break contact and seek the most readily accessible escape route.

Raktavira's reaction to intruders entering via the roof: The rakshasa has always anticipated that one day assassins in the hire of one of the many, many wealthy individuals he has terrorized would find him. Armed mercenaries sneaking in through his roof naturally draw his suspicion and he presumes that said hit squad has been thoroughly briefed as to his weaknesses and equipped to succeed at the job they were sent to perform.

Upon spotting these intruders, he asks, "I expected someone like you. What did you expect? Are you assassins?" Whatever their reply, he counters with, "You're neither. You're errand boys, sent by grocery clerks, to collect a bill." He then proceeds to unleash his most destructive spells as quickly as possible. He will not worry about possible spell failures for he believes he is in a fight for his life!

In the event that a confrontation goes against him he does have several means of escape:

- Behind one of the tapestries are footholds cut into the wall that lead to a trapdoor in the ceiling. This door is barred from the inside and loosing the latch only takes a second. Once on the roof, Raktavira will prefer to cast *Wall Walk* and descend the tower but in extremis he simply leaps (counting on his incredible DR to cushion the impact).

- If denied access to the roof, he will simply make a dash for the stairway disregarding any preferential opportunities he gives his attackers to strike him from behind. He is really fast and should be able to outrun any pursuers.

- He can cast *Quantum Leap* (1 s) and reappear 200 feet away.

If Raktavira is slain, his mortal form returns to its natural state and his corpse can readily be identified as a Rakshasa.

The only valuables in the room are the silver dinner set (value 100 silver pieces) and Raton Draik's Monocle which Raktavira absently left on the table. The Plate Mail armor is another replica piece (see similar item in area 19) and the battle axe is ordinary though serviceable.

AREA 22: TORTURE CHAMBER

This room contains a large table upon which lies a badly bruised and bleeding young man whose hands and feet are manacled to the corners. There is a cramped jail cell to the left of the door that holds a woman who is similarly covered with wounds and lies weeping curled up in fifthly straw .

- ▶ An [easy] Scrutiny check reveals that the two captives have similar features and coloring suggesting a familial relation.

The prisoners are Aldus and Olenor Nund, the teenage children of a local merchant and business associate of Raktavira. Unbeknownst to their father, Foldol Nund, he invited them to dinner the prior evening. He has been having his usual fun and plans on returning their heads back to their father when he is through.

AFTERMATH

- ▶▶ If Raktavira is forced to flee and survives, the characters have gained a very dangerous mortal enemy. He has likely had the opportunity to read their minds and knows the best way to strike back where they are weakest. At any rate before going after the characters themselves he will kill those around them and he will make sure they know that it is him.

- ▶▶ If the characters kill Raktavira but are not able to secure his body they will have a lot of explaining to do. Ultimately they will not be charged with any major crimes if they are able to rescue the two captives in Area 22.

- ▶▶ If the characters are able to kill or drive off Raktavira and his main henchmen, they may be able to take ownership of the villa. This is highly dependent on their reputation and relationship with the Lord Mayor and other leaders in Dorndern. This is left up to the GM to determine.

- ▶▶ There are clues in the study about the various victims of the rakshasa, in particular a number of journals and diaries he has kept. These are in the books that can be sold for treasure. If the characters spend a LOT of time going through the books (e.g. two weeks), they will discover these and if they so choose can get in contact any living relatives of the Rakshasas victims. Although the details of this are left up to the GM, they would certainly be grateful for news that Raktavira is dead and look favorably on those who slew him.

Potential Story Awards:

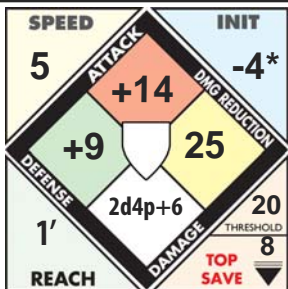
- ❑ Rescuing the Nund teenagers and returning them to their father (2800 EP)
 - or returning the corpses of the slain youths to their father to provide closure (700 EP)
- ❑ Undeniably revealing Raktavira's true nature by displaying his corpse to the authorities (2000 EP)
 - or Having the Nund teenagers provide eyewitness testimony as to Raktavira's malevolent deeds (1000 EP)
 - or Relying upon Raktavira's diaries and journals to expose his depraved activities (500 EP)



Raktavira

Race: Rakshasa
Class: Mage
Level: 12th
Size: M
Movement: 5 ft
Alignment: NE
Reared: Tarisato
Hit Points: 50

***Initiative Die:** 2 lower
Other notable skills: Administration 37, Appraisal (expert in all sub-fields), Arcane Lore 67, Cooking/Baking 14, Disguise 30, Escape Artist 42, Gambling 53, Glean Information 29, Hiding 32, Hunting 41, Intimidation 58, Jumping 64, literacy 83, Riding 65.



Skills
language (Brand) 59
language (Fhokki) 53
language (Kalamar) 82
listening 71
torture 94
observation 72
diplomacy 81
skilled liar 92
resist persuasion 77
persuasion 82
interrogation 84
seduction 69

Raktavira is very old, very intelligent, and very evil. His true form is forgotten even to him but he always takes the guise of a handsome human male. He is originally from Tarisato but has travelled to many lands over his lifetime. Like many of his kind he has a strong desire for wealth and luxury. In pursuit of these ends he hired himself out as a mercenary to various Kalamaran nobles during the Time of Misfortune. He became wealthy as he sold his services to whoever could pay the most, sometimes even working for bitter enemies under different guises at the same time. In the end he didn't care who won or lost as long as the strife continued and he was paid.

After many decades of this life he grew bored of the usual luxuries and began to seek out new entertainments. He no longer simply wanted to eat the flesh of his enemies, but also his employers. He seduced the daughters and wives of powerful nobles and then feasted on them in front of their loved ones. Ultimately his arrogance was his undoing. Over the years he had left a trail of very angry, wealthy, powerful men whose grief led to thoughts of justice and vengeance. Even with his powers of illusion and skills as a mage, soon there were assassins on the prowl everywhere he went. Raktavira was forced to flee to the west and go into hiding.

Eventually he found himself in the far north of Cosdol in the town of Dorndern, where he hoped the assassins will not be able to find him. He now lives in a walled villa under the guise of a wealthy merchant (which is hardly a guise since he is wealthy and uses his contacts in distant lands to run a lucrative trade in both legal and illicit goods). Within the walls of his compound he has fanatically loyal followers based on a cult of personality (and mind control) that he had built up during his mercenary years. Although he does business with 'the filth', he almost always does so through intermediaries who are sometimes thralls but could also be one of his employees. His most trusted employee is a failed Brandobian merchant named Grutha Orinda who surely suspects the darker activities of his employer but has decided that he would rather be rich than moral. Grutha carries out all of the major activities of running the trading operation, although Raktavira is sometimes there in disguise.

For a time Raktavira was able to control his fetish for pain and suffering, drinking his favorite vintages from the skulls of his most memorable conquests and perhaps taking the occasional nameless victim from the alleys. Dorndern can be a dangerous place after all. However, of late he has forgotten the danger and taken up his old habits and invited a few notable inhabitants of the town to dinner. It is only a matter of time before someone comes looking for his guests. Raktavira is not afraid; he has never really been afraid of mere humans.

By Steve Lawrence

Possessions: spell components, Raton Draik's Monocle, dagger +2, fine silk robes (value 80 sp), 3 gold/jeweled rings (value 50+d20p sp each), gold chain (value 250 sp).

Spells Memorized: (1340 spell points) Aura of Innocence, Enrage, Throw Voice, Slippery Surface, Veil of Darkness, Magic Projectile of Skewering, Levitation, Telepathic Mute, Bash Face, Phantom Horse, Lightning Bolt, Fireball, Create Pit, Quantum Leap.

Spells Known: **Apprentice:** Aura of Innocence, Fire Finger, Phantom Irritation, **Journeyman:** Audible Clamor, Aura of Protection, Enrage, **1st Level:** Throw Voice, Wall Walk, **2nd Level:** Frighten, Slippery Surface, **3rd Level:** Rope Charm, Unlock, Veil of Darkness, **4th Level:** Light Sleep, Magic Projectile of Skewering, Reveal Secret Portal, **5th Level:** Disembodied Floating Hand, Entrancing Lightshow, levitation, **6th Level:** Flame Ball, Telepathic Mute, **7th Level:** Bash Face, Clairnomia, **8th Level:** Force Fumbles, Phantom Horse, **9th Level:** Clairoptikos, Lightning Bolt; **10th Level:** Fireball, Induce Fatigue, **11th Level:** Create Pit, Induce Cowardice, **12th Level:** Quantum leap

Sateru Ritu, the Mercenary Captain, was born in a Kalamaran military fort on the frontier with Tarisato. His father was an honorable, if un-extraordinary legionnaire and his mother was a local woman who had fallen in love with and married his father. From an early age Sateru realized that he loved fighting. Quickly adopted by the soldiers of the garrison, he learned how to use a sword at a young age and by his early teens was inducted into the legion.

Sateru was a natural soldier and leader. His ambition and ability was not overlooked by his superiors who soon promoted him to centurion and put often put him at the fore front of every battle he was involved in. He was known for the discipline of the troops under his command and the utter ruthlessness that characterized both his fighting style and his disciplinary methods. He was also known by his peers and underlings as a man who would do anything to further his own position, especially if he could damage his rivals in the process.

There were others that took notice of his skills and he was soon approached by a well know known mercenary leader named Raktavira. This charismatic soldier of fortune offered Sateru second in command over his company, more battle, women, and treasure than he could imagine, and promised that he could secure his discharge from the legion. Although it took some persuading, soon Sateru had joined Raktavira and everything that he had been promised, and more, was his. The wealth and freedom he now enjoyed allowed him to explore the darker aspects of his nature. Sateru had never been 'good' even in his youth but now he fully embraced his own selfish and dark nature. Raktavira encouraged this evil side of Sateru's nature and after several months revealed his secret to him, that he was actually a Rakshasa. Rather than being repulsed by this revelation, Sateru saw only the advantage he could gain by having such a powerful mentor. Over time Sateru would become completely loyal to Raktavira and in return he became his most trusted follower.

After many years traveling and fighting at Raktavira's side, Sateru has now followed him into hiding in Dorndern. Although he agrees with the need to lay low for a while, it has now been several years with little real action and Sateru, as well as many of the mercenaries under his command, are just getting bored. This has led to discipline issues, run ins with the locals, and even altercations with the town watch. Although Sateru would never desert Raktavira, he has been trying to persuade him that it is time to move on. More and more he feels like Dorndern is a cage and they must escape it while they can.

By Steve Lawrence



Setiru Ritu

<p>Race: Human Class: Fighter Level: 10th Size: Medium Movement: 5 ft Alignment: NE Reared: near Tarisato Hit Points: 69</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">SPEED 7</td> <td style="background-color: #ffcccc;">ATTACK +11</td> <td style="background-color: #ccccff;">INIT +4</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #ccffcc;">DEFENSE +9</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffff; border: 2px solid black; text-align: center;">M</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">DMG REDUCTION 7</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #ccccff;">REACH 3'</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">DAMAGE 2d8p +8</td> <td style="background-color: #ccccff;">THRESHOLD 28</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="background-color: #ffcccc;">TOP SAVE 9</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	SPEED 7	ATTACK +11	INIT +4	DEFENSE +9	M	DMG REDUCTION 7	REACH 3'	DAMAGE 2d8p +8	THRESHOLD 28		TOP SAVE 9	
SPEED 7	ATTACK +11	INIT +4											
DEFENSE +9	M	DMG REDUCTION 7											
REACH 3'	DAMAGE 2d8p +8	THRESHOLD 28											
	TOP SAVE 9												
<p>Possessions: chainmail +2, scimitar +2, medium shield +1</p>	<p>Skills administration 37 interrogation 63 intimidation 42 resist persuasion 21 skilled liar 28 torture 35 language (Brand) 25 language (Kalamar) 67</p>												
<p>Proficiencies: armor, scimitar, shield</p>													
<p>Quirk: superstitious (thinks world flat), chisler</p>													

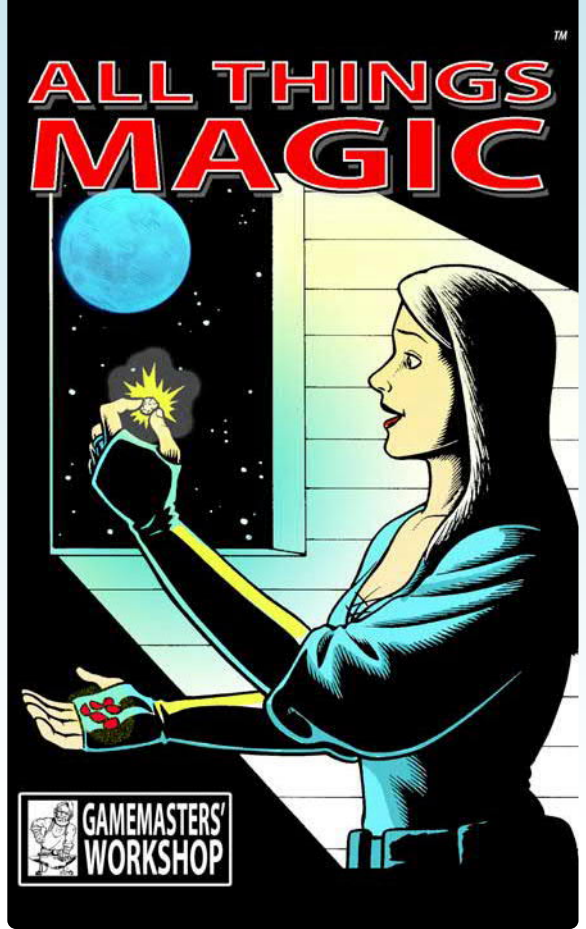
Raton Draik's Monocle



Raton Draik's Monocle appears to be a simply made eyepiece of the kind sometimes used to correct vision in one eye or provide an air of upper-crust superiority. The Monocle has a lens with a bluish tint to it and is trimmed in a plain silver wire with a mechanism that allows it to be adjusted to fit individual wearers as long as their head, and eyes, are roughly human sized.

Raton Draik was a courtier in the Imperial Court of Kolokar, Emperor of Kalamar. A distant nephew of a minor noble, any lesser man would have been relegated to obscurity. Raton was no ordinary man however. Through a combination of extraordinary talent and raw ambition he became the Emperor's spymaster and trusted advisor. It was said that no man could lie to him or even keep their unspoken thoughts hidden. Many plots against the emperor were foiled by Raton personally and he became feared by all who would commit treason or have ill will against the imperial court.

In reality Raton could probably have overthrown the Emperor and taken power himself if he wished. The amount of damning information he held on nearly every major or minor noble would ensure their co-operation in whatever plans he laid and he had gained the respect and trust of many potential userspers. If the Emperor had ever realized how dangerous Raton could be if he 'went rogue' he would have surely found a way to check his power and probably eliminate him.



Raton was a short, pudgy man with thinning hair and quick, beady eyes. He always wore conservative clothing and no jewelry. He had complete disdain for money having long ago realized that power was all he desired. The one exception to this lack of materialism was his monocle which he always seemed to be wearing.

There is no formal record of how a man such as Raton Draik came into possession of an item so useful but allegedly he stole it from a Truthseeker whom he had 'questioned' in earnest for several weeks. This particular legend further relates that years later Raton's corpse was discovered at the Third Legion's headquarters sans his liver while investigating allegations of treason within the unit. The unusual desecration of the corpse was believed to be a signal from the line units warning the Emperor not to interfere with army business. Despite an extensive purge of the Legion's officers, no guilty party was ever specifically implicated... The true culprit being a Rakshasa posing as a common mercenary.

When worn, Raton Draik's Monocle gives the wearer a +4 on mental saves made against any type of illusion or deceptive magic. It also grants a +20% bonus to any skill check used to detect a lie or deception (this skill bonus stacks with the Truthseekers detect lies ability but can't raise it beyond the 90% maximum). Finally it allows the wearer to use *Mind Reading* once per day as the 6th level arcane spell.

by Steve Lawrence