

Avengers of Koric

An Adventure for 3-6 Slayers

INTRODUCTION

This adventure is suitable to 4-6 beginning *RuneQuest: Slayers* characters. It is set in the wealthy Duchy of Valden, located in the heart of eastern Khragmar, though it can easily be adapted to the cold setting of the Glacier Rifts.

The town of Koric recently used its wealth, acquired from nearby gold mines, to build a massive marketplace. They hoped that this stonework wonder would attract merchants and caravans from all over Valden, making their small town a center for trade and commerce.

Unknown to the small town, their chief architect of the marketplace, Fenki, was a worshipper of the Silver Peacock, a dark demon god from Khragmar's ancient history. Once the market was completed, he called on the leader of his cult to sack the town and convert the new marble building into a massive temple to his ancient demon god.

Koric's Last Stand

The town of Koric did not have much in the way of warriors, and they were ill-prepared for an attack. Most of the young men were still at the gold mines when the attack came. The cult of the Silver Peacock barred the mines with a wagon and set guards, knowing these strong village men would starve in a week.

Several of the elders of Koric escaped during the attack, led by an old veteran named Dakik that once rode with the Riders of

Caldecan. He led some of his people north toward the Woodsrun River to seek help from the Riders of Caldecan who once roamed those fields. Unfortunately, they were no where to be found. This is where the heroes come in.

The adventure begins with the Dakik and the survivors of Koric finding the heroes.

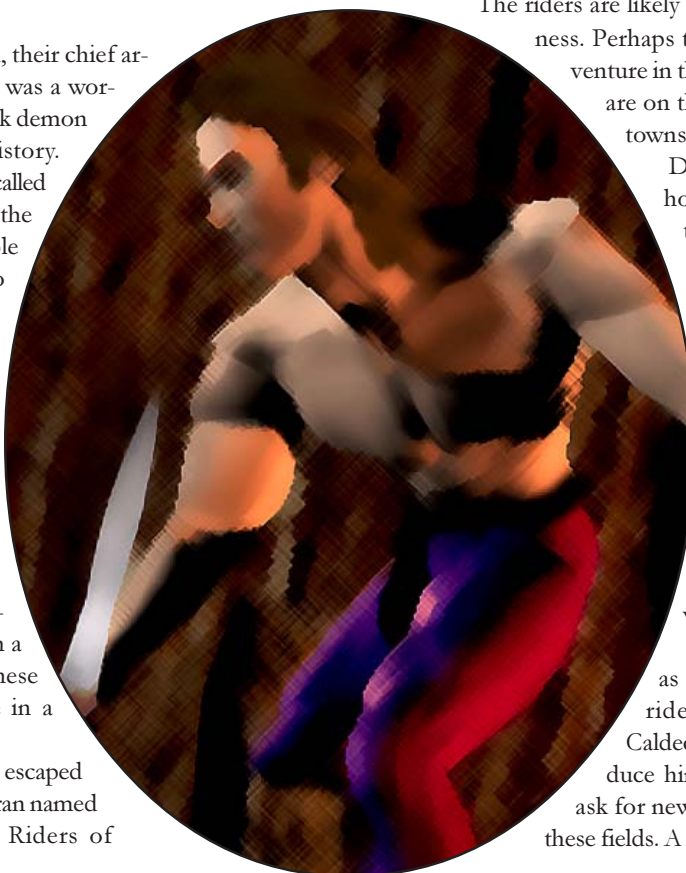
Riders in the Night

The riders are likely to find the PCs out in the wilderness. Perhaps the heroes are returning from adventure in the northern lands, or perhaps they are on their way to one of the many river towns along the Woodsrun.

Dakik is looking for allies quickly. He hopes to find enough strong men that can help them defeat the guards around the gold mines, release the young men of Koric, and then take back the town. Time, however, is not on his side.

During the night, his riders stumble into the PC's camp, probably trampling anyone sleeping far from the fire. The riders are tired and curt, for they have been travelling for three days without much in the way of food or water.

Dakik introduces himself as the leader of the group of elder riders. If there are any Riders of Caldecan among the heroes he will introduce himself as Dakik of Caldecan, and ask for news of the Riders that once roamed these fields. A PC can recall with a Difficult Intel-



lect roll that the Riders of Caldecan went to war at the ruins of Mergas, far to the east, nearly ten years ago. They have not yet returned. Dakik is disheartened by this news.

Dakik's arm is wounded with a crossbow bolt, and he tells his tale with his teeth gritted in pain. He explains that his town was attacked by southern men, and that they trapped the fighting men of the village in the local gold mine where they will starve to death in days. He does not know the identity of the attackers, but suspects they are cultists, since they spoke in a strange dialect and made references to dark demons.

Dakik's first tactic is to implore the PCs for help. He will promise them riches and brides. His town, he claims, is a wealthy one. However, no matter how hard he is pressed, he will not specify any numbers, only mention that gold mines provide great wealth.

If the PCs prove too mercenary or reluctant to help, he states the facts plainly: the miners will die in a matter of days. He doubts he has any more time to find help. If the PCs refuse him, then he has failed his mission and he will order his three riders to execute the PCs where they stand. Better to die in battle now, he explains, than to travel back to Koric knowing the horrible fate that await his sons.

Dakik's threats are not idle. He is a fair, but practical man. His stoic, helmed riders, will follow his orders, no matter how outmatched.

The Trek to Koric

Koric lies 135 miles south of the PC's location. Most of the terrain is rolling fields, making visibility excellent and the journey fairly easy.

Any PC making a basic Perception roll will find tracks and surmise that someone was following Dakik and the other survivors.

If pointed out, Dakik explains that they saw nothing for the past few days, though he admits that they were not being especially alert.

Kala

A day into the journey, one of the helmed riders reveals herself to the PCs. Her name is Kala, and she was the foreman's daughter. She is a vengeful and angry, and if she befriends the PCs, she will reluctantly explain that she witnessed the cultists torture her father slowly before finally feeding him to their wardogs.

Kala goes on to explain that the invaders captured her briefly, and promised to sacrifice her to some dark god, before Dakik rescued her. Knowing her family was lost, she fled with the other riders.

Kala wants vengeance on the man who killed her father. She does not know his name, though she knows his voice. "Like a woman's voice," she spits, "only on a 400-lb pig of a man."

Kala asks that if the PCs find this man that they capture him so she can exact her revenge.

Hunting Party

The tracks that the PCs encountered following Dakik were made by a mercenary hunting party hired by the cultists of the Silver Peacock. The hunters witnessed the riders escape, and have been tracking them for many days. They attack at dawn.

Their leader is intelligent, and orders his hunters to surround their prey on horseback and fire arrows. Two of the hunters are ordered to fire on any mounts in an attempt to kill the horses; the other four attack the PCs and the riders.

Kala

MIGHT	11	HEALTH: 25
COURAGE	14	Reeling: 19
INTELLECT	10	
AGILITY	12	Speed: 8
PERCEPTION	11	Toughness: 3 (leather)

Spear Thrust Attack Dice: 2 Damage: 2d6 impale
Expertise: Novice

Kala is Dakik's young niece. She was engaged to a young miner who was one of the men to become trapped in the mine. She is fiery and vengeful, and yearns to find and join the Riders of Caldecan like her uncle.

Dakik

MIGHT	12	HEALTH: 27
COURAGE	15	Reeling: 20
INTELLECT	12	
AGILITY	12	Speed: 8
PERCEPTION	12	Toughness: 3 (leather)

Spear Thrust Attack Dice: 2 Damage: 2d6+1 impale
Expertise: Veteran

Runes: Bagra's Endurance, Strength of Caldecan

Dakik is close to sixty years old, though he still views himself a hardened warrior of Caldecan. Even though he left the Riders years ago, he is fiercely loyal to them, as well as to his home town of Koric.

The leader of the hunters wears a peacock amulet. An Difficult Intellect roll will reveal these to be signs of the Silver Peacock, an obscure cult that worships demons and revels in human sacrifice. The cult is very small, and mostly based in the southlands of Khragmar.

The other hunters appear to be mercenaries. A basic Intellect roll will confirm this, as they bear the marks of hired soldiers.

If presented with the mark of the Silver Peacock, Dakik recalls that one person in his town was stoned to death many years ago for supposedly worshipping the Silver Peacock. But he has never heard of them having a large cult presence in this region. Dakik assumes the attackers raided his town for the gold mines, better to help build their cult and hire more mercenaries.

The Wizard Hakino

The next day, a Perception roll will spot a strange man meditating on a small, grassy mound far off in the distance. He has erected a strange totem from old wood, hides, and animal bones.

Dakik mumbles that it is likely the hermit of these parts. One of his men suggests they speak to him for good fortune, but Dakik is unsure.

The meditating man is Hakino, a hermit that wanders in the fields of Valden. An Intellect roll will recall that he is a wise man who has supposedly been alive for over two hundred years. Generals often seek him out before battles to ask his advice. If the PCs do not recall this fact, Kala probably will.

Hakino is a bit strange, but will respond to friendliness with a bit of his own. He especially appreciates donations of bread and wine.

Near Hakino's encampment is the scorched body of a dead

The Hunters of the Peacock

MIGHT	13	HEALTH: 25
COURAGE	12	Reeling: 19
INTELLECT	10	
AGILITY	11	Speed: 8
PERCEPTION	12	Toughness: 3 (leather)
Spear Thrust	Attack Dice: 2	Damage: 2d6+2 impale
Shortsword Cut	Attack Dice: 2	Damage: 2d6+2 carving Expertise: Skilled

The hunters are Koli-Jimi's expert, mercenary trackers. They are skilled in horsemanship and their weapons. Their leader, a man named Farish, has Veteran Expertise with his Shortsword.

mercenary. If asked about this, Hakino casually explains that he was a scout of the Silver Peacock who overstayed his welcome, and "now my magic boils in his blood."

If asked to demonstrate this magic, Hakino merely laughs to himself and tells the heroes that they would be horrified to witness it.

What Hakino Knows

Hakino volunteers that the dead cultist informed him that the cult of the Silver Peacock took over the marble marketplace of Koric and plans to convert into a temple.

The dead cultist also told Hakino that men trapped in the gold mine were suffocated with smoke two days ago, though Hakino won't likely share this information for fear of upsetting the Dakik and his friends.

Hakino also knows that the leader of the cult is a man known as Koli-Jimi. He has watched Koli-Jimi for many years, and describes him as a fat man "with little understanding of fate." Kala will identify him as the man who speaks with a woman's voice.

On an exceptional reaction roll, and bribed by good food or wine, Hakino will offer to join the party and assist them in their crusade against the Silver Peacock.



The Iron Peacocks of Ruszt

As the PCs near the city of Koric, they will spot several large birds flying in the skies above them, circling like vultures. A Difficult Perception roll will reveal them to be strange, silvery-red peacocks! A Difficult Intellect roll will identify them as Iron Peacocks, a breed of large, trainable birds from the southern lands of Ruszt.

Flying in unnatural patterns, these birds have been trained to become the servants of the Silver Peacock, and assigned to warn Koli-Jimi of any unusual trespassers.

There are easily a dozen of these aberrants. When they spot the PCs, two fly off back to Koric. The others will continue to circle, waiting for night.

When dusk comes, the peacocks attack. The ten remaining peacocks will dive down from the sky and flock around a single NPC in an attempt to tear him to shreds. Once this is done, they will choose another target. These strange creatures never separate their attacks on different victims. Getting attacked by the horrific flock calls for a Terror Check!

Koric's Gold Mine

Dakik suggests the heroes attack the gold mine before venturing closer to Koric itself. The gold mine, which lies about ten miles out of town, is abandoned; several burnt carts litter the rocks outside the mine shafts, and a foul, charnal odor wafts from inside the dark cave.

A large pile of dead bodies lies inside one of the shafts. From the looks of it, the cultists suffocated the miners with smoke and fire and left them to rot. This horrific sight requires a Revul-

sion roll!

Kala and Dakik are enraged at this sight. Dakik collapses to the ground and beats his chest in anger. Kala stares at the mine in disbelief. After a few words, Dakik and Kala immediately attempt to rush off to Koric to assault the city single-handedly.

If the PCs do not stop them, Dakik and his riders will be slain by the cultists and Kala captured to be sacrificed later that night by Koli-Jimi himself.

Dakik and Kala can be persuaded to wait before trying to take back the town, though if the PCs suggest waiting for more than a few hours, it will take a good reaction roll to convince them.

The Walls of Koric

If asked about the town's defenses, Dakik explains that the town is ringed with a stone wall. There are only two gates in and out of the city. Scaling the walls is difficult because they are high ("the height of five men," Dakik proclaims) and are made from smooth dwarfstone.

If the PCs scout the town, they'll discover two dozen cult guards roaming the tops of the walls. Another dozen cultists are positioned at each gate. Several silver bells have been positioned on the walls every thirty or so paces, making a fairly sophisticated alarm system.

The moment a PC is spotted, at least one of the guards will race for a bell to alert the others. The cultists will send a group of a half-dozen warriors out to capture any renegades, though if these cultists do not return they will grow more cautious and send out larger parties.

The PCs need to come up with a clever plan to get into the city. Since the guards aren't especially bright or alert, scaling the wall and sneaking in is probably a good bet, though more creative plans may work as well.

The New Temple of the Peacock

The marble market building -- three stories high and partially completed -- has been converted into the temple to the Silver Peacock. Several blood-red and black curtains



IRON PEACOCKS OF RUSZT

MIGHT	5	HEALTH: 15
COURAGE	11	Reeling: 11
INTELLECT	4	
AGILITY	11	Speed: 10 (flying)
PERCEPTION	14	Toughness: 0
Beak Shred	Attack Dice: 3	Damage: 1d6-1 carving

hang from the windows, embroidered with the silver peacock. Silver bells are set all about, and cultists ritually ring them with small, finger-shaped hammers.

A Perception roll will spot several iron peacocks roosting atop the market, keeping watch. Avoiding their gaze is tricky, as their Perceptions are quite high.

Some sort of ceremony seems to be planned for this evening. A great mass of chained women and children -- survivors of the initial attack, no doubt -- are being led into the temple. Cult members with whips prod them in. A few more silver peacocks peck at rotting corpses left around the marble temple.

Both Dakik and Kala (if they're still accompanying the PCs) will point out Fenki, a white-bearded cultists.

"He was the architect of the market!" spits Dakik, recognizing the man's treachery. "He's mine."

If the PCs wait long enough, they will eventually glance Koli-Jimi, the cult leader, at the top of the temple. If Kala is with the party, she will curse under her breath and start planning an assassination. If she has been captured, the PCs will spot her with Koli-Jimi -- preparing to be sacrificed!

The Final Revenge

While it looks like many townspeople were slaughtered after the initial raid, at least half of them seem to be still alive. Several of Koli-Jimi's advisors recommend enslavement in the gold mines, others want them to be sacrificed in certain combinations.

Koli-Jimi hasn't decided the villager's fate just yet. However, to appease his demonic god, he plans to sacrifice ten women to the Silver Peacock for the next three nights.

Although the Silver Peacock is not especially strong at this moment, the demonic thing will grant Koli-Jimi and his cultists a reward for their sacrifice. For each sacrifice made, Koli-Jimi will gain +1 Might permanently! For each ten sacrifices made, his cultists gain the same bonus. Once Koli-Jimi feels the strength of the Silver Peacock come to him, he will no doubt speed up the sacrifices and send additional hunting parties out for captives.

If Koli-Jimi himself is defeated, a good majority of the cult will lose its desire to occupy the town. This thought is aided by the disappointment of the Silver Peacock himself, who will possess any remaining Iron Peacocks to devour Koli-Jimi's corpse.

The remaining cultists will pillage what they can from Koric and leave with as many hostages (no doubt future sacrifices) as they can manage.

Koli-Jimi Priest of the Silver Peacock

MIGHT	10	HEALTH:	25
COURAGE	15	Reeling:	19
INTELLECT	12		
AGILITY	9	Speed:	8
PERCEPTION	13	Toughness:	3 (leather)

Knife Stab Attack Dice: 2 Damage: 2d6 impale*
Expertise: Grandmaster

* Poisoned with cobra venom (4d6 damage, see p.RQ83).

Maneuvers: Assassin's Whisper, Throat Slasher

Koli-Jimi hails from the Shining City of Bafirr, far to the south of Khragmar. In those dry lands he discovered ancient texts that spoke of the Silver Peacock, a dark demon god who was defeated by an alliance of the Galloglauch and Elves in Khragmar's long history. Fascinated by the eldritch tales of the Silver Peacock, Koli-Jimi used his natural charisma and leadership abilities to found a cult to the banished demon.

Soon, his cult gained a reputation among the nobles of Bafirr, and they were chased out of the southern lands by the Justiciars. Koli-Jimi took his survivors north, where they occupied a sunken palace to the east of Valden. When one of his most trusted cultists, Fenki, told him of the plan to build Koric's marketplace, Koli-Jimi knew the time was right to strike out again and conquer a town for his cult.

VICTORY!

With Koli-Jimi destroyed, the cultists flee to their sunken palace in the hills a hundred miles east of Koric. The heroes can arrange to attack the palace, or to help rebuild the town. Either way, Koric is avenged, and the cult of the Silver Peacock seriously degraded. Each hero should hero points for roleplaying and creativity as outlined in Chapter X of *RuneQuest: Slayers*.

The town of Koric will undoubtedly award the characters with some form of monetary payment. The gold mine was a large source of income for them, so each will be presented with a carved gold nugget worth at least 500 silvers. If Dakik is still alive, he will present these nuggets to the heroes himself.