

Fritz Leiber's
Lankhmar
Unleashed



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THEMES OF LANKHMAR

This book contains all the background information needed to start a *RuneQuest* campaign in the classic sword and sorcery world of Nehwon, home of the infamous city of Lankhmar. Games Masters will need the *RuneQuest* Core Rulebook to make full use of the material presented here and although not required, the *RuneQuest Companion* and *Arms & Equipment* might also prove useful.

In Lankhmar on one murky night, if we can believe the runic books of Sheelba of the Eyeless Face, there met for the first time those two dubious heroes and whimsical scoundrels, Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser. Fafhrd's origins were easy to perceive in his near seven-foot height and limber-looking ranginess, his hammered ornaments and huge longsword: he was clearly a barbarian from the Cold Waste, north even of the Eight Cities and the Trollstep Mountains. The Mouser's antecedents were more cryptic and hardly to be deduced from his childlike stature, grey garb, mouse-skin hood shadowing flat swart face and deceptively dainty rapier; but somewhere about him was the suggestion of cities and the south, the dark streets and also the sun-drenched spaces. As the twain eyed each other challengingly through the murky fog lit indirectly by distant torches, they were already dimly aware that they were two long-sundered, matching fragments of a greater hero and that each had found a comrade who would outlast a thousands quests and a lifetime – or a hundred lifetimes – of adventuring.

– Induction, Swords Against Deviltry

Fritz Leiber was among a small number of fantasy writers that truly coined the notion of adventuring in the way we, as players of roleplaying games, understand it today. Adventuring in its purest form is living by the wit and the blade, opting out of normal society and getting by as part-vagabond, part-scoundrel and part-mercenary. For those with a band of moral fibre within them, they can add 'part-hero' to that list. Adventurers rarely have an overall life goal beyond surviving another day and making enough money to eat, though they generally have lofty ambitions that involve vast riches, fame and no shortage of glory. Put bluntly, adventuring is a career dedicated to enjoying life and making the most out of a man's span of years in the world – answering to none, relying on instincts and true friends and always keeping an eye out for the next great opportunity to see something new or make some easy money.

The characters of *The Lord of the Rings* had a specific, world-altering quest to complete. Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser were never bound by such responsibility and that is at the heart of being an adventurer in the world of Nehwon. You trade the

responsibility of the working world and obeying its laws, exchanging these elements of life for the chance to make a living off your own back, playing by your own rules. In Nehwon, walking this path stains a soul with shades of grey, at times making the black and white of good and evil a touch unclear.

SWORD & SORCERY

Lankhmar's characters, both in literature and the personalities that players will create in their own games, are not cut from the same cloth as many fantasy protagonists. The Sword & Sorcery genre has significant differences to the Fantasy over-genre – differences which were born in the writings of authors like Fritz Leiber. The themes and the atmosphere of Sword & Sorcery will affect all characters in a *Lankhmar* campaign, as well as have a notable influence on the kinds of stories told and the adventures that characters have.

By Wit and the Blade

Characters in *Lankhmar* are self-sufficient above all – at least, the ones wishing to one day become legends are. Self-sufficiency is a strong theme in the Sword & Sorcery genre. In the world of Nehwon, characters rely on their minds, their courage and their skills. No almighty deities exist in the heavens, ready to dispense incredible magic to aid their heroic followers. No white-robed magician will appear to save the characters at the last minute. No supernatural healing awaits the adventurers if they can just reach the next town. They are on their own, living or dying by their own actions and abilities.

The characters in a campaign, whether blue-blooded nobles or lowborn barbarians, have turned their backs on the traditional ways of life in their respective societies. Instead, they have chosen the unpredictable path of the adventurer. Their goals are rarely heroism in the name of saving the world but simple survival in a world with many dangers and unknowable mysteries.

Beyond survival, Sword & Sorcery characters are also looking out for themselves and seeking personal gain through their adventures. This is what drives so many of them to become thieves and robbers of the bodies of the men they slay. There would be little point in risking one's life in a life of adventure if the rewards to be had were not that much greater than those attainable in a more mundane existence. When a barbarian turns into a wandering sell-sword or a townsman becomes a swordsman and a thief, both have done so because they seek the (often financial) rewards of adventure as well as the thrills.

Few Sword & Sorcery characters are reluctant adventurers labouring under a destiny which was forced upon them. They are escaped slaves who wish to see the world and never be confined by the chains of responsibility again. They are wanderers who burn with the desire to see as much of the world as possible before they die. They are fighters who feel flushes of pride at testing their steel against the blades of others. They are the thieves who relish a heist well done and enjoy every penny of the profits. They are the nobles who turn to the street life to flee from the boundaries of their social position. Among almost all *Lankhmar* characters will be a lust for life that drives them into new lands and new experiences, even as their grumbling bellies and empty coin-purses demand that they take the very next job offered to them.

This is not to say such characters are without heroism. Quite the opposite – their wanderings and treasure hunts bring them face to face with sinister and malicious entities, and slaying these beings does serve the nebulous ‘cause’ of good. Characters are rarely altruistic heroes, out to save others because of a pure-beating heart, but heroism peeks out through the shades of grey.

Heroism in Shades of Grey

The characters of *Lankhmar* are heroes with rather loose ethics by the standards of other fantasy settings, yet their heroism is undoubted. Questioned, perhaps but never truly doubted. Central to all Sword & Sorcery heroes, with *Lankhmar* characters absolutely part of the equation, is that their morals and ambitions are firmly embedded in notions of realism. In the grim setting in which they live, the characters are designed with an element of stark humanity – they make the decisions, good, bad but mostly right, that most people would if they lived in that same world and had to live with the reality of every action’s consequence.

Fafhrd is a barbarian with a great love of both violence and women, even to the point where he considers ravaging a defenceless ghoulish woman at one point and he shows a flair for thievery that is the envy of many cutthroats and criminals in the Thieves’ Guild. The Grey Mouser is a skilled duellist and dirksman with a long tally of slain foes, a love of women who are in a few cases more accurately described as girls and he never regrets once killing a man by the use of hate-driven Black Magic. And yet for all of their faults, Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser do great things. Good, noble things. They fight foul monsters and oppose evil when it crosses their paths. In a world as dark as Nehwon, that happens all too often.

Both of these men are adventurers in the classic, truest sense. They are the very archetypes of Lankhmarese characters, trailblazing through their adventures with heart, humour and determination. *Lankhmar*’s characters live off their wits and skills, working from job to job under the direction of various employers, travelling hither and thither in search of rumoured treasure and killing malicious people and creatures that are bent on causing them harm. Only in a world like Nehwon, and more

specifically in a city as decadent as Lankhmar, could these men and women be considered heroes. Yet heroes they are.

Living By Your Own Code

A central theme of Sword & Sorcery is that the heroes kill their enemies and feel no great guilt at doing so. Some antagonists might escape, others might prove too much for the protagonists and force the characters to flee but heroes in the genre – heroes in *Lankhmar* – will usually kill their enemies given the chance.

Much of this attitude comes down to a character’s own code of conduct and honour rather than any ingrained bloodlust but rage-driven murders certainly have their place in the setting as well. A character may avenge a loved one’s death or lose control in bouts of strong emotion – but these are exceptions to the tradition. The fact of the matter is that codes of conduct and honour come down to perceptions of good, evil and cold necessity. When confronted by their enemies, human or otherwise, Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser think nothing of killing these foes. *Lankhmar* characters have grown up in a world of decadence, mystery and immorality – killing in a fair fight might be a crime against the law but it is not a crime against a man’s honour. If you draw blade against another man, you are making it clear that you are ready to end his life or lose yours trying.

To coin a phrase used by Leiber himself, Fafhrd and the Mouser are rogues in a decadent world where you have to be a rogue to survive. Much is made of Lankhmar’s corruption, decadence and the evil done in its streets. The thugs, thieves and murderers are organised into guilds to make their trades more efficient. Even the protagonists, Fafhrd and the Mouser, are thieves and killers. In the story *Lean Times in Lankhmar*, when Fafhrd finds religion, he follows a particular priest purely because he is impressed and amazed that the faithful old man patted a blind child on the head when no one was looking. Even tiny acts of kindness like this are rare in Nehwon, evidenced in the story and by virtue of the fact that this gesture stuck in Fafhrd’s mind so clearly. The entire setting, especially the great city of Lankhmar itself, absolutely bleeds with an atmosphere of dark fantasy.

This also enters into the confrontations between Sword & Sorcery heroes and their villain counterparts. Why should a man feel guilt at ridding the world of someone (or something) truly evil? The simple answer is that he should not. Slaying evil is at the very core of adventure heroism, even if it comes as the result of trying to survive.

The Malignancy of the Supernatural

The greatest and most unambiguous evil *Lankhmar* characters will face is that of the supernatural. In the Sword & Sorcery genre and excellently portrayed in Leiber’s *Swords* tales, the supernatural is almost always a sinister, dangerous and unwholesome presence.

Magic is the primary tool of dark-hearted and malicious souls, with sorcerers going to great lengths in order to gain power and



influence over others. In *Lankhmar*, magic is something foul and evil that the characters encounter and usually must oppose through their own ingenuity. Rarely is sorcery something they command themselves, at least not without risking supernatural corruption.

Monsters and other supernatural enemies are likewise deeply immersed in the darkest shades of grey. They are often mindless, brutish and violent beings, seeking little more than the destruction of life because it is in their nature to do so. They are beings of an uncomplicated evil. Dark cultists and the foul demons they summon will have distinct reasons for their actions but they remain distinctly evil, with the deaths of innocents being of little concern to them.

Another mark of Sword & Sorcery antagonists is that they frequently possess powers that the characters lack. Most often this will be Black Magic and access to dark rituals, which are the classic genre tropes and can come in ten thousand forms without being repetitive. Whatever form the power takes, it is something the heroes are unfamiliar with and struggle to overcome with their own mere mortal and more realistic abilities. The titles of the *Swords* stories highlight this genre foundation perfectly: *Swords and Deviltry*, *Swords Against Death*, *Swords in the Mist*, *Swords Against Wizardry*, *The Swords of Lankhmar*, *Swords and Ice Magic* and finally, *The Knight and Knave of Swords*.

It is a basic truth in Nehwon that the bearer of blades opposes the wielder of spells and the latter is usually a blacker-souled being than the former.

The Touch of the Unfamiliar

Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser encapsulate another element of classic Sword & Sorcery characters in that they are outsiders coming to terms with living in an unfamiliar land. This need not always be represented by the uncivilised barbarian living amongst the civilised folk, though that is often a satisfying genre trope with a great deal of potential for roleplaying and storytelling. The Mouser is a street-rat and a gutter-thief from another city that comes to the City of the Black Toga for the opportunities it provides a man of his talents. The *Swords* saga details many people who are in similar situations, with escaped slaves and thieving nobles chief among them.

Many *Lankhmar* characters will touch on this aspect of unfamiliarity by deviating from their expected social stations or leaving their homelands in the name of seeking adventure. The farmer who desperately wishes to see the world and turns his back on his rural home is just as valid a character as the wandering barbarian, at least where players are trying to capture this aspect of the genre.

Gallows' Humour

A dark sense of humour permeates through most Sword & Sorcery. In Lankhmar City, the Thieves' Guild is a brotherhood of muggers, burglars, criminal bunglers and underworld

masterminds, all gathered together in a guild which is more organised than most businesses or militaries. Walking from room to room in Thieves' House reveals a legion of thieves being trained by journeymen and master robbers in order to steal by various means. This is a perfect example of how nonsensical elements can take a sinister tone in both the genre and the Imperishable City itself.

Fafhrd and the Mouser are directly targeted by Death on more than one occasion, yet they survive by the skin of their teeth and foil the supernatural entity responsible for the eventual deaths of every being in the world. In fact, their triumph is a remarkable one, for at one point they leave Death cursing in his realm as they flee with his favourite mask. This mix of adventure against the supernatural is at the very core of the genre's black humour.

Another example of the gallows' humour pervading the work is the presence of Sheelba and Ningauble. The heroes' most important patrons are two wizards with a penchant for telling only half of what the characters need to know and spending much of their time bickering with one another like catty old women. On several occasions, both Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser are forced to endure quests for some hard-to-find and ridiculous components for their respective warlocks' sorcerous workings. And yet beneath all of these events are two unknowable alien entities, completely covered in black robes, with enough power to inflict untold harm on the world if they chose to do so.

Time and again, aspects of the ridiculous and the foolish are twisted to create an air of sinister threat or mystery. This black humour characterises Leiber's work and flavours *Lankhmar* campaigns accordingly – the blending of humour and danger can be a powerful storytelling tool if the Games Master gets it exactly right.

Decadence beneath Elegance

Nehwon and Lankhmar City especially appear grand and glorious on the surface but it takes very little digging to reveal the corruption underneath the grandeur. Nobles and merchants grow fat (and occasionally insane) with self-indulgence while peasants and indentured servants toil in fields, dance in taverns or work in kitchens. In a world where the thieves are as organised as the army and slavery forms a large portion of the workforce, the decadence and immorality of many people is only barely concealed, if it is hidden at all.

The characters of the stories oppose this with their very presence. While they accept the world as it is, they recognise injustice and react accordingly. Few would shed guilty tears at the theft of a rich merchant-wife's jewels. Even fewer would regret freeing an abused or wronged slave if they had the inclination or the opportunity, even if they knew on an instinctive level that slavery was an acceptable punishment for certain heinous crimes.

The notion of decadence beneath elegance can take a more blunt and obvious form as well.

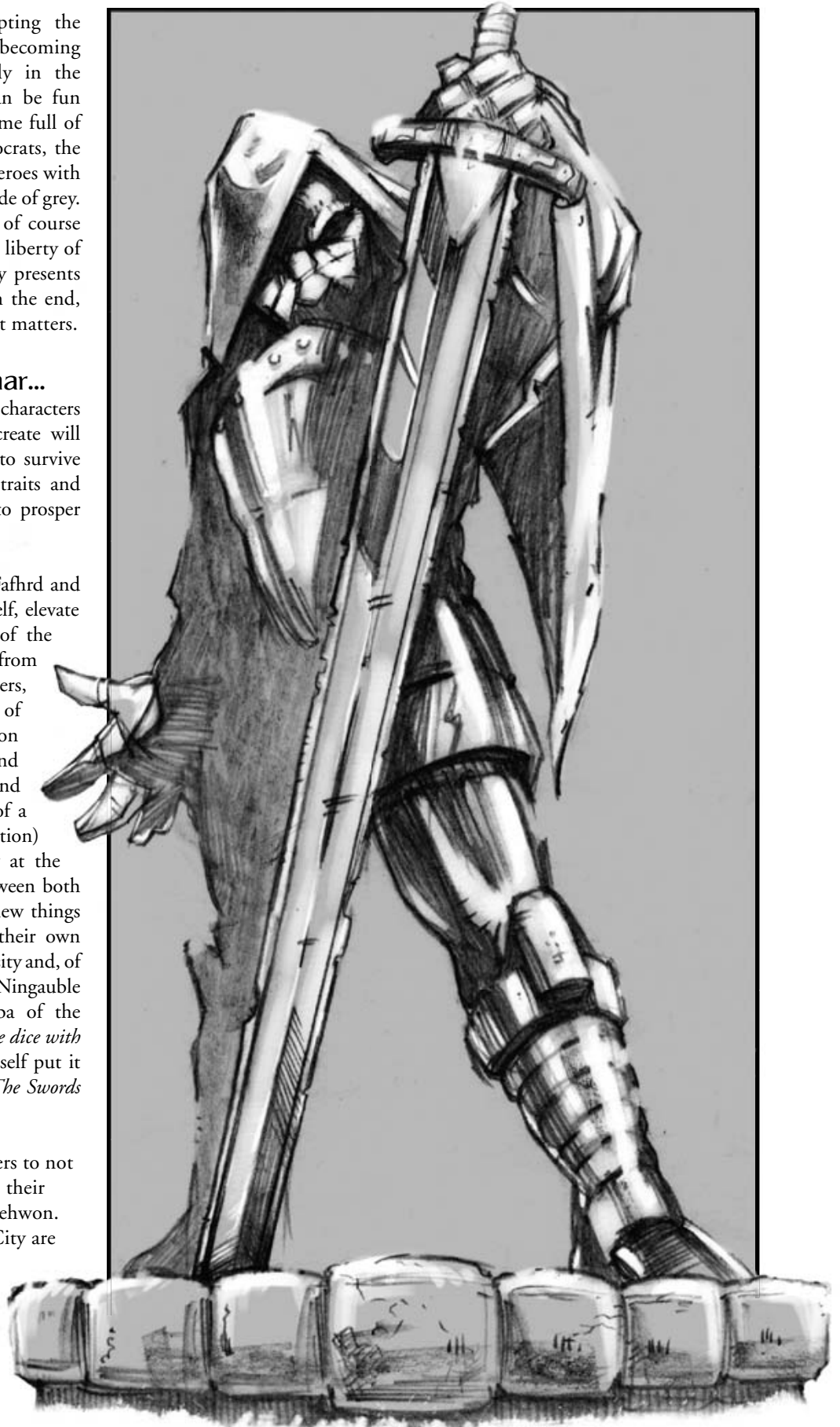
The difference between accepting the world as it is and actively becoming decadent is displayed perfectly in the genre's characters. While it can be fun for Games Masters to run a game full of spiteful assassins and vile aristocrats, the foundation of the genre is for heroes with ethics that are on the lighter shade of grey. There is no right way to play, of course and this chapter never takes the liberty of insisting on anything. It simply presents ways of playing *thematically*. In the end, the players' enjoyment is all that matters.

Welcome to Lankhmar...

This is the world in which your characters will live. The characters you create will need their own shades of grey to survive – the right mixture of heroic traits and scoundrel tendencies in order to prosper and weave their own legends.

Over the course of their lives, Fafhrd and the Mouser thwart Death himself, elevate new gods, crush the strength of the Thieves' Guild, save the world from bizarre inhuman market traders, save Lankhmar from an invasion of sentient rats and wander Nehwon in search of wealth, love and new experiences. If Fafhrd and the Mouser are not the cause of a particular trouble (or its solution) then they are almost assuredly at the centre of the chaos, caught between both sides. They are driven to find new things to do, urged ever onward by their own wanderlust, their powerful curiosity and, of course, their enigmatic patrons Ningauble of the Seven Eyes and Sheelba of the Eyeless Face. *'One more roll of the dice with destiny and death'* as Leiber himself put it in the author's note prefacing *The Swords of Lankhmar*.

Now it is time for your characters to not only fill these shoes but to leave their own tracks across the land of Nehwon. The gates of the Imperishable City are always open for the next group of roguish heroes looking to make their names and fortunes.



NEHWON CHARACTERS

The character creation system for *Lankhmar* games is similar to the standard process detailed in *RuneQuest* with the following differences:

Lankhmar characters receive 100 free skill points. Cultural Backgrounds and Profession also differ from the basic *RuneQuest* standards, due to Nehwon's regional variations and the differences between Leiber's Sword & Sorcery-style writing compared with modern high fantasy.

Cultural Backgrounds

The regions of Nehwon provide a variety of potential cultural backgrounds for players to consider for their characters. Whether a character comes south to Lankhmar from the ice-shrouded Cold Wastes, west from decadent and lawless Ilthmar or north from the tropical jungles of Klesh, players will find the rules here to shape their characters as they see fit.

Aristocrat

Nehwon has no shortage of nobles. In Lankhmar they are the decadent ruling caste of the city, bound together in their dozens – even their hundreds – as part of the Overlord's court. Galas, balls, masquerades and celebrations are the surface pastimes of the aristocracy, though there is always an undercurrent of treachery, backstabbing and political machinations that flows beneath the social one-upmanship and dazzling parties.

Aristocrats of Ilthmar are similarly decadent, with the rat- and shark-worshipping nobility clinging to their eerie beast faiths just as the Lankhmarts follow their ever-changing pantheon as dictated by the Street of the Gods. Political killings, be they poisonings or violent assassinations, are even more common in Ilthmar, as would be expected in such a foul city.

Any aristocrat character can find a reason for adventuring, whether he has a desire to prove himself in the eyes of his family, escape the burdens of responsibility his bloodline bestows, see the world to gain experience for rule or simply 'slum it' for a while and pick up some tricks he would never otherwise acquire.

In other campaign settings, the term 'aristocrat' is generally clearly defined. In the city of Lankhmar it applies not only to blood relatives and peers of the reigning Overlord but also to those traders with the wealth to elevate themselves into the ranks of the aristocracy. For the Imperishable City itself, these ambitious and shrewd souls are most often members of the Grain

Merchants' Cartel – many members of the guild are actually wealthier than most nobles of the city, who rely on hereditary riches rather than amassing fortunes of their own.

Extremely wealthy moneylenders and guild masters are another two groups that are equally well represented by the aristocrat class, for although they work for their riches, they walk in the same circles, attend the same parties and stand as far above the peasantry as any aristocrat with a blood-tie to the Overlord. 'Old money' nobility might sometimes choose to make a big deal out of the newly elevated bluebloods among their number but the aristocrat class applies to any character with the wealth and influence to stand among the noble classes.

In the *Swords* novels, the aristocrat background is displayed by Overlord Glipkerio, Atya, Muulsh the Moneylender, Elakeria Kistomerces, Hisvin and his daughter Hisvet, among many others.

Barbarian

The nomadic tribes of the Cold Wastes have a rich culture, far removed from the sights and sounds of civilisation. Far to the south, the dense, sweltering jungles of Klesh conceal the enigmatic, dark-skinned folk of Nehwon's southernmost nation. The Barbarian cultural background represents characters from these inhospitable northern and southern climes. Characters who select this trait are likely to be uneducated by civilised standards but possessed of great knowledge regarding their own culture. What barbarians lack in refined education, they more than make up for in their wilderness survival skills and their grasp of the lore of the land.

Cold Wastes barbarians are noted for their nomadic natures and the thick streak of wanderlust that runs through the hearts of many tribal men. Many chafe under the matriarchal culture in which they are raised, leading to no shortage of world-wandering northerners seeking adventure, glory – or simply seeking to stay away from their families back in the frozen north. Even the Cold Wastes barbarians that are content with their society still travel a great deal, nomadically following the seasons and coming south each midwinter to meet and trade with traders from civilised lands. Males from the Cold Wastes tend to be tall and physically impressive, to say the least. Their lives of hunting, fighting and general physical exertion tends to leave them with large, bunched muscles on otherwise lean frames and it is not unusual for men to grow between six and seven feet in height. Women are shorter, tending towards stout frames and their own

physical exertions in the arctic wilds give them a strength that can seem intimidating to people of other cultures. Hair colours common to both genders are light blond, jet black or fiery red. Cold Wastes barbarians are usually very pale-skinned.

On the contrary, the barbarians of Klesh are black-skinned, black-haired and secretive in the extreme. Characters from this region will have valid reasons for leaving their jungle homeland, such as seeking adventure, atoning for a wrongdoing or simply leaving their kin. Physically, a demanding life in the jungle leaves Kleshites fit, lean and healthy, with well-defined musculature and little fat on their bodies. Hair is almost always left long, often braided or dreadlocked or otherwise tied back, to keep it from blocking a character's vision.

The barbarian cultural background is represented in the *Swords* novels by Vellix the Venturer, Hringorl, Fafhrd's lieutenants Skor, Mannimark and Skullick and of course the mighty hero Fafhrd himself. It can be used to represent characters from the Kleshite Jungles or the Cold Wastes and any similar arctic or equatorial rainforest regions.

Freeman

The overwhelming majority of folk in Nehwon are represented by the freeman background. Rather than see this choice as a plain or common selection, Games Masters and players are encouraged to remember that it is common by virtue of the sheer number of skills and careers it covers, rather than because of a lack of anything interesting.

Villages in Nehwon are more rare than might be expected in a fantasy setting, because the lure of grand cities such as Lankhmar and Ilthmar mean that these sprawling settlements are often teeming with life. Rural villages feature only rarely in the *Swords* novels, with practically everything of interest happening either in urban areas or the deep wilderness of forest, desert, arctic mountain ranges or the ocean. This is not to say that there are no villagers in Nehwon but Games Masters can represent them just as well by this cultural background as they can any urban-dwelling character.

Playing a freeman character offers a lot of opportunity to customise just what a character has mastered over the years of life. It is easily the broadest of the cultural backgrounds because so many people in the setting are born and raised in Nehwon's great cities. A freeman character is assumed to have influence over his own life, whether in owning his own property or simply living within civilisation and not wearing the shackles of slavery. These are the characters that are at one with the streets of dark Lankhmar, filthy Ilthmar, majestic Horborixen and crowded Kvarch Nar.

While few people will ever feel *comfortable* in the labyrinthine roads and alleys within a Nehwon city's walls, a freeman character will at least be familiar with the ebb and flow of life in the streets,

understanding the power of the guilds, knowing where to find work in the fields or bargains in the trader markets and feeling more at home when protected by city walls than when sleeping rough in the wilderness staring up at distant stars.

A freeman character will adventure for any number of reasons. If his career involves a degree of travel, it might be a life that the character becomes accustomed to and refuses to give up after he moves on. Characters might need to escape the notice of enemies they have made in the city or seek fortune to bring back to their family if they have fallen on hard times, when simple work-life will no longer cut it. Since so many people in Nehwon can be considered freeman characters, there exist as many reasons for adventuring as there do adventurers themselves. Literally any reason imaginable could set a freeman character's feet on the road of adventure.

In the *Swords* novels, Krovas the master Thief, Eyes of Ogo, Nemia of the Dusk, Slevyas, Ravis Rightby and, of course, the talented rogue known as the Grey Mouser are all represented by the freeman background.

Mariner

For some characters, such as those in Nehwon's colossal port cities or the islands of the various seas, the mariner background applies. These characters are not simply sailors but rather people who spend practically their entire lives at sea. Some crews of merchant or pirate vessels spend mere days every few months (or even every few years) in port, living almost their entire lives aboard a ship and calling no nation home.

Mariner characters know little outside life on the sea. They likely have knowledge of the world because they have visited so many ports but the knowledge they have is broad rather than in-depth. Those with a love of the sea that runs so deep that they avoid spending time on land and prefer rigging under their feet to stone and those with saltwater in their blood to the point where they have spent almost their entire lives on the waves, are potential mariner characters.

Games Masters unsure as to the distinction of a mariner character and a freeman character with a sailor profession should use the following criteria to decide which is more appropriate: Mariners are relatively rare, found only among those who are actively uncomfortable on land because it is almost unfamiliar to them to have solid ground under their feet. An average sailor or fisherman is not a mariner – a man who has sailed since his raw youth and no longer feels at home in any port city certainly is.

A rough rule of thumb to determine whether a character is a mariner is to determine how much time he has spent on the sea. Regular sailing trips that any merchant or military sailor would take are one thing. A pirate whose home is his ship and who spends only a few days on land every year is quite another. This is a rare cultural background but thematically appropriate

because Nehwon is so dominated by seas. It is the attachment to the ocean waves over everything else in life that make a mariner character and Games Masters should be careful about allocating this background to characters simply because they have a love for the sea and a talent for setting sail.

A mariner character already lives a life that could be considered adventurous, depending on the trade and routes of the vessel he sails. Those that leave the sea to walk on dry land usually do so because a curiosity eats at them and they are driven to discover just what life on earth and stone can be like. Others might have a need to seek work and riches away from the waves they love because they are unable to find work on a vessel, whether temporarily or permanently. Still others will promise themselves that this venture on land is their first, last and only journey, perhaps in the name of seeking out rumoured treasure that will make it all worthwhile.

Nomad

Life on the Great Steppes is a far cry from the clustered and crowded civilisation of the south. Here the Mingol hordes rove in their tribes, setting up tent towns month by month and moving on as they see fit, whether by season, by the travels of the wild cattle they hunt or by some other inclination. A nomad character has lived most or all of his life on the endless plains of the Steppes and is at home in the long grasses under the wide-open sky. He is also born to the saddle, with horseback riding coming as naturally to him as walking does to city-dwellers.

Nomads are not barbarians, at least not in the sense of cultural backgrounds. A nomad lives in the wilderness of the plains and is uneducated by civilised standards but life on the Steppes is not the same as dwelling in the southern jungles or the northern Cold Wastes. The life of a barbarian character is a battle against the elements and inhospitable surroundings. Life on the Steppes offers no such challenges, where game is plentiful, the climate is temperate and the nomadic Mingol tribes are lords of their realm.

This background is only really appropriate for Mingol characters that have spent their lives on the Steppes and lived as warriors, hunters or wives among their own people. Captives taken by the Mingols are better represented by the slave background and characters that travel a great deal as wanderers and vagabonds hardly have the same affinity and experience with the comfortable wilderness of the Steppes. As with the mariner background, Games Masters will find that this choice is a rare selection for characters, featuring only among a few characters unless the campaign specifically focuses on the Great Steppes as a location.

That said, Mingols have no shortage of reasons to leave the Steppes. A Mingol enslaved during his youth is better represented by the slave background but adult warriors and tribe members venturing south or east to seek adventure are common enough.

Slave

Slavery is common in Nehwon, from captives of the Mingol nomads and labourers of underground Quarmall to Lankmarese criminals forced into indentured servitude. Indeed, the latter make up a significant minority of the city's workforce. This character background represents characters that have spent much of their lives in bonded slavery, accumulating skills through hard labour and forced servitude.

Slaves in and around Lankmar City (and other large cities such as Ilthmar) are either foreigners owned by decadent nobility or criminals forced into indentured servitude for years, perhaps even decades, at a time. These slaves serve as labourers in the grain fields, serving staff in inns or noble houses (perhaps even as members of the overlord's vast palace staff), concubines to the aristocracy and dancing girls in taverns. Most will be bought from the overlord by independent masters who will set them to their individual tasks. Such purchases can lead to a rare few slaves even serving on ships as part of a crew.

Male slaves captured by the Mingols will lead lives of forced labour, carrying supplies for the nomadic people of the Great Steppes, helping around the tent camps and performing similar degrading, menial duties. Women taken by the Mingols will perform the same actions with the grim addition of becoming either willing or unwilling mistresses to Mingol warriors.

Slaves in Quarmall fare the worst of any souls forced into this unfair and punishing life. Many are set to work in the fields around Quarmall, harvesting food for their subterranean masters under threat of death, while others forget the touch of sunlight on the skin as they labour under the earth for decades, manning the windmills that push air through the lower caverns of the underground realm.

Though Games Masters might wish to run a slave campaign, perhaps with the players escaping over the course of the campaign and living on the run, it is assumed that slave characters have either served their allotted tenure and paid for their crimes or escaped their overseer masters for a life of freedom. Slaves might adventure for a host of reasons, be it accompanying their owner on his travels, fleeing retribution from a former overseer and needing to stay on the move or even hoping to experience as much of the world as possible to make up for the time lost in slavery.

The slave cultural background is represented in the *Swords* novels by a host of characters, notably the victims of Palace-Mistress Samantha in the Overlord's court, Friska and Ivisis who were rescued from Quarmall, and Ourph and his Mingol compatriots who served Fafhrd and the Mouser on several of their nautical journeys.



Cultural Background

Background	RuneQuest		RuneQuest II		Starting Money
	Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	
Aristocrat	Influence +10%, Lore (World) +10%, Persistence +10% Pick Two +5% 2H Sword, Dodge, Perception Pick Two +15% 1H Sword, Dagger, Evaluate, Rapier, Riding, Shield	Language (Native) +50%, Lore (Regional) Pick Two Craft, Dance, Language, Lore, Play Instrument, Shiphandling	Influence +10%, Lore (World) +10%, Persistence +10% Pick Two +5% 2H Sword, Dance, Evade, Perception Pick Two +15% 1H Sword, Dagger, Evaluate, Rapier, Riding, Shield	Courtesy, Language (Native) +50% Pick Two Art, Craft, Culture Language, Lore Play Instrument, Shiphandling	4D10x100 Smerduks

Background	RuneQuest		RuneQuest II		Starting Money
	Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	
Barbarian (Cold Wastes)	<p>Athletics +10%, Perception +5%, Resilience +10%, Stealth +5%</p> <p>Pick Two +5% Boating, Dodge, Influence, Sing</p> <p>Pick Three +10% 1H Axe, 1H Hammer, 2H Axe, 2H Hammer, Bow, Dagger, Shield, Sling, Spear, Staff, Throwing, Unarmed</p>	<p>Language (Low Lankhmarese) +50%, Lore (Cold Wastes), Survival</p> <p>Pick One Craft, Dance, Lore, Play Instrument, Tracking</p>	<p>Athletics +10%, Perception +5%, Resilience +10%, Stealth +5%</p> <p>Pick Two +5% Boating, Dance, Evade, Influence, Sing, Swimming</p> <p>Pick Three +10% 1H Axe, 1H Hammer, 2H Axe, 2H Hammer, Bow, Dagger, Shield, Sling, Spear, Staff, Throwing, Unarmed</p>	<p>Language (Low Lankhmarese) +50%, Lore (Cold Wastes), Survival</p> <p>Pick One Craft, Lore, Play Instrument, Tracking</p>	4D6x20 Smerduks
Barbarian (Kleshite Jungle)	<p>Athletics +10%, Perception +5%, Resilience +10%, Stealth +5%</p> <p>Pick Two +5% Dodge, Lore (Animal), Lore (Plant), Persistence</p> <p>Pick Three +10% 1H Axe, 1H Hammer, Blowgun, Bow, Dagger, Shield, Sling, Spear, Staff, Throwing, Unarmed</p>	<p>Language (Klesh) +50%, Lore (Klesh), Survival</p> <p>Pick One Craft, Dance, Lore, Play Instrument, Tracking</p>	<p>Athletics +10%, Perception +5%, Resilience +10%, Stealth +5%</p> <p>Pick Two +5% Dance, Evade, Lore (Animal), Lore (Plant), Persistence</p> <p>Pick Three +10% 1H Axe, 1H Hammer, Blowgun, Bow, Dagger, Shield, Sling, Spear, Staff, Throwing, Unarmed</p>	<p>Language (Klesh) +50%, Lore (Klesh), Survival</p> <p>Pick One Craft, Lore, Play Instrument, Tracking</p>	4D6x20 Smerduks
Freeman	<p>Evaluate +10%, Influence +10%, Lore (World) +10%</p> <p>Pick Two +10% Boating, Driving, Lore (Animal), Lore (Plant), Resilience, Stealth</p> <p>Pick Two +10% 1H Hammer, 1H Sword, Crossbow, Dagger, Persistence, Polearm, Sleight, Shield</p>	<p>Language (Native) +50%, Lore (Regional), Streetwise</p> <p>Pick One Craft, Dance, Language, Lore, Play Instrument, Shiphandling</p>	<p>Evaluate +10%, Influence +10%, Lore (World) +10%</p> <p>Pick Two +10% Boating, Dance, Driving, Lore (Animal), Lore (Plant), Resilience, Stealth</p> <p>Pick Two +10% 1H Hammer, 1H Sword, Crossbow, Dagger, Persistence, Polearm, Sleight, Shield</p>	<p>Language (Native) +50%, Lore (Regional), Streetwise</p> <p>Pick One Craft, Language, Lore, Play Instrument, Shiphandling</p>	4D6x50 Smerduks

Background	RuneQuest		RuneQuest II		Starting Money
	Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	
Mariner	<p>Acrobatics +5%, Athletics +5%, Boating +15%, Lore (Animal) +5%, Lore (World) +15%</p> <p>Pick One +10% 1H Hammer, 1H Sword, Dagger, Unarmed</p> <p>Pick Two +5% Crossbow, Dodge, Sing, Perception</p>	<p>Language (Native) +50%, Lore (Regional), Survival</p> <p>Pick One Craft, Language, Lore, Play Instrument, Shiphandling</p>	<p>Athletics +5%, Boating +15%, Lore (Animal) +5%, Lore (World) +10%, Swimming +5%</p> <p>Pick One +10% 1H Hammer, 1H Sword, Dagger, Unarmed</p> <p>Pick Two +5% Crossbow, Evade, Sing, Perception</p>	<p>Language (Native) +50%, Lore (Regional), Survival</p> <p>Pick One Acrobatics, Craft, Language, Lore Play Instrument, Shiphandling</p>	4D6x25 Smerduks
Nomad	<p>Athletics +10%, Lore (Animal) +5%, Lore (Plant) +5%, Resilience +5%, Riding +15%</p> <p>Pick One +10% 1H Axe, 1H Sword, Dagger, Unarmed</p> <p>Pick Two +10% Blowgun, Bow, Dodge, Perception</p>	<p>Language (Mingol) +50%, Lore (Steppes), Survival</p> <p>Pick One Craft, Language, Lore, Play Instrument</p>	<p>Athletics +10%, Lore (Animal) +5%, Lore (Plant) +5%, Resilience +5%, Riding +15%</p> <p>Pick One +10% 1H Axe, 1H Sword, Dagger, Unarmed</p> <p>Pick Two +10% Blowgun, Bow, Evade, Perception</p>	<p>Language (Mingol) +50%, Lore (Steppes), Survival</p> <p>Pick One Craft, Language, Lore, Play Instrument</p>	4D6x20 Smerduks
Slave	<p>Athletics +5%, Persistence +10%, Resilience +10%</p> <p>Pick Three +10% Boating, Dodge, Driving, First Aid, Lore (Animal), Lore (Plant)</p> <p>Pick One +10% 1H Axe, Dagger, Sling, Spear, Staff, 1H Sword, Unarmed</p>	<p>Language (Native) +50%, Lore (Regional)</p> <p>Pick Two Craft, Language (Any), Lore, Play Instrument, Survival</p>	<p>Athletics +5%, Persistence +10%, Resilience +10%</p> <p>Pick Three +10% Boating, Evade, Driving, First Aid, Lore (Animal), Lore (Plant)</p> <p>Pick One +10% 1H Axe, Dagger, Sling, Spear, Staff, 1H Sword, Unarmed</p>	<p>Language (Native) +50%, Lore (Regional)</p> <p>Pick Two Craft, Language (Any), Lore, Play Instrument, Survival</p>	2D6x20 Smerduks

Professions

The standard Profession table from *RuneQuest* has been adjusted slightly to reflect the cultural backgrounds of Nehwon. When creating characters use the following rules rather than those found in the main *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*. In the section that follows, a brief and informal description is given of each Profession, highlighting some of the attitudes and common personality traits found in characters that ply these trades.

Professions

Profession	Cultural Background	RuneQuest		RuneQuest II	
		Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills
Acrobat	Barbarian, Freeman, Slave	Acrobatics +10%, Athletics +10%, Dodge +10%, Throwing +10%, Sleight +10%		Athletics +10%, Evade +10%, Throwing +10%, Sleight +10%	Acrobatics
Animal Handler	Barbarian, Freeman, Nomad, Slave	Driving +5%, First Aid +5%, Lore (Animal) +20%, Persistence +10%, Resilience +5%, Riding +5%		Driving +5%, First Aid +5%, Lore (Animal) +20%, Persistence +10%, Resilience +5%, Riding +5%	
Bard	Barbarian, Freeman, Slave, Nomad, Mariner	Influence +10%, Lore (World) +10%, Perception +10%, Sing +10%	Pick One Play Instrument, Language, Lore	Lore (World) +10%, Perception +10% Pick One Influence +10%, Insight +10%, Sing +10%	Pick Two Culture, Language, Lore, Oratory, Play Instrument
Blacksmith	Freeman	1H Hammer +10%, Evaluate +5%, Resilience +5%	Craft (Blacksmith), Lore (Mineral) Pick One Engineering, Mechanisms, Craft (Armourer), Craft (Weaponsmith)	1H Hammer +10%, Evaluate +5%, Resilience +5%	Craft (Blacksmith), Lore (Mineral) Pick One Engineering, Mechanisms, Craft (Armourer), Craft (Weaponsmith)
Cartographer	Freeman	Perception +10%, Persistence +5%, Lore (World) +15%	Pick Two Language, Lore (Geography), Lore (Regional)	Perception +10%, Persistence +5%, Lore (World) +15%	Pick Two Language, Lore (Geography), Lore (Regional)
Charlatan	Barbarian, Freeman, Slave, Nomad	Athletics +5%, Dodge +5%, Influence +15%, Sleight +10%	Disguise, Streetwise	Athletics +5%, Evade +5%, Influence +15%, Sleight +10%	Disguise, Streetwise
Courtesan	Barbarian, Freeman, Slave, Nomad	Athletics +5%, Dagger +5%, Dodge +5%, Influence +10%, Persistence +5%, Resilience +5%	Pick Two Disguise, Lore (Regional), Streetwise	Athletics +5%, Dagger +5%, Evade +5%, Influence +10%, Persistence +5%, Resilience +5%	Seduction Pick One Disguise, Lore (Regional), Streetwise

Profession	Cultural Background	RuneQuest		RuneQuest II	
		Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills
Courtier	Aristocrat	Influence +15%, Lore (World) +5%, Perception +5%, Sleight +5%	Dance Pick One Lore (Art), Lore (Heraldry), Lore (Philosophy), Lore (Regional), Play Instrument	Influence +15%, Lore (World) +5%, Perception +5% Pick One Dance +5%, Sleight +5%	Courtesy Pick One Culture, Gambling, Lore (Art), Lore (Heraldry), Lore (Philosophy), Lore (Regional), Play Instrument
Craftsman	Barbarian, Freeman, Nomad	Evaluate +20%, Influence +5%, Persistence +5%	Craft Pick One Craft (other), Engineering, Mechanisms	Evaluate +20%, Influence +5%, Persistence +5%	Craft Pick One Craft (other), Engineering, Mechanisms
Diplomat	Freeman, Aristocrat	Influence +20%, Perception +10%, Lore (World) +10%	Pick One Dance, Language, Lore, Play Instrument	Influence +10%, Insight +10%, Perception +5%, Lore (World) +5%	Courtesy Pick One Culture, Language, Lore, Oratory, Play Instrument
Explorer	Barbarian, Freeman, Aristocrat, Nomad	Lore (World) +20%, Perception +5%, Resilience +5%	Pick Two Language, Lore (Astronomy), Lore (Geography), Shiphandling, Survival	Lore (World) +20%, Perception +5%, Resilience +5%	Pick Two Language, Lore (Astronomy), Lore (Geography), Shiphandling, Survival
Farmer	Barbarian, Freeman, Slave	Athletics +5%, Driving +5%, Lore (Animal) +15%, Lore (Plant) +10%, Resilience +15%		Athletics +5%, Driving +5%, Lore (Animal) +15%, Lore (Plant) +10%, Resilience +15%	
Fisherman	Barbarian, Freeman, Mariner	Athletics +5%, Boating +20%, Lore (Animal) +5%, Resilience +10%, Throwing +10%		Athletics +5%, Boating +20%, Lore (Animal) +5%, Resilience +10%, Throwing +10%	
Hedge Magician	Barbarian, Freeman, Slave, Nomad	Perception +10%, Persistence +5%, Lore (World) +15%	Divining Pick One Lore (Geography), Lore (Regional)	Insight +5%, Perception +10%, Persistence +5%, Lore (World) +10%	Divining Pick One Lore (Geography), Lore (Regional)
Herdsmen	Freeman, Nomad, Slave	First Aid +5%, Lore (Animal) +10%, Perception +5%, Resilience +5% Pick One Bow +5%, Sling +10%	Survival	First Aid +5%, Lore (Animal) +10%, Perception +5%, Resilience +5% Pick One Bow +5%, Sling +10%	Survival
Hunter	Barbarian, Freeman, Nomad	Bow +5%, Lore (Animal) +10%, Spear +5%, Stealth +10%	Survival, Tracking	Bow +5%, Lore (Animal) +10%, Spear +5%, Stealth +10%	Survival, Tracking

Profession	Cultural Background	RuneQuest		RuneQuest II	
		Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills
Lord	Aristocrat	1H Sword +10%, Influence +20%, Persistence +10%, Riding +10%		1H Sword +10%, Influence +10%, Persistence +10%, Riding +10%	Courtesy
Mercenary	Barbarian, Freeman, Nomad, Mariner	Lore (World) +10% Pick Two 1H Axe +15%, 1H Flail +15%, 1H Hammer +15%, 1H Sword +15%, 2H Axe +15%, 2H Flail +15%, 2H Hammer +15%, 2H Sword +15%, Bow +15%, Crossbow +15%, Polearm +15%, Shield +15% Pick Two Athletics +5%, Dagger +5%, Dodge +5%, Driving +5%, Evaluate +5%, Resilience +5%, Riding +5%, Unarmed +5%		Lore (World) +10% Pick Two 1H Axe +15%, 1H Flail +15%, 1H Hammer +15%, 1H Sword +15%, 2H Axe +15%, 2H Flail +15%, 2H Hammer +15%, 2H Sword +15%, Bow +15%, Crossbow +15%, Polearm +15%, Shield +15% Pick Two Athletics +5%, Dagger +5%, Evade +5%, Driving +5%, Evaluate +5%, Resilience +5%, Riding +5%, Unarmed +5%	
Merchant	Freeman, Aristocrat, Mariner	Evaluate +20%, Influence +10%, Lore (World) +10%	Pick One Language, Lore (Logistics), Shiphandling	Evaluate +15%, Influence +10%, Lore (World) +5%	Commerce Pick One Language, Lore (Logistics), Shiphandling
Miner	Freeman, Slave	1H Axe +10%, 2H Axe +10%, Athletics +10%, Resilience +10%	Lore (Mineral)	1H Axe +10%, 2H Axe +10%, Athletics +10%, Resilience +10%	Lore (Mineral)
Performer	Barbarian, Freeman, Slave	Acrobatics +10%, Athletics +10%, Influence +10%, Sing +10%	Pick One Dance, Play Instrument	Athletics +10%, Dance +10%, Sing +10%, Influence +10%	Pick One Acrobatics, Play Instrument
Physician	Barbarian, Freeman, Aristocrat, Nomad	Evaluate +5%, First Aid +20%, Lore (Plant) +10%, Perception +5%	Healing	Evaluate +5%, First Aid +20%, Lore (Plant) +10%, Perception +5%	Healing
Pirate	Barbarian, Freeman, Slave, Nomad, Mariner	1H Sword +5%, Acrobatics +5%, Athletics +5%, Boating +10%, Dodge +5%, Lore (World) +10%	Shiphandling	1H Sword +5%, Athletics +5%, Boating +5%, Evade +5%, Lore (World) +5%, Swimming +5%	Acrobatics, Shiphandling
Priest	Barbarian, Freeman, Aristocrat, Nomad	Influence +15%, Lore (World) +5%, Persistence +10%	Lore (Specific Theology)	Influence +5%, Insight +5%, Lore (World) +5%, Persistence +5%	Oratory, Theology

Profession	Cultural Background	RuneQuest		RuneQuest II	
		Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills
Sailor	Barbarian, Freeman, Mariner, Aristocrat, Slave	Acrobatics +10%, Athletics +10%, Boating +10%, Lore (World) +5%, Resilience +5%	Shiphandling	Athletics +5%, Boating +10%, Lore (World) +5%, Resilience +5%, Swimming +5%	Acrobatics, Shiphandling
Scholar	Freeman, Aristocrat	Evaluate +5%, Lore (World) +10%, Persistence +10%	Lore, Language Pick Two Engineering, Healing, Language, Lore (other), Mechanisms	Evaluate +5%, Lore (World) +10%, Persistence +10%	Language Pick One Culture, Lore Pick Two Culture (other), Engineering, Healing, Language, Lore (other), Mechanisms, Teaching
Soldier-Warrior	Barbarian, Freeman, Aristocrat, Slave, Mariner	Dodge +5%, Lore (World) +5%, Resilience +5%, Unarmed +5% Pick Three 1H Axe +10%, 1H Flail +10%, 1H Hammer +10%, 1H Sword +10%, 2H Axe +10%, 2H Flail +10%, 2H Hammer +10%, 2H Sword +10%, Athletics +10%, Bow +10%, Crossbow +10%, Dagger +10%, Driving +10%, Polearm +10%, Riding +10%, Shield +10%, Sling +10%, Spear +10%		Evade +5%, Lore (World) +5%, Resilience +5%, Unarmed +5% Pick Three 1H Axe +10%, 1H Flail +10%, 1H Hammer +10%, 1H Sword +10%, 2H Axe +10%, 2H Flail +10%, 2H Hammer +10%, 2H Sword +10%, Athletics +10%, Bow +10%, Crossbow +10%, Dagger +10%, Driving +10%, Polearm +10%, Riding +10%, Shield +10%, Sling +10%, Spear +10%	
Sorcerer	Barbarian, Freeman, Aristocrat, Nomad	Persistence +10%, Perception +10%, Lore (World) +10%	Manipulation (any) Pick one black magic spell	Persistence +10%, Perception +10%, Lore (World) +10%	Manipulation (any) Pick one black magic spell
Thief	Barbarian, Aristocrat, Freeman, Slave, Nomad	Acrobatics +5%, Evaluate +5%, Perception +10%, Sleight +10%, Stealth +10%	Pick One Disguise, Mechanisms, Streetwise	Evaluate +5%, Perception +5%, Sleight +10%, Stealth +10%	Pick Two Acrobatics, Disguise, Mechanisms, Streetwise

Profession	Cultural Background	RuneQuest		RuneQuest II	
		Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Basic Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills
Thug	Freeman, Slave	1H Hammer +10%, Dagger +10%, Evaluate +5%, Resilience +5%, Stealth +10%	Streetwise	1H Hammer +10%, Dagger +10%, Evaluate +5%, Resilience +5%, Stealth +10%	Streetwise
Town Guard	Freeman	1H Hammer +5%, Athletics +5%, Crossbow +5%, Perception +5%, Polearm +10%, Shield +10%	Streetwise	1H Hammer +5%, Athletics +5%, Crossbow +5%, Perception +5%, Polearm +10%, Shield +10%	Streetwise
Woodsman	Barbarian, Freeman, Nomad	1H Axe +5%, 2H Axe +10%, Athletics +10%, Lore (Plant) +10%, Resilience +5%	Survival	1H Axe +5%, 2H Axe +10%, Athletics +10%, Lore (Plant) +10%, Resilience +5%	Survival

Acrobat

Perhaps a character is a tumbler in a circus that tours Nehwon and sets up temporary residence in the Plaza District or a street acrobat performing for a few Iron Tikks in the slums on market day or a juggler in the performance troupes that venture north to entertain the barbarians of the Cold Waste in midwinter. No matter where he earns his coin, he is good at what he does and can put his body through acrobatic motions as easily as a scholar reads a book or a mercenary swings a sword.

Animal Handler

Some folk have a knack for dealing with beasts. An animal handler is among them. Some turn this talent to catching rats and killing cadaver birds that come over the walls by the Great Salt Marsh and steal pets. Others make a living out of training horses for nobles or working in Lankhmar's stables where the well-to-do and the military keep their steeds. Among the Mingols, some warriors of the tribes display a skill in breaking the wild Steppes ponies for use as war mounts. Whichever way an animal handler's talents lay, he has a gift for handling animals and the wherewithal to make a living out of it.

Bard

Whether performing in jovial inns, rough dockside taverns or at the classy soirees of the nobility, bards are always in demand. Most end up becoming world-wise to some degree, learning the poems and songs of many cultures over the course of their lives, all in order to add variety and spice to a performance. A bard might end up performing night after night in the Silver Eel, watching for knives in his back as he catches coins in his empty beer mug or he may strike it lucky and perform at the masquerade galas of the Lankhmarese aristocracy. It is all a matter of talent, charm and luck.

Blacksmith

Blacksmiths tap into a strong market in Nehwon: people always need metalworking done. If a blacksmith works in the slums of Lankhmar he has got work for a few Iron Tikks, as kitchen maids and housewives bring knives that need re-blading and repairing, but most of his coin will come from working on grain-farmer ploughs and farming scythes and keeping the local thuggish rabble well-tooled in weapons of war. If a blacksmith makes it into respected master status, he is likely to be looking at signing contracts with the military and nobility to provide first-class weapon repair and creation. There is a lot of work at all levels of society for a skilled blacksmith, which probably means if a blacksmith sticks to the graft he will end up richer than most other people he knows.

Cartographer

Nehwon has had many brave and adventurous explorer souls over the centuries but those who take on the role of cartographer want to do more than *see* the world – they want to map and record it, so others can follow in their footsteps and see what they have seen. At least, that is the grand ideal. Maybe a character buys into that and believes it with all his heart. Maybe he just treks to the ends of the earth because there is a fat guild paycheque at the end of the job. Expert cartographers are always in demand by nobles and merchants who need new regions mapped, enemy territories evaluated, new trade routes plotted out and older, unreliable maps updated.

Charlatan

A charlatan claims to have the gift of future-sight: the power to divine the truth of What Will Be, by performing his own personal rituals. The gullible, the curious, the pious and the desperate folk of Nehwon come to him in the hope of answers. With a

theatrical flair and a look into the mists of time, he provides them with the answers they need. In return, they provide him with coin. It can be hard not to laugh sometimes. After all, he is making the whole thing up. In a charlatan's opinion, whoever it was that said 'honesty is the best policy' never had a coin purse that jingled.

Courtesan

The world's oldest trade is a courtesan's area of expertise. Whether she has been doing it for weeks or years, in the candle-lit harem of a depraved Horborixen monarch, in the dockside inns as part of her indentured servitude or in the dark alleys behind Lankmar's slum taverns, she knows how to please a man and, usually, make him pay for it. The art of seduction, spiced with a hint of deception, is second nature to her now. In Lankmar, only the Red Lantern girls are safe from abuse, protected by their guild and the hired hangers-on in the Slayers' Brotherhood. If a character wants to ply her trade in the Imperishable City, she will need to join with the guild or arrange her own protection because the streets of Lankmar are no place for an undefended lady.



Courtier

Different games are played in the halls of the wealthy elite. Instead of sell-swords battling for pay and survival, duellists cross blades for honour and social one-upmanship. Rather than quaff ale and seek out employment, aristocrats sip bubbly Ilthmarish wine and seek the downfall of political rivals. A courtier knows the stakes of the game intimately, for he plays it every day and night. Half of his life is wrapped up in the masquerades and parties of the social elite. The other half is a complicated web of treachery, shifting alliances and toadying to higher-ranked bluebloods in a civilised game of survival. The peasantry might look up and envy a courtier's lifestyle but they have never had to actually try it.

Craftsman

Skilled workers can find work anywhere. Maybe a character considers himself an artist, working at painting or sculpting for the upper classes and taking work creating icons for the successful temples on the Street of the Gods. Maybe he ekes out a living in the heart of one of the Eight Cities, working as a carpenter repairing the city's frequent fire damage. His

skills make him a useful member of society and give him something he can always fall back on should the tides of Fate turn against him.

Diplomat

War is a regular occurrence in Nehwon. The rare men and women that seek to prevent the outbreak of armed conflict are usually employed by merchant guilds afraid of trade being disrupted in a disputed region or nobles hoping for a last chance aversion to their lands being engulfed in war. The problem facing most diplomats is that the odds stacked against them are immense right from the outset. This is because wars most often break out between Lankmar, Ilthmar or the Eight Cities on one side and the Mingol hordes or the ghouls on the other. An emissary from the civilised lands going to the Mingols or the ghouls is hoping for too much if he expects to leave alive, let alone leave with a peace treaty signed and tucked under his arm. A diplomat is no fool – he knows the odds are not in his favour. Whether he mediates between warring merchant families, warring cities or the marauding armies of the ghouls

and Mingols as they lay siege to a civilised city, he will do his best out of idealism (or for a vast fee) and most likely be long gone before the walls fall and the blood starts to flow.

Explorer

If a character manages to land a patron who wanted another region explored, he is one of the lucky ones. Most of the poor souls in his trade do it out of love and curiosity, wandering off into the wilds because they want to know what lies in that direction. In many ways, an explorer's line of work sets him up as the carefree cousin of the cartographer. All he has to do is remember what he saw. He has to note down all the hundreds of ways of getting there. A lot of people get wanderlust and walk the world of Nehwon to see what Fate has in store for them but that is not the same as being a real explorer. Whether by choice or because he gets paid, an explorer plans to see *all* of Nehwon before he dies, taking ships to see new lands and walking on foot to those close enough to trek to. He has a lot of stories and he knows a lot about the world. Some people might consider him useless but he is the one who can point out which cacti have drinkable milk in the Parched Mountains, while guesswork would leave others dead in the dry winds and blazing sun.

Farmer

Someone has to work in the fields to provide food for the cities and that happens to be the farmer. Besides, a life of toil can be good for the soul. Whether a character has endless patience or a hot-blooded temper, there is an enduring strength under his surface born from years of hard labour. His work has made him knowledgeable in areas of certain plants and animals but his real strength comes from the stamina born in so much time of dawn-to-dusk toil. People can never fake strength like that.

Fisherman

Life on the coasts of the Inner Sea can be hard for some. The catches are good and the fish are plentiful but the taxes in Ilthmar are savage and the dangers of the docks there and in Lankhmar can scare any honest fisherman off. A fisherman knows how to make a living and sail on Nehwon's seas and he knows how to handle himself in a rough port as well. He takes well-justified pride in being tougher than people might expect of him.

Hedge Magician

A hedge magician has the gift of future-sight: the power to divine the truth of What Will Be, by performing his own personal rituals. The gullible, the curious, the pious and the desperate folk of Nehwon come to him in the hope of answers. With a theatrical flair and a look into the mists of time, he provides them with the answers they need. In return, they provide him with coin. Some will consider him a charlatan but he does not set out to deceive anyone (well, not usually) and he genuinely feels he earns fairly the money he charges. Perhaps he dreams of more powerful magic or perhaps his minor rituals are enough to satiate any curiosity he might have with the occult.

Herdsman

The life of a shepherd can seem a humble one, standing around watching herds, occasionally doctoring sick animals and deterring wild beasts and infrequent brigands alike with a well-aimed volley of sling stones. A herdsman is used to putting in long days of work and has built up the stamina necessary to stay on his feet for an entire day's worth of hours, keeping a keen eye on the surrounding terrain.

Hunter

Whether a hunter calls the jungles of Klesh or the Cold Waste tundra home, he has the skills to make a living by bringing down wild beasts. While a trained soldier can probably outfight him, he knows the soldier would be lost and helpless in the wilderness he is so familiar with. A hunter's knowledge of the wild, his skill on the hunt and his accuracy at thrusting a spear into a beast's vitals means that he makes a capable provider for his family, a valued member of any community and a worthy addition to any adventuring party.

Lord

Raised above the courtiers, above the aristocracy and into the true nobility, a lord is part of Nehwon's ruling elite, perhaps even blood-related to the overlord of Lankhmar. A lord's life has been a series of preparations for responsibility, weapons training and formal education, though he can put these talents to whatever ends he sees fit. Some who share his exalted social level 'slum it' in the cities, allying with thieves, making enemies and acting with a certain degree of impunity because 'disappearing' would raise too many questions. Others remain among their courtiers and admirers, immersing themselves in the political machinations behind the running of kingdoms.

Mercenary

People always need killing. Other people always need to be kept alive. It is these two truths that keep a mercenary in enough coin to maintain his weapons and move from place to place, taking orders from a succession of nobles, village elders, gang leaders, underworld figures and pot-bellied merchants. Nehwon has no shortage of work for a man who can handle a blade. A mercenary is just such a person.

Merchant

Trade is big business in Nehwon. Luxuries and mundane items alike are brought from port to port on fat-hulled cargo ships, while guilds like the Lankhmar Grain Merchants and the Lumber Merchants of Kvarch Nar grow prosperous on the coins their enterprises rake in. A merchant may never achieve the vast success necessary to put him on the map with the Grain Merchants' Guild of the Imperishable City but he knows how to handle a trade deal and his experience in the mercantile business is invaluable at times. With a little cunning and a helping of diligence, he could be heading up his own company or one

day sitting in the council chambers of one of Nehwon's biggest merchant guilds, his interests carried out by fleets of ships, convoys of wagons and making decisions that will affect the industries of entire nations.

Miner

A miner lives a life of backbreaking toil under the earth and down in the sides of mountains, digging out whatever minerals his current employer asked for. The work is boring beyond imagining – he makes no argument otherwise – but it makes for a tough soul with strong bones, as well as giving a miner a mean talent with an axe or pick in his hands.

Performer

Whether a performer gets by as an exotic dancer in slum taverns, wearing ankle-bells that chime as he moves or a poet reading for the wife of a wealthy grain merchant, his skills in performing his chosen art means he has a way to make a decent living. He has a voice that can meet the demands of various cultures' music and may even have talent with instruments. Overall, while a performer lacks the musical focus and world-wisdom of a bard, he has more diverse talents and no shortage of charm.

Pirate

The plunder on Nehwon's Inner Sea is a rich prize indeed. The ships that sail between Ilthmar to the east, Lankhmar to the south and the Eight Cities to the north are laden with goods going to the populace and coin heading to the pockets of dishonest men. There is so much of it; who would ever miss a few ships' worth here and there? Why, in that light, a pirate barely commits crime at all. Maybe he tells himself that and maybe he just likes the thrill of riding the waves and locking blades and belaying pins more than 'honest' sailors. Either way, a pirate is in the right line of work if he wants action at sea and the chance to get rich in the process.

Physician

Medical treatment is not a high art in Nehwon – a fact a physician is all too aware of. The majority of medicine's practitioners learn their trade from apprenticeships to older physicians or from scholarly texts acquired over the years. Surgery takes the form of amputations, cutting out shards of sword blades or applying poultices to clean infections. The least skilled physicians in Nehwon find work in Ilthmarish slums as wound-stitchers. A physician hopes never to be among those poor souls. The competent ones are employed by travelling troupes, mercenary bands or even guilds so as to provide fast treatment for their members.

Priest

The ways of the gods are strange and inhuman and it takes an enlightened soul to dedicate his life to spreading a holy faith to others. A priest is such a soul, hoping to spread the belief in his chosen deity as he does his utmost to act in his interests. For some followers of the divine, particularly those in service

to gods that might be considered evil or malicious, nothing in their position says they must be kind or tolerant in their piety. Nehwon's priests are a dark and conflicted lot on the whole, with gold-lust and the ruthless ambition to live an easy life found in equal measure to sincere faith.

Sailor

A life on land just is not for a sailor. He prefers to work hard and earn his coin by living barefoot on a wooden deck with the sun beating down on him and the deep, blue Inner Sea stretching out in every direction. The joys of ports – the drink, the women and the pay – are fun to look forward to at the end of every journey. A sailor gets to see more of the world than any town-dweller stuck behind his stone walls ever will and he gets to earn an honest wage doing something useful while he is at it.

Scholar

Nehwon and especially Lankhmar have their fair share of musty libraries full of ancient tomes. Historians have been known to make a living when supported by a wealthy patron and many scholars find employment in teaching the heirs to noble and aristocratic families. In a world where education is rarely prized, scholarly pursuits can often seem an unappreciated line of work and a passion with little use. A scholar might even feel this himself at times. However, Nehwon and its history are full of stories: tales of heroes and insane overlords, torturers and sorcerers and bitter, bloody wars. If these events were not chronicled, there would be no one to tell of them today.

Soldier-Warrior

Soldier: Maybe a soldier simply fights because there is regular pay at the end of every month and maybe he does it because he finds a touch more nobility in fighting for his nation or local noble than there is in selling his sword to the highest bidder. Whatever the reasons a soldier has for signing up, someone in charge pays him and trains him to kill in battle. He wears the uniform and fights for the cause, though his free time is spent attending to his own interests. Any adventuring group that has a soldier as a member is getting someone toughened by years of training and weapon-work but who does not know too much outside of what he has been trained to do.

Warrior: A warrior is one of his clan's blades or his tribe's spears and his battle-howls sound out the loudest when there is killing to be done. His work makes him the uncivilised counterpart of the soldier but whether he is a Cold Waste northerner bearing a two-handed sword or a mounted Mingol using a spear as a lance, he fights for his people and his own honour rather than a liege lord. His payment comes not in coin but in the form of his family's safety and his people's protection.

Sorcerer

There are always people in Nehwon who are drawn towards the dark arts and although they are uncommon, there are more than most normal folk would like to believe. Sorcerers tend to

stay away from heavily populated areas, preferring solitude or the company of like-minded magicians to devote their time to the study of black magic. Those that are known to dwell in the cities are treated with caution and fear by those who know their power. The exception to this is of course the city of Quarmall where many of the nobles practice sorcery, particularly the field of necromancy. Details of black magic and sorcery can be found in the Magic chapter on page 139.

The sorcerer profession is provided here primarily for Games Masters to create Non-Player Characters. Sorcerers tend to be malevolent and become even more twisted as the effects of black magic manifest physically and mentally on the magician. For this reason, Player Character sorcerers are not recommended and players wishing to create one should get permission from their Games Master, who should only allow this profession if their campaign is such that a sorcerer in the party will not unbalance or otherwise disrupt the game.

Thief

For some people, a life on the shadier side of the law is a lot more rewarding than playing the straight and narrow. Nehwon's cities are rife with thieves, cutpurses, muggers, burglars and any type of property-stealing criminal the human mind can imagine. Lankhmar is well known for its organised Thieves' Guild, as well as being called the 'City of Thieves' among its many monikers. A thief is one of the many who takes what he wants in life rather than earns it, though he certainly works hard enough on some jobs. Without guild membership or special permission for freelance activity, a thief's days are numbered if he sets foot in Lankhmar. Lucky for him the great guild is always looking for talented recruits...

Town Guard

Whether a town guard mans the wooden walls of leafy Kvarch Nar or the stone battlements of Lankhmar City, he gets to deal with the lawless, the violent and the outright ugly elements of Nehwonese city life. Lucky him. He might be the kind of person to take a few bribes here and there, which is perfectly acceptable (even expected) in his line of work. Arresting petty criminals, guild-bound thieves and the murderers that glide through Lankhmar's mazy streets is no plum job and everyone is expected to take a kickback now and again as payment for looking the other way or running slow in a rooftop chase. Then again, maybe a guard got into city watchman duties to set things right. There are always a few would-be heroes in a constable's uniform. They tend not to live long, mind you.

Thug

Just like a thief, a thug walks the crooked path rather than the straight and narrow. The difference is that thieves try to do it in secret, remaining unseen and getting away with everything right under the noses of the authority. While a thug might not advertise his business to the law, he rarely cowers and hides like a thief. His line of work demands confrontation, a lot of bashing

and no shortage of threats in order to get things done. Muggings and violent battles in dark alleyways are his forte. There is a lot of money to be made in Lankhmar by beating up the right people. If a character is the kind of person who fell into this line of work because he saw no other choice (or he is exceptionally careful about the law) then he is careful not to brain or kill his victims to get their money. If a character could care less about those he preys upon, then there is always Bones Alley to hide the remains.

Woodsman

Nehwon's forests cover a vast expanse of the terrain, especially in the Land of the Eight Cities, which is not called the Forest Land for nothing. A woodsman's trade is a mixture of the mundane and the dangerous. Trees need to be cut down and there are a lot of men with the backs and wills to do it. However, the wilderness is never entirely safe, with Mingol and ghoul raiders picking off frontier villages and lumber outposts with unrelenting frequency. It is fortunate that a woodsman's trade gives him some skill with an axe because the chances are he will have to use it in a fight more than once.

Themed Adventuring Groups

Adventuring groups are often a gathering of disparate souls forming unlikely friendships and going on to work well together despite their differences. Success through diversity is a key aspect in most adventuring groups.

This section presents a different tack, highlighting the potential value, realism and utility of groups united by a similar Cultural Background or Professions. The list is far from exhaustive, designed purely to show what is possible rather than detail every potential band of adventurers. Games Masters and players may be inspired to create similar groups using these examples as guidelines, adding to the overall realism of their characters' places in the *Lankhmar* setting.

Barbarian Clan-Brothers

A group of barbarians, bound by clan ties and stricken by wanderlust, can make for a fantastic and thematic group of characters. The northerners come south as raiders, explorers, mercenaries or merely opportunists seeking their fortunes by whatever Fate brings their way. The differences between these uncultured Cold Waste-dwellers and the people of the so-called 'civilised south' can be emphasised for maximum roleplaying potential, with misunderstandings and culture shock becoming major themes in the campaign.

The character possibilities need not be restricted to violent barbarian stereotypes, though there are undeniable elements of fun and realism in doing so. Other possibilities include a more civilised guide tagging on with the barbarians, such as a Bard, Mercenary, Merchant or Performer who seeks to keep the group out of trouble when cultures and customs clash. The varied Professions of the barbarian characters can also make for

Languages of Nehwon

The tongues spoken across the world of Nehwon are as diverse and different from one another as those on Earth. Lankhmarese has spread across much of Nehwon, spoken as often and as accurately by different cultures as English is spoken in our world. Such is the benefit of Lankhmar being the cradle of civilisation and largest world power. A great many Lankhmarts speak fragments of other languages, since the great city sees so many travellers, tourists and traders that exposure to the tongues of the wider world is almost impossible to avoid.

The following languages are mentioned in the *Swords* novels:

High Lankhmarese: This is the language spoken in the land of Lankhmar.

Low Lankhmarese: A stripped-down pidgin tongue based on High Lankhmarese, the so-called 'low language' is used by many foreigners in the city and serves as the general trade language of Nehwon.

The Three Eastern Tongues: The high, low and common Arabic-like tongues of the desert-dwelling easterners.

Forest Tongue: The language spoken by the people of the Land of the Eight Cities.

Ilthmarish: The tongue of the notorious city-state of Ilthmar.

Klesh: The language of the southern tropical jungle land of Klesh.

Kvarchish: A more 'civilised' (read: complex) version of Forest Tongue, primarily spoken by Eight Cities nobility and residents of Kvarch Nar. Many Lankhmarts know a smattering of Kvarchish due to the degree of trade and travel between Kvarch Nar and Lankhmar.

Mingol: The tongue of the Mingol hordes that populate the Great Steppes. Mingol (the language) roughly equates to an Oriental/East Asian tongue.

Old Ghoulish: A dead language once used by the ghouls of northeastern Lankhmar. It is rumoured to still be used in the flesh-eating rites performed by their religious leaders.

Quarmallian: The tongue of the subterranean nobles of Quarmall, similar in sound to the languages of the native South Americas before European colonisation

Rimic: The tongue of the near-legendary Rime Isle-dwelling fishermen and traders

a diverse and interesting group, such as a party made up of a Bard (Singing Skald), a Hunter, a Warrior and an Explorer. The broad spread of talents in a group such as this prepares them for a wealth of different situations.

Freelance Thieves' Cell

Going against Lankhmar's Thieves' Guild is dangerous unless the proper kickbacks are in place. Even then, the Guild thieves are better informed and better organised and are likely to get the richest pickings before any freelancer. A group of freelancers working together and watching out for one another can overcome these drawbacks to some degree. One could take the role of the group's eyes and ears on the street, another could be a master cat burglar and another might be a thug with a knack for mugging and fleeing unseen. Literally any combination of lawless characters from any Cultural Backgrounds are possible in this set up.

A variant would be for all the characters to be members of the infamous Thieves' Guild and work together as partners, mandated by the Guild leaders because of the characters' efficiency as a team. The campaign might be somewhat more 'mission-based' unless the Master Thief specifically decrees that the characters are allowed to work with little supervision. A long career of bribery, thievery and clashes with the law and rival thieves are ahead of any adventuring group that begins on this path.

Mercenary Band

A classic tradition is the band of mercenaries out for coin, serving a succession of employers and looking to live another day come hell or high water. Any character with some skills in arms will be welcome in a rugged, travelling merc party. Aristocrats hoping to become worldly (or simply avoiding the responsibilities of their bloodline) often find themselves among such groups, as do thieves on the lam from the law and the legitimate criminal guilds. Getting lost in a wandering group of sell-swords is about as good a disguise as can be conceived. Here, Barbarian Hunters can rub shoulders with Freeman Soldiers and Slave Woodsmen, all looking out for one another when the blades start swinging and the blood starts flying.

The dilemma faced by many of these warrior bands is one of employment. Work is usually easy to come by for skilled fighters, be it border skirmishes, escort duty or as part of an army in pitched battle but the *moral* question of some employers is one that many groups find troublesome. If they are desperate enough (as Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser are on many occasions) then working for someone with a shaky ethical code can be a necessary evil but many of the wealthy people seeking to employ skilled fighting men and women have malicious and vicious reasons for doing so. It can be a grind on the soul to labour and kill for a man one despises, fighting in his black-hearted cause purely because one needs the coins to eat. Games Masters who are fond of this moral uncertainty can highlight this aspect of doubt and guilt in their campaigns and stay firmly in the genre.

They should also note that turning on an evil employer and ramming a length of sword-iron through his belly is also a thematic thing for characters to do. Everyone has limits, after all.

Performance Troupe

Theatre troupes and similar performance groups are popular in the civilised regions of Nehwon, presenting a wide range of potential Professions. The likeliest and most obvious examples are: Performer (Poet), Performer (Dancer), Performer (Singer), Performer (Mime), Performer (Actor), Acrobat and Bard. Characters from any of these backgrounds might find themselves banding together either to create a new troupe and seek fame or as a tight-knit band of friends within a larger troupe.

Mercenary characters could be hired on a permanent basis to guard a troupe's less combative members. In places like Cold Corner, where the barbarian women accost and occasionally kill female performers, this can be a difficult and essential duty. Merchant characters might fund and direct the show, while any Animal Handlers take care of the convoy's beasts of burden and Craftsmen work as skilled tailors or set-makers.

Touring troupes will see a great deal of the world, no doubt becoming involved in brigand road-ambushes, falling victim to criminal guilds and becoming entangled in the societies they perform for. Membership in a performance troupe can be an excellent way to present lowborn characters with a chance at entering high society, albeit temporarily. Perhaps the best place for such a group to meet and work is the Grand Theatre in Lankhmar.



The Noble Family

A group of adventurers drawn from the same aristocratic bloodline could make for some intriguing opportunities. In high society games, a group of siblings (or other relatives) would probably be concerned with maintaining their family honour and status in the city, while using misdirection and hidden methods to bring about the downfall of rival houses. Arranged marriages, star-crossed lovers and secret affairs could also be significant factors in such a campaign, especially if characters develop tendencies to operate outside the expected tiers of society and rub shoulders with the peasantry.

Hero Points

Finally, *Lankhmar* characters are allotted four Hero Points at character creation, not two as in standard *RuneQuest*. In a world of darkness, decadence and few opportunities for magical healing, luck is a heroes' closest ally. The characters of Nehwon campaigns are made of sterner and more fortunate stuff than many others among the populace and although Player Characters do not gain Hero Points any faster than other characters, they begin with a slightly larger pool to represent their supply of death-defying luck and ability to scrape out of trouble by the skin of their teeth, much as Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser are so fond of doing – usually at the very last possible moment.

LANKHMAR: CITY OF THIEVES

*D*ominating the Land of Lankhmar and crouching at the silty mouth of the River Hlal in a secure corner between the grainfields, the Great Salt Marsh and the Inner Sea is the massive-walled and mazy-alleyed metropolis of Lankhmar, thick with thieves and shaven priests, lean-framed magicians and fat-bellied merchants – Lankhmar the Imperishable, the City of the Black Toga.

– Induction, Swords Against Deviltry

City of Thieves. City of Adventure. City of the Black Bones. City of Seven-Score Thousand Smokes. The Imperishable City. *Lankhmar.*

Lankhmar is the oldest, grandest city in the world; a sprawling human hive of tarnished beauty, incredible opulence, abject poverty and moral decadence. It is a bastion of civilisation, if not civility, with its cobwebbed streets home to thousands of merchants, priests and workers and its shadowed back alleys a haven for beggars, thugs and thieves. Lankhmar is a chaotic bastion of life – the perfect place for the type of men and women who live by their wits and blades.

On First Sight

Distant, twin thunderstorms played to either side – north over the Inner Sea and south over the Great Salt Marsh – as they approached that monstrous city and as its towers, spires, fanes and great crenelated wall emerged from its huge customary cap of smoke, being somewhat silhouetted by the light of the setting sun, which was turned to a dull silver disc by the high fog and the smoke.

– The Circle Curse

To the north of Lankhmar is the Inner Sea. Those travellers seeking to enter Lankhmar from the sea find themselves repelled by the Sea Wall in the northernmost section of the city. Sailors and shipboard passengers will see that behind the Sea Wall lays a lush garden district and the towering, many-coloured spires of the overlord's estate – the Rainbow Palace.

To the south of the city are vast grain fields, responsible for feeding the residents of the city as well as forming the tidy bulk of many a merchant's profits. The Grand Gate is the largest of Lankhmar's entryways, capped with beautiful architecture and dozens of statues, welcoming travellers from the south with a display of grandeur. The Grain Gate is the second of the three southern gates, open almost exclusively for the constant traffic of laden wagons returning from the fields in an endless trail. The End Gate is the least of the southern gates, set far from

the Grand and Grain Gates and is used primarily for nefarious dealings and criminal purposes, such as smuggling and entering the city without being noted by the authorities.

To the east of the city is the Great Salt Marsh, creeping up and lapping against Lankhmar's stone walls. Travellers entering Lankhmar from this easterly direction gain access through the Marsh Gate, a relatively humble portal into the city that stays open for the rare wanderers coming through the marshlands.

To Lankhmar's west is a stretch of the Inner Sea that leads into the great River Hlal, as well as the expansive city docks. The docks are a hive of activity at all times of day and night, filled with ships coming in to dock, casting off and leaving, loading grain, unloading imported cargoes and with hordes of people going about their individual businesses. All of this is punctuated by the constant sound of an argument or a fight breaking out somewhere along the wharf, frequently nearby one of the many taverns that line the docks.

On Second Thought

The Mouser said dryly, 'I already smell dead fish, burnt fat, horse dung, tickly lint, Lankhmar sausage gone stale, cheap temple incense burnt by the ten-pound cake, rancid oil, mouldy grain, slaves' barracks, embalmers' tanks crowded to the black brim and the stink of a cathedral full of unwashed carters and trulls celebrating orgiastic rites – and now you tell me of a taint!'

– Cloud of Hate

As with everything in Lankhmar, these grand images of a glorious, bustling city are tainted somewhat. Lankhmar is not known as the City of Seven Score Thousand Smokes for nothing. Whether due to evening fog coming from the coasts or the smog of ten thousand night-fires, past sunset Lankhmar becomes a city wreathed in dark clouds that block out the moon and the stars. It is said that the black toga garb of Lankhmar's social and political elite were once traditionally white but the filth in the air ruining the material soon made a darker hue the more sensible choice.

In addition to the smoky fog that chokes the air above the city, Lankhmar is known for its smell. This is to be expected in any coastal city with a large population and vigorous industries but the stench can reach overpowering levels if the smog becomes extremely thick, such as on windless, sweltering summer nights. One might say that the smell is part of the city's character, which would be an unfortunate truth.

A Grand Tour of Lankhmar

The Lankhmar of Fritz Leiber's *Swords* series is never completely defined. At no point in the stories is the city ever laid out and comprehensively mapped for the reader. What is presented are a host of richly-detailed locations around the city, which easily serve as the foundations for readers and Games Masters to envision this chaotic, fantastical metropolis.

The following section is designed to guide Games Masters and players in creating their own Lankhmar and draws heavily on the descriptions and setting material in Leiber's masterwork. Ultimately it is down to individual Games Masters to make the city in their games fit their own perceptions of what it is in the novels but this chapter should go a long way in helping out. Readers will find a wealth of information here, beginning with the basic facts of life in the city and moving into a tour through the streets, alleys, taverns and palaces of the City of Thieves.

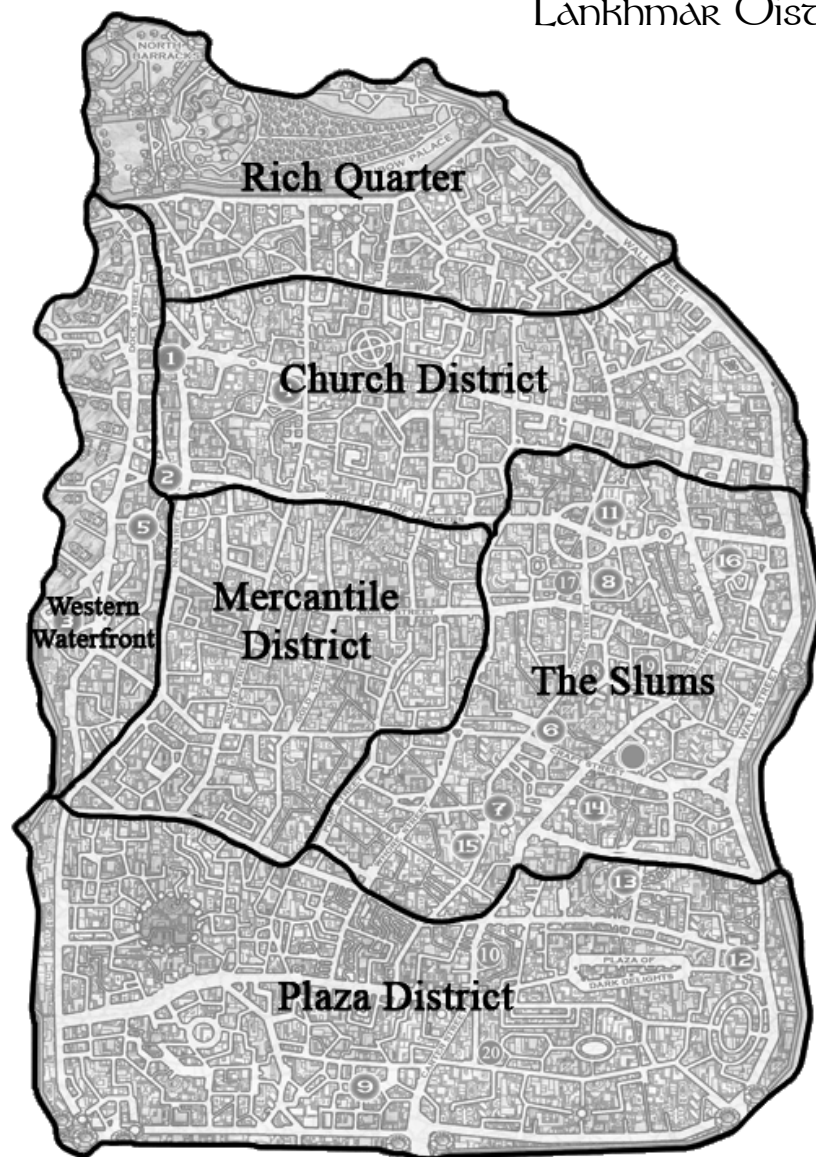
The city is roughly divided into six districts; the slums, the mercantile district, the church district, the western waterfront, the rich quarter and the plaza district. These areas are detailed later in this chapter.

Matters of Coin

In a city filled with merchants and thieves, the acquisition of money is a subject dear to the hearts of many Lankhmarts. Traders and businesses will take coinage from across the length and breadth of Nehwon but the land of Lankhmar uses the following currency:

Iron Tik – the smallest coin in both value and size, Iron Tiks are sometimes referred to as 'pennies.' These are thumbnail-sized

Lankhmar Districts



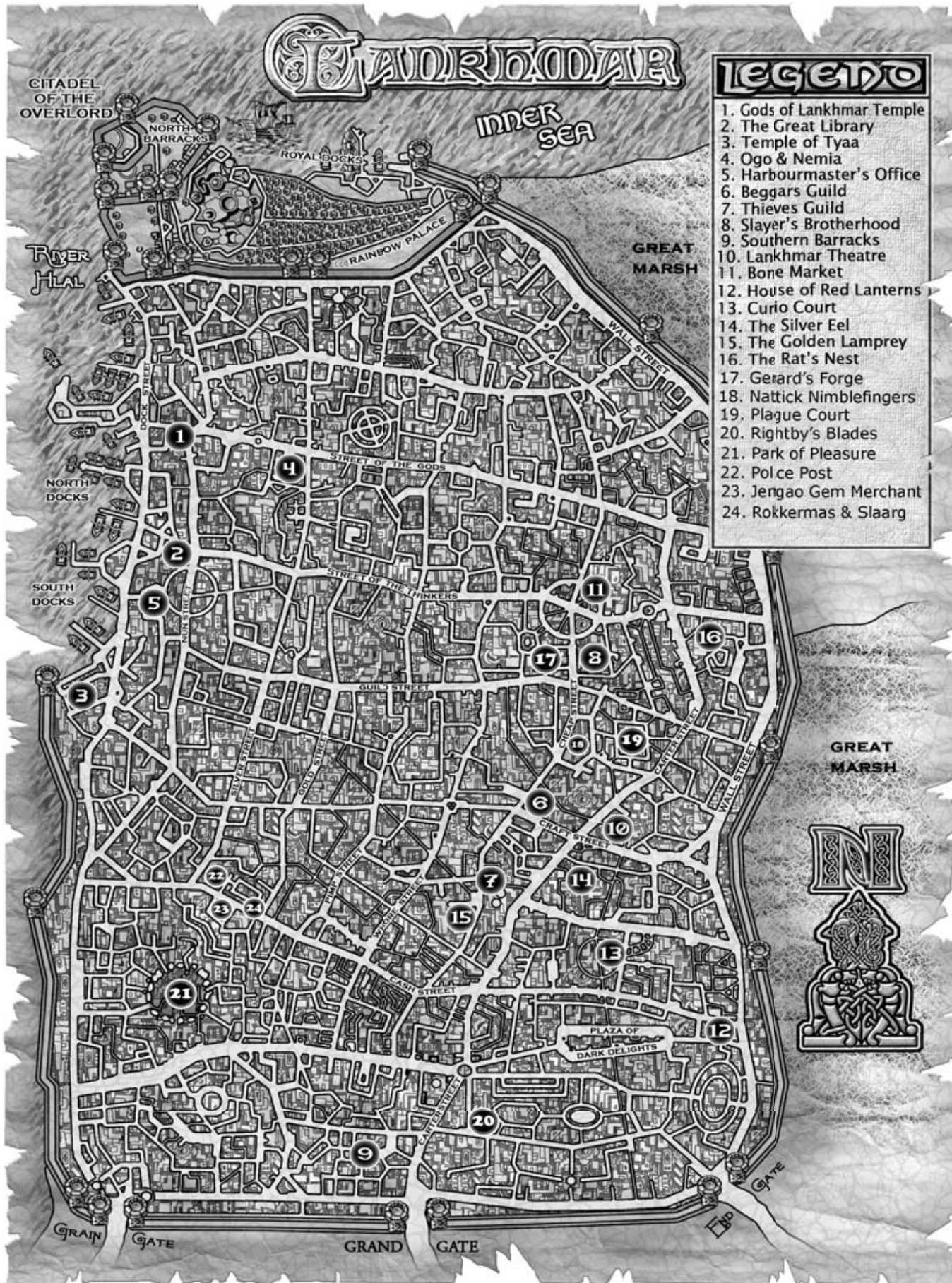
square shards of iron, usually cheaply minted with the imprint of the Guild of Grain Merchants symbol on one side and the minting date on the other. It is not unusual for even poor characters to have a pocket rattling half-full of Iron Tiks. Tiks are used mainly to buy cheap drinks, to hand over to beggars and to spend on anything else of almost no value. *Five Iron Tiks make up a single Bronze Agol.*

Bronze Agol – the first coin of any real value in Lankhmar's currency, the Bronze Agol is a large round coin with a hole in the centre. The coin is imprinted with a view of the city's walls on one side and the minting date on the other. Agols are used primarily for cheap services such as hiring porters, paying for shoddy equipment or accommodation, average-quality meals and inexpensive drinks. *Ten Bronze Agols make up a single Silver Smerduk.*

LANKHMAR

LEGEND

1. Gods of Lankmar Temple
2. The Great Library
3. Temple of Tyaa
4. Ogo & Nemia
5. Harbourmaster's Office
6. Beggars Guild
7. Thieves Guild
8. Slayer's Brotherhood
9. Southern Barracks
10. Lankmar Theatre
11. Bone Market
12. House of Red Lanterns
13. Curio Court
14. The Silver Eel
15. The Golden Lamprey
16. The Rat's Nest
17. Gerard's Forge
18. Nattick Nimblefingers
19. Plague Court
20. Rightby's Blades
21. Park of Pleasure
22. Police Post
23. Jengao Gem Merchant
24. Rokkermas & Slaarg



LANKHMAR: CITY OF THIEVES

Silver Smerduk – The Silver Smerduk is the backbone of Lankmarese industry, used to buy services and make purchases from across the board. Most tradesmen and workers within the city, as well as hirelings, adventurers and mercenaries who generally work outside the city, are paid in Smerduks. The coins are smallish and round, marked by the previous overlord's face on one side (as a post-mortem honour) and a view of one of the four city walls on the other. The wall on the back of the coins changes every year, from the Grand Gate of the south wall round to the Royal Docks of the north wall. *Twenty Silver Smerduks make a single Gold Rilks.*

Gold Rilks – The standard coin of Lankmar's prosperous elite (or most adept thieves) is the Gold Rilks. These coins are smaller than Smerduks and Agols and are close to the Tik in size but are obviously worth a great deal more than either. They are minted with the face of the current overlord on one side and that of his wife on the other. The overlord's face appears on both sides if the ruler is unmarried. *Two hundred Gold Rilks make a single Diamond in Amber Gluditch.*

Diamond in Amber Gluditch – These coins almost never fall into the palms of most Lankmarts, due to their rarity and value. Diamond is common enough to be used as trade currency in the largest deals and purchases but the tiny chips of diamond necessary would be easily lost. Centuries ago, a previous overlord had the insight and creativity to demand that a new (relatively) common currency take advantage of Lankmar's bevy of diamond mines by encasing minute shards of the gemstones in small pellets of amber approximately the size of a fingertip. These coins are stored in vaults and counting houses rather than carried around in pockets like metal coins.

Lankmarts have a saying, often related to watered-down beer, skinny wenches or cheap bed sheets: *Thin as a hundred-year-old coin.* This is born from the wear that soft metal coins such as Tiks, Smerduks and Rilks tend to show after a few years. Lankmar coinage is based on weight, which means that as coins start to wear out from years of changing hands and rubbing against each other on the inside of pockets, they can lose value. Every few years the overlord's counting houses recall old coins, which are melted down and re-minted. This is the primary reason Lankmarese coins are dated.

Taxation & Tolls

Taxes and tolls rise and fall depending on the political climate, the state of war in the land of Lankmar and perhaps most importantly, the whims of the current overlord. Some overlords levy a flat tax on the number of residents in any given household (the so-called 'head tax') which has been the subject of more than one revolution by families with many children and little income. A more acceptable variant involves taxation based on the number of adults within a household, though this proves difficult each time it is instituted because the various specifications of the different overlords responsible for the law have never agreed on the year a resident is considered taxable.



Currency Converters

Copper is common enough in Lankmar that it is never used as currency. For the purposes of currency conversion from basic *RuneQuest* to Lankmar campaigns, use the following rule:

Lead Bit = Iron Tik
Copper Penny = Bronze Agol
Silver Dollar = Silver Smerduk
Gold Ducat = Gold Rilks

Five Iron Tiks = One Bronze Agol
10 Bronze Agols = One Silver Smerduk
20 Silver Smerduks = One Gold Rilks
200 Gold Rilks = One Diamond in Amber Gluditch

The most recent proponent of this tax is Overlord Radomix Kistomerces, who set the level at 15 years of age, some years later than all previous decrees, which list ages ranging from 11 to 14.

A popular tax takes the form of personal asset evaluation, with tax inspectors cataloguing the net worth of an individual's property and belongings and charging him a percentage based on the result. This leads to chaotic times around tax collection days, with many Lankmarts hiding valuable personal possessions in

order to pay less tax. In the past, intelligent (and greedy) overlords instigated this tax in order to raise a great deal of capital in a short time. Admittedly the lower classes of Lankhmar – especially the slum-dwellers – end up paying very little in tax because of their deceptions but if tax week is timed just right it can bleed the nobility and aristocracy dry for some time and swell the overlord's coffers. For example, few noble families would hide their valuable jewellery and heirlooms during the summer party season, which is dedicated to showing off and looking one's best. In a very real sense, their pride makes them pay. Obviously, most nobles and grain merchants in Lankhmar can afford to pay steep taxes even several years running, since the wealth of the city's great and good is staggering in many cases.

The main toll that every Lankhmart knows all too well is the gate toll for coming into the city. The guards on duty at the various city gates are often easily bribed but the tolls still generate significant revenue from travellers and merchants. Each gate has a separate toll, based on the traffic that each portal into the city usually sees.

The Grain Gate at the south wall is barred from admitting travellers and only admits grain wagons, field workers with leather chits stamped by the Guild of Grain Merchants and indentured criminals set to work as slaves in the fields. Due to the Harvest Tax the Grain Gate imposes no additional tax upon the merchants or workers that use it.

The Grand Gate, also situated in the south wall, is the main source of traffic in and out of the city. The guards here are harder to bribe than at the End and Marsh Gates, purely because there are usually many potential witnesses, some of which are likely to be city watch officers on duty with their men. A lucky bribe of a Bronze Agol or three will gain a traveller access but the standard toll of five Agols is non-negotiable. Day and night, this gate tax remains the same.

The End Gate in the south-east is a small entrance, used mainly by pilgrims, travellers and skinflint merchants seeking to avoid the Grand Gate tax. Ostensibly the five Agol charge applies here as well, though bribes can go as low as a small handful of Iron Tiks. The lack of heavy patrolling at this smaller gate means that bribery is much easier to get away with and accordingly more common. Wagons are banned from entering via the End Gate unless they are proved to be for personal purposes and not trade. A slightly weightier bribe, usually in the region of a couple of Agols, is enough for many of the guards stationed there to overlook that particular law.

The Marsh Gate faces directly into the inhospitable Great Salt Marsh and sees only a trickle of traffic compared to the other gates. The toll for coming into the city via the Marsh Gate is only a single Agol, easily bribed down to a few Iron Tiks. Wagons are also barred from entering the city here, both for personal and trade use, since the Marsh gate leads directly onto the Street of the Gods and no amount of bribery will be able to hide a wagon on the holiest road in Lankhmar.

The Western Docks see the most outside trade coming into the city, confirming Lankhmar's reputation as a flourishing port. Upon docking (and shelling out a one Smerduk docking fee 'formality') a captain must turn over his manifest to the office of the port authority before unloading a single ounce of cargo. The accountants of the port authority calculate the value of the cargo and charge 5% of the total. Bribing the port authority depends on the ethics of the accountant in question and it should be borne in mind that they are paid well by the government for their service. Spot checks are performed on approximately half of the vessels that come into port, in order to ensure the captains have not missed anything of value from the manifest.

A final tax, the largest and most important of all, is the Harvest Tax – a set payment that applies to the Guild of Grain Merchants and never changes from overlord to overlord. After the harvest profits are reaped, the overlord's tax collectors take a full quarter of the entire Guild's profits. This might seem harsh but the profits from Lankhmar's grain fields are vast indeed and this yearly payment counts for a great deal of the overlord's treasury, which in turn pays for repairs to the city, upkeep of the docks and the maintenance of the military. Still, an overly wasteful overlord (and that is a relative term given the decadence of Lankhmar's nobility) can raise the ire of the Guild of Grain Merchants. In such cases, if the merchants are not placated, revolution is rarely far behind. Lankhmar breathes and grows because of her grain merchants and only the most ignorant overlords ever forget that.

Lankhmar Fashion

When it comes to clothes for the lower classes, standard medieval fare is the order of the day. Trousers, hose, long skirts, shirts and jerkins made of cheap but durable cloth tend to be the main garments worn by Lankhmar's poor. Hats to shield a person's eyes from the sun are not common, since the coastal climate is more often stormy than sunny. The grain field workers probably enjoy the most sun of any citizens and it is among these workers that wide-brimmed straw hats are most often found.

The middle classes, such as tradesmen, craftsmen, professionals, business owners and lesser merchants, tend to favour the black toga from which the city takes one of its many names. Jackets, shirts and other items of clothing are usually tailored to individuals, sitting on their owners with more appeal than the loose-fitting garments of the peasantry. Unsurprisingly, dark colours remain popular with the middle classes, who tend to care more than most slum-dwellers if the night-fogs ruin their outfits.

In high society, fashions change with the turning of the seasons and only one garment retains its class all year-round – the black toga. The balls, galas and parties of Lankhmar's prosperous aristocracy and wealthy pretenders are always competitions in who can make the blacks, greys and dark hues of the city's fashion into a dress to be admired by all others. Tailors with an instinctive eye for creating beautiful, classy outfits with the

limited dark colours available to them are in high demand among noble Lankhmarts. A character with excellent tailoring skills has a chance to make quite a name for himself and perhaps even infiltrate high society despite his lowborn roots.

Lankhmar's high society is known for its resilience in times of strife and upheaval, able to adapt to changes as they come. During the Year of Feathered Death when birds of prey tore the jewellery from women's bodies and scarred them horribly, the rich noblewomen and wives of grain merchants took to wearing lightweight silver cages around their heads, both as a curious fashion item and to protect their faces and wealth from avian-inflicted mutilation and feathered thievery.

Festivals & Holidays

Lankhmar is a city with a lot to celebrate: victories in war, the accumulation of endless wealth, the parties and get-togethers of the social elite and the seasonal celebrations of the harvest are among the most notable but several annual holidays stretch across the year at irregular intervals.

The Overlord's Deathday

A day of mourning is held to honour the death-date of any overlord. The Deathday is an annual event where each year of an overlord's reign sees a celebration of the previous overlord's Deathday on the date he died. Officially, this is a day of rest and respect, though in truth most of the peasantry use the day off work to celebrate ('raise a glass to the old overlord!'). The higher classes often throw last-minute galas to mark the occasion and ruminate on the potential changes to come in government and society.

The Seed & Harvest Festivals

The week in which the southern grain fields are seeded for the coming year is technically a holiday week, though most workers are far too busy to really enjoy it. However, most taverns cut their prices by a few Agols or Tiks for the Seed Festival week. The Harvest Festival is a day of raucous celebration on the date the last bushels of grain are brought in from the fields. Taverns usually cut their prices by half for the night and remain open until dawn. Nobody is expected to work the following day, which is a fact most people take full advantage of. Even members of the Thieves' Guild tend to abstain from their trade on this evening, though some may choose to 'work'.

Masquerades

A popular form of celebration, usually among the aristocracy but occasionally emulated on more humble terms by the peasantry, is the notion of a masquerade party. Nobles hold elaborate dances and ballroom parties at their estates, preparing expensive tailored dresses and elaborate masks weeks in advance. The poorer elements of the city usually gather in the Plaza of Dark Delights for carnivals of sorts, wearing simple porcelain or copper masks that hide their faces and celebrate military victories or a particularly bountiful harvest.

Day of the Dead Rat

After the Rat Plague, the citizens of Lankhmar had a new respect (mixed with the old, ingrained fear) for the Gods of Lankhmar. The general belief among the populace is that the gods walked that day, killing rats with their death-touch and summoning hordes of cats to chase down the rodent invaders. On the annual date that the Rat Plague was finally driven from the city, the Lankhmarts leave offerings of black togas, food, drink and even money on the steps of the black-stone Temple of the Gods of Lankhmar.

'The Overlord's Mercy'

The law of Lankhmar is generally referred to by the catchall term 'the overlord's mercy,' which is something of a joke to the city's citizens. When they use the word *mercy* they are referring to the fact that crime goes largely unpunished in Lankhmar. In some instances, such as the rule of Kastarck Overtamortes, overlords have not only tolerated the city's vast underworld activities but have actually been immersed in them. Another Lankhmart saying describes the attitudes of many of its residents: '*To the pious, it's the City of the Black-Boned Gods. To the rich, it's the City of the Black Toga. To the poor, it's just the City of Thieves.*' Whereas the nobility and wealthy aristocracy of Lankhmar focus on the garment that they habitually wear each day of their lives, the downtrodden dwell on the lawlessness that shapes the parts of the city they live in. Few rich Lankhmarts would ever refer to their city as the City of Thieves (at least not if they were trying to impress someone). Likewise, no slum-dwelling worker or cutthroat thinks of Lankhmar as the cradle of civilisation and will rarely use a name as grand as the City of the Black Toga.

City Watch

Oh, there're always one or two guys who like to play the heroes. They're the ones that forget just for a while how all of us in the city watch spend our rainy days and smoke-filled nights knowing that the thieves and assassins of Lankhmar are much better organised than we'll ever be. They've got a better guild, for a start. What really hurts is that they get paid a lot more than us. That's just insult to the injury, if you ask me.

– Sergeant Ruven, Lankhmart Constable

The city watch are Lankhmar's corrupt law enforcement organisation. Full details can be found on page 114 of the *Guilds and Cults* chapter.

Bribery

Bribery is a part of day-to-day life in the City of the Black Toga, with a few coins of the right metal opening all kinds of opportunities if they find a home in the right palms. Anyone in Lankhmar can be bribed for the right price, including the city watch.

For most Lankhmarts, offering or taking a bribe is basically another form of haggling. Whether the deal is to buy silence, look the other way or get off the hook, the taker always tries

to push the bid up by another few Tiks or Agols. The person offering the bribe knows as soon as he tries for the deal that he is entering a bargaining posture and will haggle accordingly. In an ideal world, upstanding citizens would be offended if someone offered them a bribe. Precious few delicate or honourable souls exist in Lankhmar with those kinds of ethics and to be offered a bribe is commonplace. Even judges can be bribed, as long as the accused character can find a way to get the money to the head of the court without arousing suspicion.

Punishment

In those rare instances where the so-called overlord's mercy does catch up with a criminal, it is usually because the crime was exceedingly heinous and cannot go unpunished or the crime was so minor that justice can be done without angering the Thieves' Guild or one of their associated brotherhoods. In the case of the former, a 'heinous crime' usually means someone with a great deal of influence, social status and money has made enough fuss about their grievances that the law takes notice. The actual crime can be something as minor as burglary or as grandiose as multiple murders and poisonings. All that matters is the influence of the victim and how much he cares about justice being done.

The Crime table lists the crimes and associated punishments in the city of Lankhmar. Games Masters should be well aware that bribing one's way out of each crime or fine depends entirely on whom the victim is and how persuasive the character can be at his own trial. For most crimes, a simple fine and public apology is enough. Judges offer the choice to pay the fine instead of meeting the sentence in almost every case, since the court gets a cut of every fine paid.

Repeat offenders are usually forced to serve the sentence unless they are convincing in any insinuations of repentance. Any instances of indentured servitude are served as slaves in the Rainbow Palace staff, in the household of one of the overlord's blue-blooded allies or in the grain fields south of the city. If a character is unable to pay the fine within three days and nights of his trial, he is forced to accept the sentence.

Games Masters wishing to judge characters more harshly (perhaps if a character wrongs an important or unusually-

powerful noble) should feel free to make the punishment more serious by choosing the fine and sentence in the row below. For example, harassing a noblewoman in the street comes with a three Rilk fine or 1D3 months of slavery. Harassing the daughter of a visiting dignitary or the overlord's female relatives might warrant double that, at 1D6 months of indentured servitude.

Slavery

Slavery is a complicated matter in Lankhmar. Some overlords have legalised the slave trade; others have banned it from the city with the exception of indentured servitude from criminals and prisoners of war. No overlord to date has entirely banished the practise, though it is generally considered illegal except as punishment for criminal behaviour.

In some cases, slaves purchased from outside the land of Lankhmar are considered legal, since other lands practice slavery with impunity. Many of these 'outsider' slaves serve in noble households and taverns, rather than in the grain fields, where punished criminals are usually set to work. As a rule of thumb, most overlords enforce an edict that no Lankhmarts can legally be sold as slaves and all indentured servants are the property of the overlord himself. Foreigners tend to be excluded from this otherwise relatively humanitarian law but so goes the decadence of Lankhmar.

The Military

The nation of Lankhmar has a large standing army, most of which is stationed in garrisons around the land rather than being housed in the Imperishable City. The reasoning for this varies from overlord to overlord, with some rulers not wishing to have a huge military presence stationed locally because the threat of invasion is so infinitesimal, others preferring not to risk a coup from disloyal army commanders and others simply finding that too much local soldiery offends their mercantile (and generally peaceable) sensibilities. Garrisons are situated across Lankhmar, with major forces stationed in the towns of Tovilyis, Kartishla and Land's End, recallable at the demands of the reigning overlord or the Captain General of Lankhmar's army.

Lankhmar's soldiers are uniformed in black and are armed with swords and spears of browned iron. Most are also armoured in dyed-black leather breastplates with accompanying vambraces,

Crime	Fine	Sentence
Harassment of a noble	Public apology and 1D12 Rilks	1D3 months of indentured servitude
Theft	Equal value to that which was stolen	1D6 months of indentured servitude
Property damage	Equal value to that which was damaged	1D6 months of indentured servitude
Assault against a noble	25% of character's current wealth	Public flogging and 1D3 years of indentures servitude
Debt / Tax evasion	50% of character's current wealth	Public flogging and 1D4 years of indentured servitude
Mutilation	50% of character's current wealth paid to victim, 25% to the court	Loss of eye or hand, decided by judge
Treason	None	2D6 years of indentured servitude or death by beheading
Murder	None	2D6 years of indentured servitude or death by hanging



thigh- and shin-guards. Each garrison answers to a commander, who in turn answers to one of several generals, most of whom serve on the overlord's War Council. These generals answer to the Captain General, who directly serves the current overlord. In previous eras, the Captain General has held nearly as much authority as the overlords of various bloodlines, with the authority and the audacity to disobey orders as he sees fit. When revolutions begin, it is often the Captain General that leads the revolt, either to install himself on the throne or in the name of a preferred candidate.

The Lankhmarines

The finest fighting force in Lankhmar (and by extension, the whole of Nehwon) is the Lankhmarines. Further details can be found on page 115 of the *Guilds and Cults* chapter.

Captain General Olegnya Mingolsbane

Soldiers and constables, according to their individual characters, grinned with relief or griped at bureaucracy's inanities when they got the news that they were to repair to the Southern Barracks one hour before midnight to be harangued by Olegnya Mingolsbane, who was reputed to make the longest and most tedious spittle-spraying speeches of any Captain General in Nehwon's history and to stink with the sourness of near-senility besides that.

– Swords of Lankhmar

For the majority of the *Swords* novels, the Captain General of the Lankhmarese military is the aging hero Olegnya Mingolsbane, renowned for his victories in battle during Lankhmar's most recent conflicts with the Mingol people. Olegnya was well into his eighties at the time of his death during the Rat Plague and was involved in both politics and the military right up until the end of his life. On a less serious note, he was also known for his long-winded and boring speeches and often found a reason to speak at any social functions he attended.

Games Masters dealing with high society characters or groups tied into the military have an excellent Non-Player Character in Olegnya Mingolsbane and one that ties in to the reign of several overlords from before the *Swords* novels right through to Karstack and Glipkerio. With his active involvement in politics as well as leading the Lankhmar military, Olegnya is a character with his fingers on a lot of pulses, despite his apparent senility. As a patron, he is likely to set tasks for characters who are almost certainly tied into either Lankhmarese high society or the Mingol hordes elsewhere on Nehwon, allowing a near-seamless interchange between two wildly divergent themes. Games Masters dealing with a group that is divided between preferring nobility-based campaigns and those preferring wilderness survival, combat and diplomacy with the enemy could do a lot worse than setting up the Captain General as a mentor, contact or acquaintance of the party.

The Slums

Reflected torchlight filtering down through the dark mist allowed them to make out only the most general shape of their surroundings. To the right was more windowless, high walls. To the left, crowded close to the back of the Silver Eel, rose a dismal, rickety building of darkened brick and blackened, ancient wood. It looked utterly deserted to Faford and Vlana until they had craned back their heads to gaze at the fourth-storey attic under the ragged-guttered roof. There faint lines and points of yellow light shone around and through three tightly-latticed windows. Beyond, crossing the T of the space they were in, was a narrow alley.

'Bones Alley,' the Mouser told them in somewhat lofty tones. 'I call it Ordure Boulevard.'

'I can smell that,' Vlana said.

– Ill Met In Lankhmar

To begin exploring Lankhmar, it seems fitting to start at the bottom rungs of society's ladder and work up, since this is the point of view most city residents (temporary or permanent) will share. The slums cover the mid-eastern region of the city where the only law that exists is that which the criminal guilds allow. Though the Thieves' Guild is a significant power behind the Overlord's throne, nowhere is their presence felt more acutely than in the southern ghettos and slums of Lankhmar. Life and death are cheap here, worth a hundred times less than the price of even the lowest slaves bartered among the nobility. Here lives are ended for a few Iron Tiks – just a shred of a slave maiden's value. Unsurprisingly, the populace often refer to the slums as the *Thieves' Quarter*.

Architecture & Layout

As a general rule, the buildings of the slums are multi-storeyed, compact tenements. Most have at least four floors, giving the slums an appearance of hundreds of cheap, old, badly stacked buildings all leaning slightly to various sides and pressing against each other. These confined buildings are ringed by an extensive and haphazard (some would say random) network of alleyways that lead out onto larger streets. The twisting, labyrinthine alleys of Lankhmar's slums are uniformly pitch-dark, receiving neither moonlight nor the fire of torchlight to illuminate them. The fog and the leaning buildings block out any hope of the night sky shedding any light on these alleys and the lamplighters who are paid a pittance by the city council rarely risk their lives to cast torchlight on whatever back-alley dealings go on in the slums after dark. The broader, straighter streets of these areas are where stalls and lesser businesses spill out onto the cobblestone roads and are where the major taverns and guilds are located.

The main streets in the slums follow the unimaginative but clear method of thoroughfare monikers in the rest of the city: only the slums get the choicest vile names as befits the architecture and atmosphere. Whore Street and Pimp Street are self-explanatory, populated by those selling their bodies and the bodies of others, respectively. These oft-visited roads are among the best-lit streets in the slums, laid out as they are on the borders of the merchant district.

Cheap Street is a narrow boulevard, intersected by many other alleys and roads, with a great many stores offering goods at the price and quality one would expect from the street's name. A number of shops are also located on this end of Crafts Street that lack the skill, resources or prestige of those further along the street where it enters the richer mercantile district.

Bisecting the slums is Carter Street, the longest, widest stretch of road in the city and one that leads from the Grand Gate to the Street of the Gods. As businesses and accommodations go, the slum buildings edged onto this street are (relatively speaking) the least shoddy in the area.

Other streets and alleys acquired their names from what goes on after nightfall rather than the intentions of any city planner. Dim Street, home of the notorious Silver Eel watering hole, was named for its darkness in the shadows of other buildings and the ever-present smog. Murder Alley and Death Alley are named for the proximity to a certain building nearby, the Thieves' Guild headquarters, as well as the prevalence of killings that occur in the area. The only souls walking this place after sunset are thieves on legitimate (by guild standards) business and merchants on the way to pay their protection money. Anyone else is most likely very brave, very foolish, very lost... and soon to be very dead.

Employment & Business

The dregs of the city live here, eking out an existence by backbreaking honest work no one else will do or more likely by dishonest work at the expense of others. Anyone in Lankhmar's sprawling, stinking slums who has not been the victim of an attempted shakedown in the form of extortion or mugging probably has not been in the city more than a few days. It usually takes less than a day or two for most visitors to encounter the criminal elements that thrive in the ghettos. Such meetings rarely go well for the victim – the Thieves' Guild does not maintain an iron control over the city by being lenient in its heartland.

The stores and stalls located in the slums, even those on the edge of Carter Street or closer to the merchant's district, are at the poorer end of the spectrum in regards to quality and service. Here one finds street-sellers offering charcoal-heated ale on the corners of cobblestone roads, punctuating a host of cobblers, tanners, hide-makers and curers, knackers, curios dealers and tinkers, which all make up a large percentage of the slums honest 'industry.' Fences, muggers, thieves, cutpurses and hired killers make up the majority of the sizeable illegal portion. Begging is a trade deemed to stand somewhere between the two, as panhandlers are well known for acting up in the name of sympathy, pretending to be blind or maimed ex-soldiers. Additionally, because begging is a guild-controlled activity, the Beggar's Guild has a noted connection to the Thieves' Guild, further blurring the lines between honest and crooked panhandlers.

The taverns in the district are the drinking holes of the slum residents and they also see trade from those who visit Lankhmar

Abandoned Temples to Forgotten Gods

'That's Lankhmar City for you,' the Mouser observed. 'You turn your back and they've put up a new secret temple.'

'Good ventilation, though,' Fafhrd commented on the absence of smoke.

Lankhmar's slums have their secrets. Dotted here and there around the poorer and richer areas of the city alike are shrines, monuments and other places of worship that were once temples to the worship of gods now long-ignored or long-forgotten by the people of Nehwon. In some cases these buildings have been converted into small storage warehouses, guild headquarters or even squalid, tenement apartments. They hold little to nothing of the places they once were. The majority, however, still stand as they have for centuries of abandonment and are untouched in the years since. They are all barred from entry and trespass is forbidden by the law of Lankhmar, upon pain of death. These slowly-rotting temples are often believed to be cursed and a pox on the fools that trigger such hexes by poking their noses where they should really avoid. Who knows what secrets lay within these crumbling

and either prefer rough living or lack the funds for any other option. Raucous and seedy ale houses such as the Silver Eel and the Rat's Nest have a 'colourful' clientele, ranging from wandering adventurers and sell-swords stopping off in the city, to more unsavoury patrons such as thugs, thieves and petty murderers who count these places among their regular haunts. Reputable recruiters seeking mercenaries, couriers and similar hirelings do use the slum taverns to seek potential employees but more often than not the jobs offered over the beer-soaked tables of a dim thieves' quarter tavern have a criminal or immoral element to them. Of course, many unscrupulous souls seek out these alehouses for precisely that kind of work; they want jobs that match their moral flexibility. Whether the recruiter is offering something fair or foul, he is likely to find takers among the crowds of a slum tavern. In Lankhmar, as long as the price is right, the offer of coin can alter many a virtuous man's sense of right and wrong.

The Silver Eel

The Silver Eel bustled with pleasantly raucous excitement. Fighting men predominated and the clank of swordsmen's harness mingled with the thump of tankards, providing a deep obbligato to the shrill laughter of the women. Swaggering guardsmen elbowed the insolent bravos of the young lords. Grinning slaves bearing open wine jars dodged nimbly between. In one corner a slave girl was dancing,

the jingle of her silver anklet bells inaudible in the din. Outside the small, tight-shuttered windows a dry, whistling wind from the south filled the air with dust that eddied between the cobblestones and hazed the stars. But here all was jovial confusion.

– The Bleak Shore

The Silver Eel is a typical slum tavern as well as one of the more popular establishments in the Lankhmar. If a traveller needs a place to breathe a spell and quaff some ale, the Silver Eel can provide such for a minimal cost. If a sell-sword is seeking a patron and some steady coin, the Silver Eel boasts more than its fair share of disguised wealthy folk using the tavern as a recruiting ground for skilled hirelings. Beyond this, the Eel also tends to house the expected number of ruffians, drunkards and slum-dwellers that have failed to better their lot through incompetence, bad luck or no desire to do so. On some nights the Eel can be a grim place but most of the time it is raucous and generally merry.

The landlord, Braggi, is a corpulent middle-aged fellow well into a lifetime of obesity. He is a close-mouthed man, well able to keep secrets (especially if his life rests on being tight-lipped) but not above taking the odd bribe here and there if he is sure he can get away with revealing information without drawing trouble upon himself. Some of the Eel's patrons consider Braggi a fat opportunist who will meet a bad end one night when he lets slip the right secret to the wrong ears.

The entertainments on offer are many and varied. Dicing for coins, dancing girls and cheap ale set the foundation for an enjoyable night at the Eel. It is also the favoured drinking hole of a lively pair of rogues known among the crowds as Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser. When they are present at the Eel, they are often drinking, whoring, gambling or making a great meal out of telling the tale of their latest exploits. It should be noted that not everyone believes these tales, which are often a mixture of dark magic, sinister mystery, beautiful wenches, impossible monsters and bold declarations of personal heroism that range from merely immodest to approaching godlike in nature. Other patrons can at least get some entertainment out of the tales, if nothing else.

The reason the Silver Eel sees so many nights end in scuffles and all-out brawls is that Braggi employs few bravos to mind the clientele. While he is not shy about whacking heads with his weighted club if the need arises, Braggi is generally content to let lads fight it out amongst themselves. The regular patrons of the Eel are loyal customers on the whole and will leap to the aid of serving wenches or dancing girls that become involved in any brawl.

The tavern front is located on Dim Street. The building itself is not quite as run down as many of the surrounding tenements, though it is hardly in a condition one would consider 'good repair'. The ground floor features the tavern bar and gambling tables. The first floor is where Braggi lives and he rents out the second and third floors for private use, cash first and no

questions asked. The top floor is gutted from a fire that occurred a few years ago. There is a rumour around Lankhmar's slums that the top floor of the Silver Eel is actually cursed and that two young women died there through unknown means.

Behind the building, Bones Alley stretches out, which smells exactly like the kind of place it is: an alley in which locals dump their chamber pots, dead pets and the occasional murder victim.

The Rat's Nest

Strands of fog came questing through small high-set street-level windows into the tavern called the Rat's Nest, interlacing curiously with the soot-trail from a failing torch but unnoticed except by an old harlot who pulled her patchy fur cloak closer to her throat.

All eyes were on the wrist game being played across an ancient oaken table by the famed bravo Gnarlak and a dark-skinned mercenary almost as big-thewed as he. Right elbows firmly planted and right hands bone-squeezingly gripped, each strained to force the back of the other's wrist down against the ringed and scarred and knife-stuck wood.

– The Cloud of Hate

If the Silver Eel is typical of many slum taverns (downtrodden, out of the way and patronised by travellers and lowlifes), the Rat's Nest is several steps further down the scale in terms of quality. The building is a ramshackle three-storied affair, with barred windows set in the stone walls. Once these windows were glass-faced, before an endless number of brawls (and killings) that ended with the losing combatant thrown through a window out into the street. The bars mean that there are no windows to be smashed and replaced and no chance of any brawler leaving any way other than the door. Regulars speculate, with gap-toothed smiles and knowing winks, that this also means fleeing the tavern is a difficult process. If someone seeks to make a run for it to avoid a gambling debt, blocking the only exit foils their escape plan quite succinctly.

The Rat's Nest is a nasty place, through and through. The entertainments offered run the gamut from poor to obscene. Cheap, ugly and often aging whores who cannot find work elsewhere (or who simply walk in from the street) are the kinds of harlots that trade their wares here. The main tavern area is a chaotic mess of cheap, old wooden furniture marred by beer- and bloodstains. Arm-wrestling bets are commonplace, as are drinking contests and knife games. The first of the Rat's Nest knife games involves throwing daggers at a painted target on the east wall. The second is a nerve/accuracy contest involving a knife-wielder stabbing his blade on a table between his splayed fingers, one at a time and increasing his speed as he goes. Bets are taken about how many seconds the game can go on without the player stabbing his own hand.

The real treat for the rough clientele of the Rat's Nest goes on under the floorboards. In the expansive cellar, illuminated by wall torches that fill the basement with a thin haze of choking

smoke, a large section of floor space is used for bare-knuckle brawls and knife fighting. Patrons are free to place bets on any fights down in the cellar, most of which end in either maiming or death for one of the combatants. Nonlethal battles are not rare but they see smaller bets and tend not to attract large crowds. Bodies from the 'real' matches are usually smuggled through the streets in a cart and dumped in Bones Alley.

The Golden Lamprey

Bordering the southern slums and the somewhat more hospitable heart of the city, the Golden Lamprey is noted for its many similarities to the Silver Eel, punctuated by a few minor differences. Firstly, it is generally seen as a positive sign that the establishment has a small number of bouncers armed with billy clubs making themselves known by the door and the bar area. The clientele remains generally as rough as the patrons of the Eel, however. Secondly, it is commonly said that the wenches and whores at the Lamprey are more appealing and indulgent than those at the Silver Eel. Of the three floors above the main bar room, one belongs to the owner, Herkal and the others are rented out either by the night (for inn patrons) or by the hour (for those paying for a whore's services).

Herkal is an underhanded businessman, stick-thin all over and with a sharp eye for sneaky opportunities. He has been known to hire mercenaries himself, usually to cause trouble in other taverns so that bad reputations spread and drive customers through his doors. He has a less than friendly rivalry with Braggi, landlord of the Silver Eel and both tavern owners have stooped to hiring ruffians, thugs (and, in one instance, a poisoner) to threaten, rough up and attempt to kill their rival. Characters patronising one tavern over the other have every chance of getting involved in this petty little feud.

Plague Court

Several interlocking alleys and small plazas meet in a densely populated but non-commercial area of the slums, going by the name Plague Court. It is here that various plagues in Lankhmar's history have first broken out due to the packed confines and poor quality of life and here that a previous Overlord ordered many of the victims' bodies burned. Though all marks of this ancient funeral pyre are gone today, when walking through the area of tumbledown buildings and rotting tenements it is easy to see why disease is rife at times.

Nattick Nimblefingers, Master Tailor

Nattick is a skilled tailor, though his advancing years mean he must work twice as hard to be as fast as he used to be. A slight tremble is noticeable in his hands as he works, which is one of the reasons Nattick works in the small fitting room behind the counter of his shop front. His business sees a brisk trade in workers and travellers alike, who are drawn by his reputation as a quick, cheap mender of clothes. In truth, Nattick can barely remember the last time he made new clothes for someone other than himself, since all of his work these days revolves around repairing the travel-worn garbs of his many regular customers.

On occasion, Nattick has been known to offer a room (or at least a pallet) to travellers he knows well who lack the coin or the desire to stay at one of the taverns nearby. Several of Nattick's friends have used his generosity in the past, usually when on the lam from the law. His own house consists of his business on the ground floor and his quarters on the first floor, which is also where Nattick keeps his collection of cheap Lankhmarese wine.

Gerard's Forge

Off Cheap Street and tucked neatly at the mouth of a side alley is a small business that looks like little more than a market stall at the front of a building. From inside the building, the clang-clang-clang of hammers against metal rings out from dawn until dusk, which does not please residents of the surrounding tenements; especially those that live directly above.

Gerard's Forge, marked by a crudely scrawled and creaky wooden sign above the street-facing market stall, is one of the major blacksmith shops in the slums. Field workers come to Gerard for scythe and sickle repairs, housewives for kitchen knives and sell-swords for weapons and armour. In the workshop behind the stall, a dozen apprentices work day in and day out. At the stall itself, Gerard lays out weapons and tools every morning and conducts business without lifting a finger at the forge. Most of his customers know that Gerard could not make a sword if his life depended on it, since the man has had no formal training. What he does have is the wits to hire several failed apprentice blacksmiths and set them to work in the hopes their skill would improve over time. In some cases, his patience was rewarded; in others, less so.

Gerard's work is unreliable, for the quality depends entirely on which apprentice is on the job. Their skills vary wildly from one to the next and overall it is easy to see why they were released from service by their masters. Despite the poor quality of Gerard's smithy, he still sees a great deal of trade. His low prices have everything to do with this – in the past he has driven other smithies out of business by savagely undercutting them.

It is well known that Gerard seeks the contract to supply the southern army barracks near to the slums but the quality of his work is a mark against his hopes. In the meantime, he desperately seeks other workers who will raise the standards of his current employees. When deep in his cups, Gerard has been known to admit that his life-long dream is to open a store on Crafts Street, though this generally provokes laughter from anyone that knows Gerard's business practices.

Bone Market

At the end of each week, thousands of Lankhmarts converge on the heart of the slums, taking up almost all available space on Cheap Street and several adjoining roads. Rugs and clothes are laid out on the cobblestone streets, hastily erected market stalls spring up and wares are hawked at the top of a hundred voices. This messy collection of buyers, sellers and traders is the Bone Market, also known as the Rag Market, the Dirt Market and (even less affectionately by many nobles) the Scum Market.

Any possession, item or object that a person wishes to sell will usually find a buyer or a barterer at the Bone Market. Lankhmarts who need a little extra coin, even just a few Tiks to get by, will come down to sell their homemade wares or any junk laying about their homes that they no longer need. Some Lankhmarts turn a modest profit each week, hiring out as cobblers and tinkers or selling craftwork like embroidery or weaving. Others just come for the opportunity to track down a bargain, maybe even a family heirloom that must be sold because the owner has fallen on hard times. Local legends about heroes finding magic swords for sale even reach the ears of children, enchanted weapons gone to rust and in need of a spot of polish to shine once again.

Beggars' Guild Headquarters

Down on Cheap Street is the building run by the Beggars' Guild, used as a headquarters and a hostel for its members. Further details can be found on page 112 of the *Guilds and Cults* chapter.

Slayers' Brotherhood

A Guild of mercenary cutthroats and killers, the Brotherhood has several buildings across Lankhmar which can be used to hire members but the headquarters are located on Cheap Street, near Plague Court. Details for joining the Slayers' Brotherhood can be found in the *Guilds and Cults* chapter on page 116.

The Assassins' Order

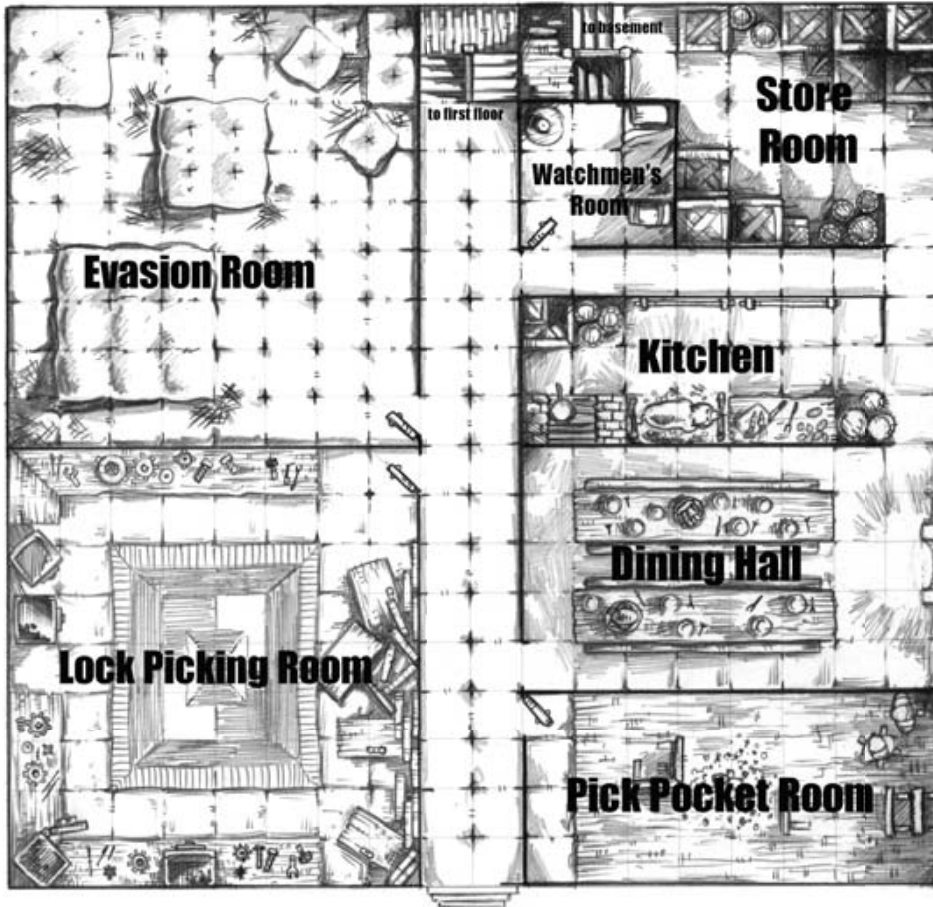
Within the Slayers' Brotherhood is an elite order of assassins. Details of the Assassins' Order can be found in the *Guilds and Cults* chapter on page 112.

Thieves' House

In one street rather narrower and more silent than the rest – Cheap Street, its name – a square yellow torchlight shone from a wide doorway in a vast and rambling house of stone. There was something ominous in a single open door in a street where all other doors were barred against the darkness and the damp. People avoided this street at night. And there was reason for their fear. The house had a bad reputation. People said it was the den in which the thieves of Lankhmar gathered to plot and palaver and settle their private bickerings, the headquarters from which Krovas, the reputed Master Thief, issued his orders – in short, the home of the formidable Thieves' Guild of Lankhmar.

– Thieves' House

Thieves' House, the base of the Thieves' Guild (detailed in the *Guilds and Cults* chapter on page 116), is a colossal building, easily the largest in the southern slums. It is found on Cheap Street, opposite Death Alley and backed by Murder Alley. It stands four storeys high, is constructed of dark stone and has few windows on any side. The front entrance of the Guild headquarters is a low door that remains open at all times. It is guarded by thieves taking shifts, lurking in a hidden alcove above the door on the inner side. A trapdoor is located just inside the entrance where additional thieves can ambush any would-be trespassers.

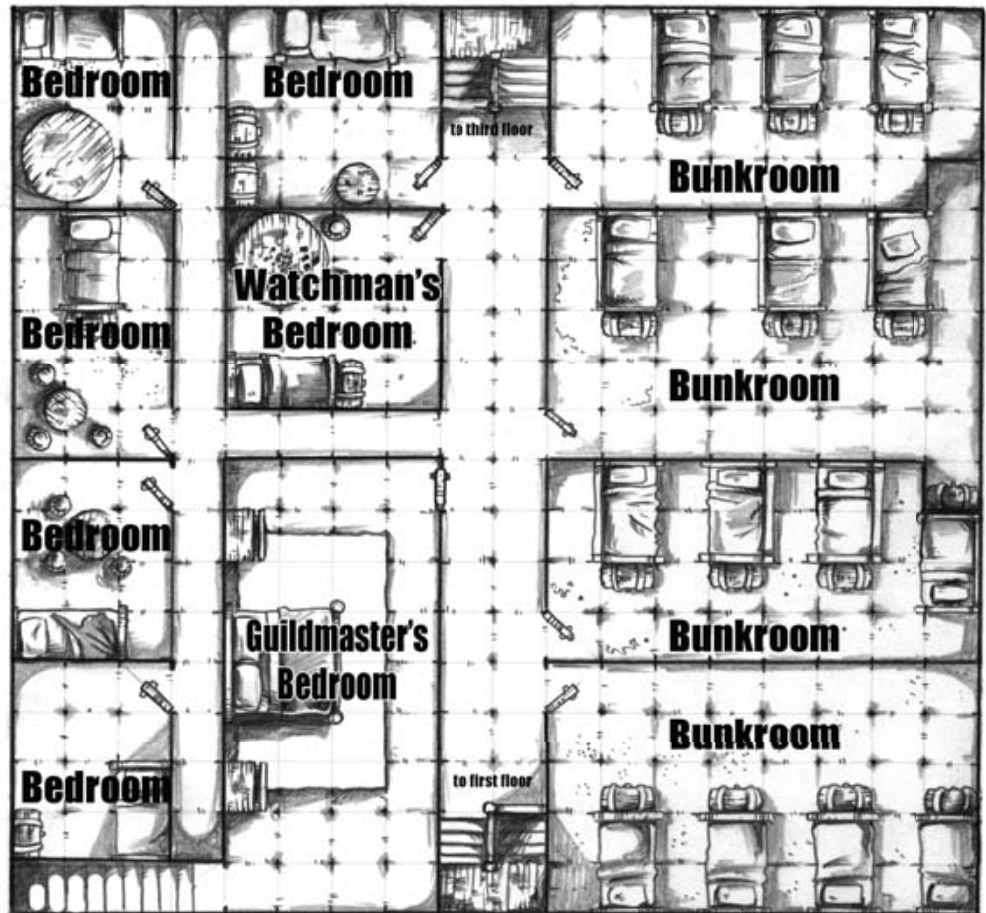


Thieves' House -
Ground Floor

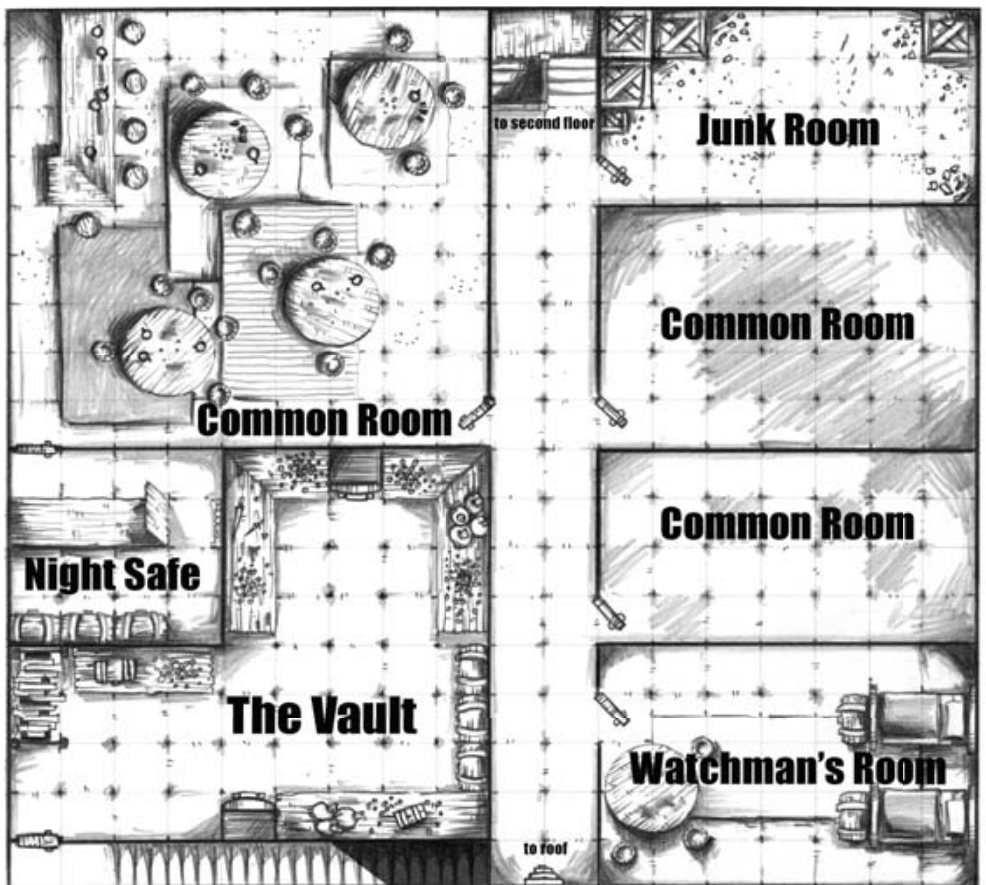


Thieves' House -
1st Floor

Thieves' House -
2nd Floor



Thieves' House -
3rd Floor



Mapping Thieves' House

The two stories that feature Thieves' House in the Fritz Leiber novels are somewhat contradictory; *Ill Met in Lankhmar* describes the building as having a simple layout with a long straight corridor, whereas *Thieves' House* describes it as having maze like corridors. For the purposes of mapping the building certain compromises have had to be taken to create a realistic layout.

The rooms of Thieves' House that Leiber details in his novels are presented here with the descriptions quoted from the books in italics. All other rooms have been added according to allusions from Leiber's text and what one would expect to find inside such a building. Games Masters are free to modify these latter rooms as required to fit in with their own ideas of what would be found in the infamous Thieves' House.

Ground Floor

Most of the ground floor rooms of Thieves' House are used for training purposes as well as kitchen and dining facilities. The following training activities and pastimes take place on the ground floor as detailed in *Ill Met in Lankhmar*:

Pickpocket Training: *In one room young boys were being trained to pick pouches and slit purses. They'd approach from behind an instructor and if he heard scuff of bare foot or felt touch of dipping hand – or, worst, heard clunk of dropped leaden mock-coin – that boy would be thwacked. Others seemed to be getting training in group-tactics: the jostle in front, the snatch from behind, the swift passing of lifted items from youthful thief to confederate.*

Lock Picking: *In a second room, from which pushed air heavy with the reeks of metal and oil, older student thieves were doing laboratory work in lock picking. One group was being lectured by a grimy-handed greybeard, who was taking apart a most complex piece by weighty piece. Others appeared to be having their skill, speed and ability to work soundlessly tested – they were probing with slender picks the keyholes in a half dozen doors set side-by-side in an otherwise purposeless partition, while a supervisor holding a sandglass watched them keenly.*

Dining Hall: *In a third, thieves were eating at long tables. The odours were tempting, even to men full of booze. The Guild did well by its members.*

Evasion: *In a fourth, the floor was padded in part and instruction was going on in slipping, dodging, ducking, tumbling, tripping and otherwise foiling pursuit. These students were older too.*

Kitchen: The main entrance to the kitchen is reached via a narrow passage that branches off from the main corridor. The kitchen provides easy access to the storeroom that is situated across the passageway through a low archway. A door on the opposite wall to the kitchen entrance leads into the dining hall.

The kitchen has modest facilities to cook meals for 30 to 40 people. There are two fires on the southern wall, one has a spit and the other has large pots hanging above it. Against the northern and western walls are a number of well-used tables for preparing food, most of them scattered with knives and scraps of food. Shelves are fixed to most walls filled with pots and other cooking utensils.

Store Room: The store room is located down the same passageway as the kitchen and has the same style low archway leading in to it. Stacked haphazardly around the room are sacks, crates, barrels, pots and jars containing a variety of grain, drink and other ingredients. At the far end of the room a staircase leads into the basement (see page 40) where meats and cheeses are usually stored.

Watchman's Room: In addition to the guards by the main entrance, there is always at least one other person on guard in the watchman's room. He is responsible for dealing with any intruders on this floor who manage to bypass the main security.

First Floor

On the first floor, a long corridor is decorated by rich drapes on the walls and filigreed hanging pots of spicy incense. This floor is much quieter than the ground floor and has seven rooms.

Disguise Room: *The first door, wide open, showed an untenanted room full of racks of garments, shelves of beards and such and several wall mirrors faced by small tables crowded with cosmetics and with stools before them.*

Watchman's Room: The watchman's room on this floor is larger than the one on the ground floor. A number of guards stand watch and are responsible for dealing with any unauthorised people on this floor. The room has two bunks, a small table and four chairs. The security here is mainly to prevent members snooping where they are not welcome as intruders are usually dealt with as they enter the building. For this reason, the security here is quite lax and the guards spend most of their time napping or playing cards.

Guildmaster's Room: *It was a large room with several alcoves. Like the rest of the building, the floor and walls were of smooth dark stone, unembellished. It was lit by four earthenware lamps set at*

random on a heavy cyprus table. There were a number of jeweller's instruments, their ivory handles stained deep yellow from long use.

Set within the northern alcove is a small low doorway, concealed and made of stone. The doorway can only be opened from the other side and reveals a passageway that connects to the home of Ivlis (see page 41). A nearby cord hangs from the ceiling to release the thick velvet drapes that conceal the secret exit.

Armoury: Although not up to military standards, the Thieves Guild does have a sufficient stock of weapons and light armour. All lieutenants and guards are supplied with weaponry as required. Other members may also request items from the armoury but they will usually have to perform additional duties in return. Only the master thief and his lieutenants have keys to this room, which is always locked (-60% to Mechanisms test).

Interrogation Room: Not the most pleasant place to be, the interrogation room has a rickety wooden chair and a small table laid out with several rusty implements. A single lantern illuminates the room and the blood stained floor emits a faint odour of various bodily wastes. This room is seldom used but occasionally it has been necessary for the guildmaster and lieutenants to extract information from certain individuals.

Holding Room: In the rare cases where several people have needed to be interrogated or held for further questioning, they are locked in this damp and musky room. The floor is hard and cold. The room has no furnishings other than a small bucket.

Map Room: The entire far wall of this marble-floored room is covered in a vast map of Lankhmar. *'Every building and street seemed depicted, down to the meanest hovel and narrowest court. There were signs of recent erasure and redrawing at many spots and here and there little coloured hieroglyphs of mysterious import.'*

Thieves' tools, from pry-bars and hammers to ratchets and wire-thin hooks, line another wall, along with a staggering collection of knives. On a huge central table, wooden models of dozens of Lankhmar's buildings are rendered in painstaking detail to the point where a character can take the roof and floors off one by one and peer at the floor plans inside. Dozens of rolled-out and weighted-down maps are also present, highlighting the methods of entry, exit and any secret passageways into a number of targeted buildings.

This room is also used for the so-called Thieves' Jury. When a member has allegedly wronged the Guild by dramatic failure or betraying secrets, he stands before a council of his peers and is judged according to their wishes.

During the reign of Krovas, seven straight-backed but well-padded chairs surrounded this square ebony table. Other leaders of the Guild have chosen more or fewer contemporaries to elevate to advisor (and potential rival) status.

Sorcerer's Room: What they saw was a room somewhat smaller than that of the great map and lit by central lamps that burned blue white instead of customary yellow. The floor was marble, darkly colourful and complexly whorled. The dark walls were hung with astrological and anthropomantic charts and instruments of magic and shelved with cryptically labelled porcelain jars and also with vitreous flasks and glass pipes of the oddest shapes, some filled with coloured fluids but many gleamingly empty. At the foot of the walls, where the shadows were thickest, broken and discarded stuff was irregularly heaped, as if swept out of the way and forgot and here and there opened a large Rathole. At the centre of the room and brightly illuminate by contrast was a long table with thick top and many stout legs.

Second Floor

The second floor contains the main living quarters for members of the Thieves Guild.

Bedrooms: Each bedroom is furnished with a bunk bed, a small table, two chairs and two storage chests (-20% Mechanisms tests). These rooms are available to any lieutenant who requires accommodation and are usually locked (-40% Mechanisms tests).

Bunkrooms: Any member can use the bunkrooms as required. Each room has four or five bunks but no other furnishings are provided.

Watchman's Room: The watchman's room on this floor is quite small and usually only has one guard whose main duty is to prevent any brave or foolish members from attempting to access the guildmaster's bedroom.

Guildmaster's Bedroom: The guildmaster has the privilege of having the largest room that is always locked (-60% Mechanisms tests). At the far end of the room, a locked doorway (-60% Mechanisms tests) reveals a staircase that leads to the vault (see page 40).

Third Floor

The third floor is slightly narrower than the lower floors and has several rooms that see little use.

Junk Room: This room is full of discarded objects, broken weapons and worthless items stacked in unorganised piles.

Common Room: This is a communal room for members to relax, talk and gamble their profits away. It is furnished with a number of tables and chairs

Night Safe: The night safe is a temporary storage area accessed from the common room. All members' takings are stored in here where they can be evaluated before being shared out or moved to the treasure or junk room. The safe is always locked (-40%

Mechanisms test) and can only be accessed by the guildmaster or his lieutenants. There are usually several members and at least one lieutenant in the common room so there is rarely an opportunity for anyone to gain unauthorised access to the safe.

The Vault: The vault room can only be accessed from the guildmaster's room on the second floor and has the most secure lock within the building (~80% Mechanisms test). The treasures stored here are vast and varied, from coinage, to trinkets and rare artefacts.

Disused Rooms: Thick dust covers the floors of these empty rooms. The only furnishings are a few shelves fixed to walls that are now filled with cobwebs.

Roof

A ladder on the third floor leads to the roof by way of a trapdoor. The roof of Thieves' House is guarded by several guild members armed with slings who watch the surrounding rooftops and the streets below. Unbeknownst to most Lankhmarts is the fact that the Guild owns dozens of the nearby buildings, using them as caches, hidey-holes, canteens, hostels and bases of operation. The real secrets of the Thieves' Guild are not found on the roof overlooking the street, however but under the floorboards of the lowest level.

Basement

The basement of Thieves' House is a series of cellars of various sizes, interlocked with the cellars of countless other buildings through a dizzying number of tunnels, subterranean corridors and labyrinthine passageways. Many of these tunnels are disused and long forgotten by the Guild – such is the extensiveness of the passage network. The rooms that still see use are used for storage and access to other parts of the city and although it is unlikely to be considered a positive feature, access to the sewers is also possible through several corridors.

Games Masters have a lot of scope when it comes to detailing just what hides down in the dark cellars and subterranean corridors of Thieves' House. In some campaigns it might even mirror a classic 'dungeon' of sorts, with ancient artefacts forgotten by the people above and both mundane and supernatural enemies lurking in the abandoned tunnels. Any imaginable kind of squatters (human or otherwise) might have taken up residence in the lightless passageways. Characters entering these tunnels without their own light sources are likely to become lost in a very short span of time, for the corridors are utterly devoid of illumination.

The only established fact, discovered at the time of Krovas's death, is that somewhere in a forgotten section of the cellars, the ancient mummified bones of the Dead Master Thieves rest in motionless undeath. As the tunnels descend further into the earth, the air becomes hotter and drier and it can seem as if the blackness all around somehow becomes even thicker. Dust particles taint the air and hamper all senses of taste and smell.

In these deeper catacombs and passages, old traps remain set and active, ready to be sprung. Rusted blades spring out of the walls on squealing hinges and springs when a certain flagstone is stepped upon and darts flaked with dried poison slash out of holes, still bearing enough venom to infect a hardy man and render him paralysed. Many such traps exist, designed to ward against intruding upon the Dead Master Thieves or any number of other forgotten relics and treasures.

In the deepest of these hidden cellars, the air takes a sudden, almost imperceptible spiciness to it, a *dead* spiciness reminiscent of the ancient desert tombs of the Eastern Lands. If one calls out he may determine from the echo that he stands in a large chamber that stretches out for some distance. The ground is carpeted in a thick blanket of fine dust. In the silence, soft rattling – the clicking of bone on bone and bone on stone – and the flapping of either bat's wings or old rags can be heard. In this deepest cellar is the basement-tomb of the Dead Master Thieves.

These mummified corpses are akin to the Gods of Lankmar (see page 46) preserved in honour because of their great achievement in founding the Thieves' Guild. These walking, talking corpses had long been forgotten by even the Guild members in the early *Swords* novels, though in *Thieves' House* the Dead Master Thieves walk to exact their revenge and show their displeasure on the new Master Thief Slevyas and the Guild above their resting place, for not returning the jewelled skull of one of their number. The Dead Master Thieves only rise up and walk the halls of the guild house when they deem the Guild has degenerated and needs to return to its 'noble' roots, though determining what degeneration actually is in such circumstances is a matter for undead near-deities and not the minds of mortals. After the death of Slevyas at the bony hands of the Dead Master Thieves, the Guild began to pay respect to the slumbering founders of their brotherhood by leaving personal offerings and a cut of each month's take in a disused room close (but not too close...) to the tomb-cellar.

Intruders finding themselves in the tomb-cellar of the Dead Master Thieves might be killed for their impudence but more likely the dead guild-founders will seek to converse with the intrepid soul that braved the maze of rooms and tunnels to make it so far. When Fafhrd stumbles into their basement in *Thieves' House*, the Dead Master Thieves calmly explain their disgust at the actions of the guildmaster (and frighten the barbarian half to death just by doing so) before embarking on a death-dealing stalk through the guild house to end dozens of thieves' lives.

For the game mechanics of the Dead Master Thieves, please refer to the Gods of Lankmar on page 129 of the *Creatures of Nehwon* chapter.

Personalities of the Thieves' Guild

Krovas

The Master Thief is an ophidian-fingered man with squinting, glinting eyes and a sinister grace to his every movement. Ambitious to the last, he raised the Thieves' Guild to the highest

positions of authority they had ever enjoyed, even reaching the ultimate goal of exerting no small control over Overlord Karstack and ensuring the Guild remained utterly untroubled by Lankmar's law enforcement. Within the brotherhood, he is as well known for his strange ideas as for his elevation of the Guild. It was Krovas who employed a black magician to work for the Thieves' Guild, aiding their endeavours and slaying their enemies with dark sorcery.

His ideas for caution when performing a theft go far beyond the standards of other Master Thieves, going so far as to demand that on almost any engagement, members of the Thieves' Guild should be accompanied by hired members of the Slayers' Brotherhood. Many thieves feel this an unnecessary slight on their abilities to do their job and remain undetected. Others are put off by Krovas's insistence on relying on a hated and malformed black magician, so hold little affection for Krovas outside of their guaranteed loyalty to the chosen Guild leader.

Ivlis

Ivlis is Krovas's manipulative and ambitious lover. With beautiful red hair and looks that every man admires, Ivlis has little trouble in using her feminine charms to get her way. She sometimes even dances for Overlord Karstack; such is her grace and talents at seduction. Despite the fact that females are barred from ever setting foot in Thieves' House, Ivlis's home backs onto Thieves House and has a secret passageway to the guildmaster's room as detailed on page 39.

Hristomilio

Behind the left end of the table stood a tall, yet hunchbacked man in a black robe and hood, which shadowed more than hid a face of which the most prominent features were a long, thick pointed nose with out-jutting, almost chinless mouth just below. His complexion was sallow-grey like clay and a short-haired, bristly, grey beard grew high on his wide cheeks. From under a receding forehead and bushy grey brows, wide-set eyes looked intently down at an age-browned scroll, which his disgustingly small clubhands, knuckles big, short backs grey-bristled, ceaselessly unrolled and rolled up again. The only move his eyes ever made, besides the short side-to-side one as he read the lines he was rapidly intoning, was an occasional farther sideways glance at the alembic.

– Ill Met in Lankmar

During Krovas's tenure as guildmaster, Hristomilio worked as Krovas's pet magician in the magic room, chanting foul magical incantations to aid thieves on their night's work and ruthlessly slaughter the Guild's enemies from afar. Hristomilio meets his end in *Ill Met in Lankmar* when Fafhrd kills him with a well-thrown silver dagger.

Slevyas

Slevyas is tall and strong, with heavy arms and big hands. He is well known for being a cruel and cold-faced man. He was Krovas's chief lieutenant and eventually became guildmaster after Krovas was killed during the events in the story *Thieves' House*.

Fissif

Fissif is a short fat man with darting eyes. This second-class thief is known for being talented in the art of double-dealing and would often work alongside Slevyas until the tall thief became guildmaster.

Mercantile District

If the slums are the rotting soul of Lankmar, the mercantile district is surely the city's heart. Here the colossal warehouse granaries house the ripe pickings of the southern grain fields, storing the economical lifeblood of the city. This area of the city has the more esteemed craftsmen situated on the aptly named Crafts Street and other prominent businesses tend to be located on Cash Street, Gold Street and Silver Street. Most of Lankmar's honest guilds (for indeed, such a thing exists) are situated on one of the main streets in the district that has earned the name Guild Street.

Cash and Silver Police Post

There are police posts dotted around most of the city (except in the slums) but the one located at the intersection of Cash Street and Silver Street is well known by the city's criminal elements; the city watch who are stationed here are notoriously difficult to bribe. This is not to say that they cannot be bribed but their asking price tends to be much higher than anywhere else.

Jengao the Gem Merchant

Jengao's jewellery store is both a legal business and a front for his fencing on the side. The Thieves' Guild periodically hit the man's shop because he refuses to pay protection money. To combat this, Jengao – an aging Mingol who gave up the Steppes life long ago – hires mercenaries and members of the Slayers' Brotherhood to guard his wares. Unfortunately for him, many of these employees are bribed into laxity by the thieves.

It is said that Jengao is the most knowledgeable trader in the city when it comes to expertise with gemstones and his prices are fair. Many aristocrats go to Jengao's store when they wish to purchase fashionable jewellery, as he stays abreast of all recent developments in that area.

Rokkermas and Slaarg Stonemasons

Just west of the Gold Street intersection, Cash Street is bridged by a passageway that joins two buildings on opposite sides of the street. These are the premises of the famous stonemasons and sculptors, Rokkermas and Slaarg. The buildings and bridge are decorated with large pillars and porticos to advertise the quality of the craftsmen's work.

The Guild Houses

To the south of the Street of the Thinkers, Guild Street is the aptly named location for several towering guildhouses. Little actual trade goes on here but the important dealings of the guild leaders take place in these three- and four-storey buildings. The

Blacksmiths' Guild, the Carpenters' Guild, the Jewellers' Guild, Moneylenders' Guild, the Scribes' Guild, Physicians' Guild, Apothecaries' Guild and the Couriers and Messengers' Guild all stand on the same street, open for members and clients to make business arrangements. The Labourers' Guild (including the Porters' Guild) and the Architects' Guild both lay claim to the two largest buildings at either end of the street, with the former in the east and the latter in the west.

Church District

North of the mercantile district and the slums lies the church district centred around the wondrous Street of the Gods, where Lankhmarts come to pray to the dozens and dozens of ever-shifting, ever-changing Gods *in* Lankhmar. This area of the city is home to a curious mixture of the spiritual, the corrupt and the mundane. The Street of the Thinkers (often called Atheists' Avenue) and the temple-strewn Street of the Gods border the sprawling houses of merchant-princes rich off their grain-selling empires. Close to the poorer end of the Street of the Gods, around the Marsh Gate itself, tumbledown tenements are slowly falling apart, home to the destitute and the deranged that live their lives breathing in the stench of the Great Salt Marsh beyond Lankhmar's high eastern wall.

Street of the Gods

A new god (his priest or priests, that is) will begin at the Marsh Gate and more or less slowly work his way up the Street of the Gods, renting a temple or pre-empting a few yards of cobbled pavement here and there, until he has found his proper level. A very few win their way to the region adjoining the Citadel and join the aristocracy of the gods in Lankhmar – transients still, though resident for centuries and even millennia (the gods of Lankhmar are as jealous as they are secret). Far more godlets, it can justly be said, play a one-night stand near the Marsh Gate and then abruptly disappear, perhaps to seek cities where the audiences are less critical. The majority work their way about halfway up the Street of the Gods and then slowly work their way down again, resisting bitterly every inch and yard, until they once more reach the Marsh Gate and vanish forever from Lankhmar and the memories of men. – Lean Times in Lankhmar

One of the biggest and busiest streets in the city is the cobblestone boulevard called the Street of the Gods. Here the nighttime worship of Lankhmar's mutable pantheon of divinities takes place, as well as the standard endurance test to see which of the many gods can make it into a more permanent residence in



the hearts of the city's residents. Stretching for the Marsh Gate in the east wall all the way to the western docks and running parallel to the Street of the Thinkers to the south, the Street of the Gods neatly bisects Lankhmar in twain. It is intersected by Nun, Whore, Cheap and Silver Streets, with traffic from each adding to the hustle and bustle of one of Lankhmar's busiest after-dark avenues. Towards the western end of the great street are the largest and most ornate temples, housing the faiths of the most successful gods *in* Lankhmar. Right at the western end of the avenue, nestling uncomfortably close to the granaries and docks, is the squat and black-stoned Temple of the Gods *of* Lankhmar.

The Street of the Gods is tied directly to the unique way in which Lankhmarts view divinity. To the citizens of the city there are two kinds of god; the Gods *in* Lankhmar and the Gods *of* Lankhmar. The former are the deities discovered by men and women, hailed as divine and tested on the Street of the Gods to see if their worship catches on with the populace. The latter are something else entirely – something darker and much more sinister.

The Gods in Lankhmar

The Gods in Lankhmar (that is, the gods and candidates for divinity who dwell or camp, it may be said, in the Imperishable City, not the gods of Lankhmar – a very different and most secret and dire matter)... the gods in Lankhmar seem as if they must be as numberless as the grains of sand in the Great Eastern

Desert. The vast majority of them began as men or more strictly the memories of men who led ascetic, vision-haunted lives and died painful, messy deaths. One gets the impression that since the beginning of time an unending horse of their priests and apostles (or even the gods themselves, it makes little difference) have been crippling across that same desert, the Sinking Land and the Great Salt Marsh to converge on Lankhmar's low, heavy-arched Marsh Gate – meanwhile suffering by the way various inevitable tortures, castrations, blindings and stonings, impalements, crucifixions, quarterings and so forth at the hands eastern brigands and Mingol unbelievers who, one is tempted to think, were created solely for the purpose of seeing to the running of that cruel gauntlet. Among the tormented holy throng are a few warlocks and witches seeking infernal immortality for their dark satanic would-be deities and a very few proto-goddesses – generally maidens reputed to have been enslaved for decades by sadistic magicians and ravished by whole tribes of Mingols.

– Lean Times in Lankhmar

Lankhmarts worship the Gods *in* Lankhmar in their day-to-day lives. These are the deities that have been discovered or created by mortals, usually born from stories of martyrs, penitents and the occasional hero that captures a scholar's attention. For many of these would-be gods, a single mortal advocate is all they need to begin the rise to true divinity. The stories of these long-dead heroes and martyrs are easily twisted into tales of divine manifestation, with the exaggerated powers and holy behaviour that goes along with such a claim. The devout soul who earnestly believes all of this – even the changes to the legend he has personally made – sets out for the Street of the Gods and camps out at the eastern end, right by the Marsh Gate. Here, amongst the infrequent traffic and uninterrupted stench of the Great Salt Marsh, the god's faith (and the patience of his advocate) is tested.

Each night, Lankhmarts come to the Street of the Gods in the early hours of evening to pay respect and sometimes make offerings to the gods they worship. As in all matters of Lankhmar, faith is fickle. A Lankhmart will change the god he worships depending on his situation in life, the god's favour among other worshippers, what other gods *in* Lankhmar stand for that might suddenly seem more appealing, and occasionally just in the spirit of a change.

The Street of the Gods is home to dozens upon dozens of preachers, priests and cultists all hawking the virtues of their deity and the merits of their faith like tradesmen on market day. Preachers in threadbare rags close to the Marsh gate will rant and rave or sibilantly enthuse about their newly-found god in the hopes that the deity's appeal spreads to other followers. Every night, one or more of the cults based on either side of the Street of the Gods will move around and change places, as worship of some rise and others decrease. Those with increasing popularity move on from their cloth mat on cobblestone beginnings, through the stalls and the small wooden platforms by the Marsh Gate end and through continued donation, may eventually be

able to rent one of the small shrines or larger temples as the Street of the Gods widens and becomes evermore grand with each westward step.

It is easy to see how the Street of the Gods can be such a busy, noisy place. In the larger temples, worshippers will go through ordered religious ceremony as dictated by their priests and cult leaders. Many of these ceremonies spill out onto the steps of the temples or out into the street from the small shrines, because of either a lack of space or the faith's leaders wishing to show off how many worshippers their god now attracts.

The largest of the temples, situated firmly on the western end of the street, are beautiful and huge in equal measure, seeing hundreds of worshippers each night. Most notably among these are the temples of Aarth and, depending on the time period of the Games Master's campaign, Issek of the Jug. The overlord traditionally worships at the temple of whichever god is farthest to the west, which has been Aarth for many successive overlords.

Many of the religions and the deities they worship are detailed in the *Guilds and Cults* chapter starting on page 120.

From Rags to Riches

The path of a god *in* Lankhmar is the path to a literal divinity. Gods created by mortal worship are born into being in the realm known as Godsland, far across the Sea of Stars. Mortal worship sustains these divine entities and grants them the power to assist or hinder their loyal and disloyal followers, respectively. Admittedly, the Gods *in* Lankhmar (and their Godsland manifestations – see page 43) are often human-like in their demeanours; meaning they can be as petty and spiteful as any man, woman or child. Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser have endured the ire of three gods they had long-abandoned and have been plagued by all manner of minor, annoying inconveniences as a result of the deity-trio's machinations. In the *Swords* novels, it is clear that the gods are less all-powerful, benevolent or evil and some degrees snider and pettier than one might initially imagine from a deity in other fantasy settings.

Many ways exist by which a preacher or a priest can promote his god. Compelling oratory is always a point on the plus side. An interesting background evidenced by heroic deeds or great suffering goes down a treat with many Lankhmarts. Interesting appearances among the acolytes can be a powerful lure, such as when Fafhrd – the seven-foot tall northern barbarian – drew a staggering amount of attention to the god Issek of the Jug in the first few months of his service purely by standing around, looking intimidating and not speaking a word. Later, he drew further attention by singing the god's praises with his melodious singing voice, which baffled onlookers when it came from such a barrel-chested and violent man.

By far the best way to attract followers is the classic Lankhmar tendency toward deception in all things. Put simply, telling lies pays off just fine. At the very least, exaggeration seems to be the

way to go. As almost all of the Gods *in* Lankhmar are based on real heroes and martyrs from the 'Eastern Lands or at least from the kindredly decadent southern country around Quarmall,' the truth behind these would-be gods is often rather mundane by divine standards. With a touch of drama to flavour the story, a god can become almost unrecognisable from the scholar's initial beliefs to the religious figure that a Street of the Gods preacher cries passionately about each night. As long as the general theme of the god's influence remains the same (be he a god of peace, war, love or any other emotion or action) then the god himself remains alive in the Godsland. This overall area of influence is called the Creed. In the case of Issek of the Jug, for example, his Creed was one of peace and unity among all men. Any lies could be (and are) told about a deity's actions before mortal death and subsequent godhood, as long as they never conflict with his Creed.

The best example of this deception working perfectly is without a doubt the doddering old priest Bwadres and his recitations of Issek of the Jug, which were altered considerably by his temporary acolyte Fafhrd through the medium of northern skald-style singing that began and ended each evening's ceremony.

Bwadres' Issek had expired quite quickly, though with some kindly parting admonitions, after being disjointed on the rack. Fafhrd's Issek (now the Issek) had broken seven racks before he seriously began to weaken. Even when, supposedly dead, he had been loosed and had got his hands on the chief torturer's throat there had been enough strength remaining in them alone so that he had been able to strangle the wicked man with ease, although the latter was a champion of wrestlers among his people. However, Fafhrd's Issek had not done so – again it would have been quite against his Creed – he had merely broken the torturer's thick brass band of office from around his trembling neck and twisted it into an exquisitely beautiful symbol of the Jug before finally permitting his own ghost to escape from him into the eternal realms of spirit, there to continue its wildly wonderful adventurings.

– Lean Times in Lankhmar

The relationship between the faith of mortals and the gods themselves is neither perfectly chronicled nor exactly understood. Belief, real faith, in the gods is enough to have a deity manifest and remain alive in Godsland, even if it is only a single believer. This would make for a very weak god but a god nonetheless. The more followers a god has, the more powerful he becomes, able to help his worshippers through Divine Intervention and grant them miracles once in a while. At all times, however, the Gods *in* Lankhmar remain relatively distant. No deity bestows mighty magic upon his worshippers or entrusts dozens of spells to a mortal believer. Most of the time, silence and the occasional patch of good luck is the reward for faith and petty revenge is the punishment for straying.

Extortion

The Grey Mouser entered the service of one Pulg, a rising racketeer of small religions, a lord of Lankhmar's dark underworld who levied tribute from the priests of all godlets seeking to become gods – on pain

of various unpleasant disturbing and revolting things happening at future services of the defaulting godlet. If a priest didn't pay Pulg, his miracles were sure to misfire, his congregation and collection would fall off sharply and it was quite possible that a bruised skin and broken bones would be his lot. – Lean Times in Lankhmar

Once a faith reaches a certain distance up the Street of the Gods, usually about the time the priest starts to earn more than a few Iron Tikks, the extortionists descend with greedy smiles. Extortion, blackmail and racketeering are everywhere in Lankhmar and the spiritual heart of the city is no exception. In fact, it is something of a nexus for this kind of activity – skilful extortionists can rake in serious money by shaking down the promising and prosperous faiths that line both sides of the avenue.

Unlike other forms of organised crime in the City of the Black Toga, the extortionists have little loyalty to one another and many operate outside of their supposed guild. Instead, the Street of the Gods is fought over by a number of competing criminals heading up their own gangs of thugs and money collectors. In *Lean Times in Lankhmar*, this is evidenced perfectly by the feud between Pulg and Basharat. Both men use their hired help to shake down various faiths and extort money from them, with each man seeking the most promising of the new faiths to claim as his 'territory'.

Another aspect to consider is that the Thieves' Guild itself runs thousands of protection rackets across the city, usually with merchants but would dearly love to break into the difficult underworld scene already playing out on the Street of the Gods. There is no love lost between the Thieves' Guild and the extortionists, as the former wish to muscle in on operations that they believe should be theirs (and once were) while the latter are offended and intimidated by the thieves and their presumption. This dispute is prevented from reaching boiling point by many extortionists having direct alliance with the Slayers' Brotherhood and a few others providing a minor kickback to the Thieves' Guild. Ironically, even extortionists get extorted in Lankhmar. They do not call it the City of Thieves for nothing.

Pulg

The Grey Mouser entered the service of one Pulg, a rising racketeer of small religions, a lord of Lankhmar's dark underworld who levied tribute from the priests of all godlets seeking to become gods – on pain of various unpleasant, disturbing and revolting things happening at future services of the defaulting godlet.

– Lean Times in Lankhmar

Pulg has become known as the 'Number One Racketeer of Religions' in Lankhmar, a rather profitable position for him to be in as he gets first pick on any up-and-coming religions. Those that do not catch his interest within the first few days are up for grabs by rival extortionists such as Basharat.

Although Pulg is well known for being a mean extortionist, very few people are aware of his sentimental and superstitious sides. Pulg is always glad to receive gifts and trinkets from his

'customers' but they must be somehow related to their god. It is said that Pulg looks at his shelves of religious regalia and dreams. Pulg will often command his bullies to go easy on those religions that are in his favour.

Basharat

Basharat is Pulg's main rival and those religions missed by the Number One Racketeer of Religions are usually taken by Basharat and his bullies. Basharat has long wanted to knock Pulg off his pedestal but has never had the strength with which to do it, so Basharat bides his time waiting for the opportunity that will make him Number One.

Votishal

Centuries ago, the priests of Votishal (for their own unknown and unknowable reasons) stole the skull of Omphal – one of the Dead Master Thieves. This relic was stored in the subterranean vault of their own temple, located somewhere in Lankhmar away from the Street of the Gods. All that is known of Votishal is that his priests are known for hoarding artefacts in their temple's crypt, guarding it with locks sealed beyond the skill of any thief and some kind of great beast that lurks in the underground darkness.

The Great God

In the *Swords* saga, a few minor mentions are made of a 'Great God,' but little tangible information is given. It is clear that at some point in history, a god *in* Lankhmar rose to such heights of authority and power that he banished many of the other ancient gods from the city and forbade their worship. This mass-exile is perhaps the cause of many of the abandoned temples and shrines that litter the Lankhmarese skyline and alleys today.

It is possible the Great God was an Overlord of Lankhmar who passed an edict banning the faiths he found distasteful, elevated after his death as are many of the other gods *in* Lankhmar. Whatever the truth of the tale (and scholars would pay dearly to find out) Games Masters can use this historical edict as the touchstone for the rage and hate in the abandoned temples and forgotten cults that have seethed unknown for centuries.

The Gods of Lankhmar

There strode four abreast from the wide-open doorway a company of fearfully thin brown figures, black-togaed too. Each before a black staff. The brown was of three sorts: aged linen mummy-branding, brittle parchment-like skin stretched tight over naught but skeleton and naked old brown bones themselves.

... Then, like so many rapiers, black staffs thrust out. Each rat they touched shrivelled where he stood, nor moved again. Other rats came scurrying in from the crowd and were similarly slain. The brown company advanced at an even pace, like doom on the march.

There were screams then and the human crowd before the temple began to melt, racing down side streets and even dashing back into the temples from which they had fled. Predictably, the folk of

Lankhmar were more afraid of their own gods come to their rescue than of their foes.

– Swords of Lankhmar

The founders of Lankhmar, mummified and preserved since time out of mind, lay in restless slumber within the black-walled Temple of the Gods *of* Lankhmar. These, as might be guessed from the name of their tomb, are the deities that Lankhmarts recognise as the city's gods. The Gods *of* Lankhmar receive no real worship, only a mixture of fear and awe from the people of the city they founded so many centuries ago. No Lankhmarts offer their love or prayers at the temple at the end of the Street of the Gods. Most prefer to ignore the building completely, if such were ever possible given the palpable aura of discomforting fear surrounding the place.

Atop the dark and silent temple is an eight-windowed belfry with several bells of various sizes, described in the *Swords of Lankhmar* thusly: 'There were eight in all and all large: five of bronze, three of browned-iron, coated with the sea-pale verdigris and the earth-dark rust of eons.' Few Lankhmarts have any reason to know of this before the Rat Plague but ringing the bells awakens the Gods of Lankhmar, summoning them to defend the city in hours of direst need. If the bells are sounded for a reason the dead gods see as false or foolish, the ringer is slain instantly and falls from the tower. If the summons is deemed worthy, such as when intelligent rats swarmed through the streets of Lankhmar and threatened the lives of everyone within the walls, the gods will leave their temple and defend their beloved city.

The founding fathers of Lankhmar resemble browned and blackened skeletons, cloaked in mummification wraps and rotted black togas. Eerily enough, mummification has not been used in Lankhmar as a method of burial in thousands of years. Only Lankhmar's first dead, passing away when the city was still in its infancy, were ever prepared like this after death. It is believed that although the Dead Gods are the true gods of Lankhmar, other mummified remains exist in cellars and catacombs under the city. These are thought to be the bodies of other ancient great ones, preserved in undeath and ready to walk the world of life whenever their interests are threatened. An example of these dark-boned ancients is the small band of Dead Master Thieves hidden and near-forgotten in the cellars of the slums.

The Gods *of* Lankhmar are fearsome foes in battle as well as being fearful to behold. Though they are not invincible, few mortals could ever hope to stand against them without overwhelming numbers on their side. No Lankhmart is ever likely to commit such a blasphemy as vile as seeking to destroy the gods of the city, either. There is a reason the squat and ugly black tomb-temple has remained un-plundered for so many centuries. That reason is reverence, dosed with a generous helping of fear.

Games Masters wishing to call forth the Gods *of* Lankhmar into their campaigns can find the mechanics for these brown-boned ancestor-deities in the *Creatures of Nehwon* chapter.

The Great Library

At the end of the Street of the Thinkers (a smaller street running parallel to the Street of the Gods) is the Great Library of Lankmar. As the cradle of civilisation in the world of Nehwon, Lankmar is where the concepts of philosophy, astrology, democracy and other 'advanced' notions were first envisioned. The Great Library is a monument and an archive of all the achievements that Man has made so far.

For a building with such an honourable purpose, it is surprisingly ugly. The Great Library has been consistently extended over and over again through the reigns of countless overlords, as more and more space is required to house the archives. Some parts of the building are on two or three storeys where additional attics and other rooms were installed in later expansions; other rooms remain on the ground floor with nothing above their ceilings; and several large hallways and storage areas exist in cellars and cavernous basements underneath the city streets. In short, the sprawling library is a mess. No matter how well it is maintained (and most overlords fund the library-masters very well) little can

be done to amend its patchwork appearance. The architecture is the product of necessary alterations, not aesthetic design and it shows all too clearly.

Within the Great Library, a thousand shelves and bookcases hold the collected scrolls, parchments and tomes of scholars, histories and generals over millennia of civilisation. There have been some attempts made to organise the archives by date order but this meets with little success because of the monumental demands of the task and the constant discovery and induction of new works into the vaults. Copies and originals of almost any imaginable work by scholars, playwrights, poets and academics can be found within the dozens and dozens of haphazardly-placed rooms but there is a two Smerduk fee for taking any book from the building.

Many of the works stored in the library are simply barred from ever being removed from the premises on account of being too valuable to risk losing, though a five Agol fee is payable in order to study the text at a private desk in the library's study hall. A small army of scribes and servants move around the rooms, through doorways, up stairs, down ladders, available to answer questions or locate works for a few Iron Tikks. Any defacement or destruction of library property is reported to the city watch with very few exceptions. Unsurprisingly, these exceptions usually arise as a result of a weighty bribe to the scribe or servant who witnesses the crime. Even Lankmar's intellectual elite have to eat.

Of particular note is the fact that every single record of property and law since the city's founding is meticulously stored in well-ordered and organised vaults, spread across the numerous cellars under the Great Library and the surrounding streets. The stench of these archive rooms can be quite overpowering since they run dangerously close to the sewers in some cases. To gain access to these sealed areas usually takes a careful bribe of no less than a few Rilks, for any scribe granting unauthorised permission to patrons is liable to be dismissed by the library-masters. Some scribes who value their job enough not to take the risk will flatly refuse the bribe, though they will often allow their silence to be bought instead, lest they report the attempted intrusion to their superiors.

Characters with a particularly long streak of cunning might seek to alter legal records or track down the trial records of other Lankmarts. Any discovery of alterations or thefts of these records will result in a difficult situation to bribe or threaten one's self out of.



Games Masters setting their campaigns after the infamous Rat Plague should bear in mind that the sentient rats stole all of the maps, plans and property deeds pertaining to the sewers. On one hand, this makes venturing down into Lankhmar's sewers an even more dangerous and unpleasant proposition than ever before, since no maps means a group has no idea where it is going. On the other hand, Games Masters are presented with a classic fantasy trope of adventurers wading through the brackish, fouled waters of a great city's sewers and never has it been more appropriate than in Lankhmar. Characters are likely to be well-paid by local scholars or government officials who wish to have the sewers re-mapped as soon as possible for maintenance (and completion) purposes.

Ogo the Blind and Nemia of the Dusk

On Silver Street, not far from where the cobbles of this road meet the Street of the Gods, two adjacent homes each house one of the two most renowned fences in Lankhmar. Ogo the Blind and Nemia of the Dusk are well-known for their talents in assessing the worth of jewels, telling trinket from treasure and selling both at a profit to unknown collectors within and without the city walls.

It is said that the two jewel-fences have a bitter rivalry flowing between them, which could not be further from the truth. Indeed, much of these two and their dealings are shrouded in a layer of lies, which makes them fit perfectly with all of Lankhmar's underworld notables. A hidden passageway in the cellars of these two buildings links them in a way outsiders will never see.

Ogo's shop is a front that sells religious artefacts and tools, mostly as historical knickknacks that might appeal to collectors of cheap antiquities and those that wish to record the passing of Lankhmar's failed would-be gods. Very little has been sold in the store for many years, in the main because it is rarely staffed. When the store is open, it is run by Ogo's young female assistant. Ogo's real customers come to do business in the pitch-dark back room, dealing in rare and generally stolen gems. It is said that because Ogo is blind, he does his business in darkness to put his customers on equal footing with himself. Obviously part of this is pure intimidation tactics but the truth of the matter is that Ogo is not an aged man sitting in the black back room, skilled enough in his trade to be able to determine a jewel's value by touch alone. In truth, Ogo does not even exist and his serving girl, known variously as Eyes or the Eyes of Ogo, is the mastermind behind the whole operation.

Eyes is a talented ventriloquist, using her mimicry to impersonate a male voice. This charade is not only to protect her identity from the law but also against any reprisals from the customers that she fleeces. 'Ogo the Blind' never cheats the Thieves' Guild in their dealings with 'him,' but any freelancers (such as adventurers) are fair game to be robbed, with their jewels replaced by fakes in the middle of the deal before 'Ogo' rejects the gems and the character's offer. Eyes only does this on a few deals each year, for she does not wish Ogo to have a

reputation for being dishonest or unreliable. The Eyes of Ogo is described in *The Two Best Thieves in Lankhmar* as having 'pale straight hair, somewhat darker skin and over-large eyes staring entrancedly from a child's tiny-chinned pouty-lipped face.' Though she looks young, perhaps even in her early teens, she is actually some years older.

The shop next to Ogo the Blind's store is that of Nemia. Nemia sells incense cakes and candles for the various religious ceremonies taking place on the Street of the Gods only a short walk distant.

Nemia is more forthright in admitting her identity and her dealings. She is called Nemia of the Dusk because she prefers to conduct her business after nightfall in candlelit rooms and comfortable surroundings. Her *modus operandi* is similar to Eyes' in results if not in execution. Nemia, like Eyes, does not fleece the Thieves' Guild because to do so would be unwise beyond reckoning and rob her of her most frequent clients. However, freelancers are also fair game to Nemia. In sensuous surroundings, before the deal is conducted, Nemia likes to seduce her clients (whether male or female) and rob them in the exhausted and distracted aftermath, replacing the real gems or jewellery for fakes. She then rejects the offer and sends her clients on their way.

As with Eyes, Nemia is reluctant to fleece more than a few marks every year, in case her deceptions are revealed and she harms her reputation. It is well known that Nemia is protected by several Kleshite stranglers serving as bodyguards.

In the *Swords* novels, the Grey Mouser describes her as 'overripe' in regards to age and appearance. Fafhrd, who was reluctantly seduced by Nemia and later deceived in his dealings with her, says: 'her charms were neither overblown, nor even ample... merely sufficient'.

As regards the aforementioned secret passageway between the two buildings' cellars, the truth is that Eyes and Nemia are lovers – partners in both crime and the bedchamber. Not even the members of the Thieves' Guild are aware of this, nor are they enlightened as to Ogo's true identity.

The Marsh Gate Tenements

Part of the slums that has bled over into the church district, albeit at the eastern end by the Marsh Gate, is the small block of dwellings and tenements around the so-called 'Beggars' Alley'. Here Lankhmar's most crazed, diseased or destitute beggars (not the guild-sponsored charlatans and underworld informants of the slums) congregate for protection in numbers and the shelter of various squatted accommodation. Many of the residents here were once part of the Beggars' Guild but were cast out for double-crossing the guild or some other crime. Here in the cheap wooden buildings closest to the Marsh Gate – the wood of which is saturated by the stink of the marshlands – the detritus of the city eke out a living, out of sight and out of mind.

The rumours say that the tumbledown tenements were once a desirable part of Lankhmar's real estate but the stink of the marsh drove away any 'quality' tenants centuries ago. Only the beggars and the stone-broke remain and even then, hardly by choice.

The Western Waterfront

Lankhmar's waterfront is a long, noisy and busy district that stretches along the western edge of the city, overlapping into the River Hlal. These docks, which see upwards of forty or fifty ships in dock each night and hundreds of vessels coming in and going out every day, make Lankhmar the busiest port in the world.

Rows of giant warehouses stretch south along the riverbank, still ensconced within the city walls but accessible from the open docks via walkways, a wide boardwalk and dozens of piers. Using these warehouses for storage costs a minimal fee at the harbourmaster's office, though stationing city watch constables outside the doors of a rented warehouse costs a few Rilks extra. Ensuring that the Thieves' Guild does not break into the building (by killing or bribing the constables) will almost always require a trip to the slums and a separate, equally weighty bribe.

The waterfront is usually crowded with sailors, porters, cargo loaders and government inspection agents from the harbourmaster's office but Lankhmarts willing to risk the rowdy and dangerous dockside taverns are occasionally in evidence. Few of these establishments bother with bullies and bravos to maintain order. The frequent fights that take place are allowed to play themselves out with the losers usually being dragged into a corner or an adjacent alley to sleep off their beating.

Set farther back from the docks is a sprawl of dome-shaped granaries that store the main source of Lankhmar's wealth, ready for local sales or export to other parts of Nehwon and the land of Lankhmar. These are mostly privately owned by the Guild of Grain Merchants, though many are considered the property of the overlord, used to house the grain that feeds the city. Both types of granary are safe from plundering at the greedy hands of the Thieves' Guild due to a succession of heavy bribes over the centuries.

Dotted around the granaries and set even farther back into the city, approaching the heart of Lankhmar and the Street of the Gods, many members of the Guild of Grain Merchants have large estate houses. These buildings rival the grandeur of the noble houses in the north of the city, with several even possessing their own walled garden grounds.

In this area are also a number of high quality coffeehouses, serving imported coffee and various teas at prices which would make a slum-dweller choke on his ale. These coffeehouses serve as meeting places for the members of the Guild, who sit and discuss business matters in comfortable surroundings.

The Shipwrights' Guild is based on the waterfront, with construction of new vessels taking place at the southernmost piers. Sabotage is common in this area if the ships are unguarded, whether from rival merchants in other cities seeking to disadvantage their Lankhmar counterparts or someone of local influence gaining something unknown from such disruptions. The Shipwrights' Guild often hires sell-swords to guard the southern docks at night, paying a pittance for a duty that involves nothing but standing around ninety-nine times out of every hundred. On the rare occasions that a guarded ship is attacked and set afire, the guards are paid danger money (a few Rilks each) in order to kill or apprehend the criminals.

The Lankhmar Starsmen and Navigators' Guild is also based here, with its employees earning some of the highest wages of any dockworkers. Both the Shipwrights' Guild and the Starsmen and Navigators' Guild are based in four-storey buildings on Dock Street, which runs parallel to Nun Street.

Harbourmaster's Office

The Harbourmaster's Office is a single-storey building that takes up a large amount of space in its own plaza. Inside the flat-topped building are dozens of individual offices, each staffed by accountants and inspectors responsible for overseeing the fair taxation of cargo. Here is where the smuggler captains come to pay their bribes.

Abandoned Temple of Tyaa

In amongst the grain silos and warehouses on the banks of the River Hlal is a crumbling temple of broken spires, breached walls and a courtyard that has been overgrowing for centuries. Though Lankhmarts see this structure as an ill-omened place, it is generally ignored as yet another of the slowly collapsing temples to a long-dead god or goddess that feature in every district of the Imperishable City. This is actually the temple of the goddess Tyaa, mistress of dark-hearted birds. Centuries ago, the altar in the top room of the tower was the place where Lankhmarts brought shining jewels and metals to honour and placate Tyaa and her swarms of birds, so that they would not scar or mutilate the beautiful women of Lankhmar as revenge for being ignored.

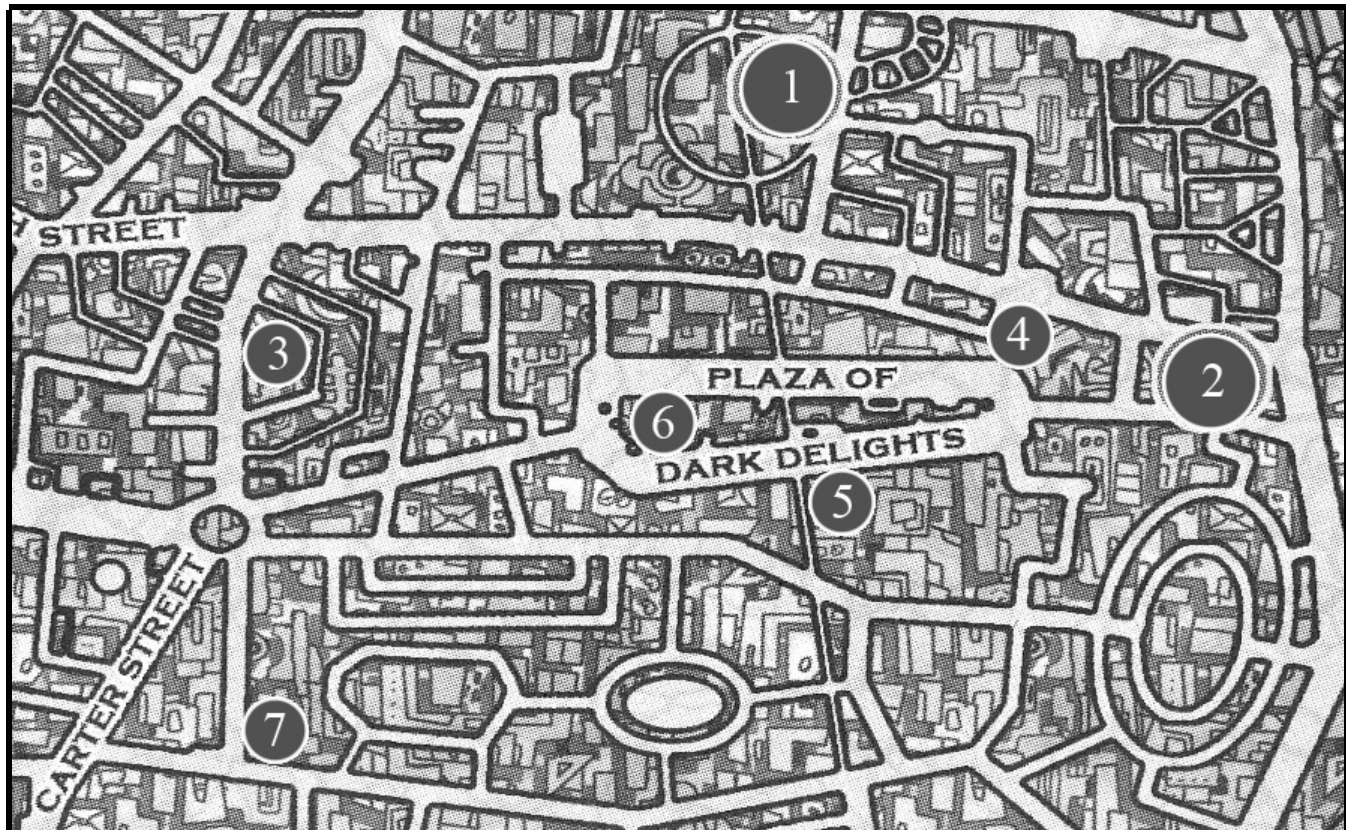
The cult was matriarchal, always led by a high priestess who was believed to be an avatar of Tyaa herself and possessed the magical ability to change into a giant raven. This is a perfect example of the kind of ancient faiths that occasionally see resurgences in modern Lankhmar, before they are either crushed again by adventurers, the city watch or some other faction that knowingly or unknowingly saves the city by ending the rebirth of the faith.

For more information on Tyaa, please refer to page 164 of the *Chronicles of Lankhmar* chapter.

The Plaza District

The southern region of Lankmar is where the parks and public gardens are found, along with a large number of marketplaces that remain open at all hours of the night. The district gets its name from the Plaza of Dark Delights, a section of the city so famous that its name has spread across the land of Lankmar and across the face of Nehwon. Accordingly, the Plaza sees a great deal of foreign visitors as well as heaving crowds of Lankmartians out to enjoy the temperate evenings in a relatively smokeless part of their city.

The Plaza District is well known as a gathering place for philosophers and magicians, who cluster around the fountains and the monuments to notable Lankmartism discussing whatever matters concern philosophers and wizards in such a city.



Legend

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Curio Court | 5. Shrine of the Black Virgin |
| 2. House of Red Lanterns | 6. Spire of Rhan |
| 3. Lankmar Theatre | 7. Rightby's Blades |
| 4. Fountain of Dark Abundance | |

Plaza of Dark Delights

In the Plaza of Dark Delights, which lies seven blocks south of the Marsh Gate and extends from the Fountain of Dark Abundance to the Shrine of the Black Virgin, the shop-lights glinted upward no more brightly than the stars glinted down. For there the vendors of drugs and the peddlers of curios and the hawkers of assignations light their stalls and crouching places with foxfire, glowworms and firepots with tiny single windows and they conduct their business almost as silently as the stars conduct theirs.

There are plenty of raucous spots a-glare with torches in nocturnal Lankmar but by immemorial tradition soft whispers and pleasant dimness are the rule in the Plaza of Dark Delights. Philosophers often go there solely to meditate, students to dream and fanatic-eyed theologians to spin like spiders abstruse new theories of the Devil and of the other dark forces ruling the universe. And if any of these find a little illicit fun by the way, their theories and dreams and theologies and demonologies are undoubtedly the better for it.

– Bazaar of the Bizarre

Lankmar has no shortage of marketplaces but by far the largest is the nighttime Plaza of Dark Delights. Practically anything that can be imagined can be bought here, though the prices can be steep and unusual. Haggling is always an option but for every perfectly natural-seeming trader there is a vendor that carts his wares and hawks them in teasing whispers, asking for payment in favours owed and tasks performed. Some of the things on sale here are undoubtedly magical in origin, such as artefacts stolen from magicians or brought to Lankmar from adventures outside the city. Furthermore, no small number of these items are cursed to some degree, such as those plundered from Eastern desert-tombs or taken from cults in other cities.

This area is also the heart of Lankmar's profitable and thriving black market. Any intoxicants, weapons, poisons or banned scrolls are on sale here for the right price. The problem with this degree of illegal activity in one place is that it attracts even more illegal activity. Cutpurses and muggers prey upon the dizzied and delighted patrons of the Plaza after dark and it is easy to pass unnoticed even in the hissing, whispering crowds, because so much quiet revelry and distraction is going on. The officers of the city watch know better than to ever try bringing law to the Plaza of Dark Delights: to make the attempt would be as futile as trying to clean out the slums.

Curio Court

A small courtyard marketplace set to the north of the main plaza market is known by the locals as Curio Court. Here traders, antiquarians, collectors, scholars and adventurers all meet in the exchange of oddments, oddities, curiosities and curios. If magic items can be found anywhere in the city, it is most likely in Curio Court, though their utility is hardly guaranteed. Unfortunately for anyone seeking anything useful, if useless junk, trinkets and antiques completely irrelevant to adventuring or urban life can be found anywhere in the city, it is also in Curio Court.

The prices here vary wildly on the *perceived* value of an item in question rather than the actual value. An enchanted wooden earring from Horborixen that is proof against pregnancy will go for Tiks if the trader remains unaware of its power. A mundane sword completely useless in battle because of its ornate design will sell for hundreds of Agols, even if the filigree and beauty of the thing is a false rendition of a true Quarmallian antique. There are many traders here that deal on the basis of what they assume an object is worth. This makes for some unruly and annoying deals. Contrary to these stall owners are the true experts in their trade, selling their curios for insightfully accurate prices. No matter how hard a character tries, it will always be hard to haggle these keen-minded folk down from the prices they know are fair.

Fountain of Dark Abundance

This fountain is at the north end of the Plaza and features a wide black-watered pool and a black-stone central pillar that drips out the dark water several times every minute. It is frequently used as a place to meet Red Lantern whores, who gather here

each night and float their crimson paper candle-lamps on the gentle waters at the base of the trickling fountain. On nights of certain astrological significance, it is said that some onlookers see visions in the fountain's waters. Lankmarts throw Tiks and Agols into the water for good fortune and to make wishes. Taking any of the sparkling coins from under the water is supposed to invite bad luck into one's life for a year and a day. Periodically, however, the fountain seems to be swept clean of coinage and no one knows who takes them.

Shrine of the Black Virgin

This shrine stands at the south end of the Plaza. It is a sculpture of black stone, shaped as a life-sized naked, reclining young woman in her mid-to-late teens. In an unwholesome reflection of this artistic representation of purity, the shrine is a noted meeting place for drug dealers. Local legends conflict on whether the Black Virgin is a forgotten goddess who perhaps has an abandoned temple elsewhere in the city or a simple and beautiful piece of history that has stood here for centuries.

Spire of Rhan

This slender tower is a monument to one of Lankmar's founders. It was apparently once capped by a statue of the man, Rhan, though according to local tales it was either toppled in a storm or fell centuries ago when the Gods of Lankmar walked the streets to punish a long-forgotten overlord. Rhan himself (what remains of him, that is) resides in the Temple of the Gods of Lankmar. Now it is topped by an ornate spike reaching above the roofs all around, forming part of the Lankmar skyline.

Rightby's Blades

The swordsmith Rivis Rightby is a skilled weapon maker, specialising in the forging of sword blades. Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser are known to use his services, though they are also known for their occasional failure to pay him for the expert work he does. This is a slight on their memories (or their characters) rather than a criticism of the swordsmith's craft.

It might also be a statement on the foolishness of doing work on credit and the promise of future payment in a city like Lankmar but Rivis is skilled enough that he earns a tidy profit above most other metalworkers in the city. Nobles and wealthy adventurers alike come to Rightby for their blades, though slightly less pricey weapons made by his apprentices can be purchased, which are still of very high quality, especially when compared side by side with slum-bought swords.

House of Red Lanterns

To the east of the Plaza of Dark Delights is the headquarters of Lankmar's infamous prostitute guild. Further details can be found on page 115 of the *Guilds and Cults* chapter.

Lankmar Theatre

Taking up the space of eight buildings on Carter Street, the Lankmar Playhouse is home to several performance troupes,

with acts running the gamut from serious plays and orchestras to political satires and entertainment for the plebs in the form of comedies painting the city's prosperous social elite in a humorous light. Tickets range from a few Tiks to a few Rilks, depending on who is performing, what is being performed and whether the purchaser wishes to sit on the prestigious balcony or in side-box seats.



The Lankhmar Theatre is busy day and night, with matinee performances and evening shows being managed practically non-stop. The politics 'behind the curtain' are the stuff of thespian legend, with actors, directors, singers, writers and musicians all seeking to become the next big thing and perhaps even enjoy patronage from a noble. To this end, beatings and even assassinations have been known to happen with alarming regularity at times. Understudies getting big breaks at the expense of a 'missing' lead star or the director of a play 'falling ill' and needing to surrender his spot on the bill to a rival are among the classics. The fickle and desperate creative crowd would be treacherous enough anyway but in Lankhmar they have access to some particularly nasty underworld guilds in order to hinder their rivals.

Games Masters wishing to create a more social campaign with undertones of treachery and secret violence could not ask for a better setting. The Lankhmar Theatre is also notable as a place where performers of any stripe can meet the city's nobility, either to beg patronage, attempt to murder or just simply perform for them. Almost anything is possible in this den of desperate souls, who are in their own way just as prone to corruption and immoral behaviour as the thieves. More than one assassin has hidden in the after-show crowds in order to strike at an aristocratic target.

Park of Pleasure

The Park of Pleasure is the largest park in Lankhmar and is situated toward the western end of the plaza district. It is ringed with rocks of various sizes laid out in a haphazard fashion with a number of entrances leading off in all directions. Apart from a few stone benches there are no other features in the park but the large open space makes it popular with locals and visitors alike.

South Barracks

The South Barracks are strategically located near the Grand Gate and is occupied by a platoon of Lankhmar's black-clad soldiery. The high-windowed assembly hall makes up most of the building with four smaller adjoining rooms that are used by the commanding officers and administration staff.

The Rich Quarter

The Rich Quarter is the catchall term for the north of Lankhmar, where the grain silos peter out, the houses of the well-to-do become gradually grander and each step takes a walker closer to the imposing wall of the Citadel of the Overlord. The Rich Quarter is also referred to as the nobles' district, the government district or the blue-blood quarter by most Lankhmarts, though the main name is by far the most used.

It is primarily taken up by the impressive and fenced estates of the aristocracy, with most of these noble-owned town houses increasing in grandeur the further north they are situated. They are all several storeys high and cover significant ground, whether simply as a large building alone or with an exquisitely kept garden ringing the house. The streets of the blueblood quarter are very wide to account for the large degree of carriage traffic and are decorated by rows of trees of various types, bringing beauty and colour in all months beside winter.

Between the gardens, the fences, the walled estates and the rows of trees and bushes, the noble quarter is a thieves' delight of hiding places and potential plunder. The matter becomes complicated

by one significant factor: the law. These wide boulevards are not the ratty, winding cobblestone paths of the slums where constables are afraid to walk without a small regiment of their fellows at their backs. In fact, the only reason the city watch are not here in force is because they do not have to be. The soldiers of Lankhmar's army complement their number, patrolling the streets and maintaining order, as do the personal forces of a great many dukes and duchesses, barons and baronesses, lords and ladies. Each of these personal forces guards their own patron's land with expected fervency – bribery is not impossible but close enough to deter all but the boldest thieves.

Added to these initial difficulties is the gamble of justice. In the slums, one can literally get away with murder. Any criminals caught here are likely to face a biased trial (overseen by a wealthy judge or even a noble) and receive the maximum penalty for their crimes. Under the rule of the harshest (or most stuck-up) overlords, it can be considered a crime to 'trespass' in the Government District without permission.

It is this difficult paradox between the greatest rewards and the greatest risks that entice and ward away thieves in equal measure. Many would never be brave or stupid enough to even try it – others cannot resist the lure of the wealth on offer and are caught much more often than not. After all, Lankhmar must get its slaves from somewhere.

Government

Lankhmar is ruled by an overlord, who dictates the laws and running of his city (and the entire land of Lankhmar) from the Rainbow Palace in the north of the city. The throne generally passes down hereditary lines, though interruptions in the dynastic bloodlines are hardly unknown in the various times when the Inner Council and War Councils have taken to vote on the next occupant of the Seashell Throne.

Wars and coups do not come to Lankhmar often but they leave their mark when they do and upheaval in the highest positions of society is often a by-product of such turmoil. The Kistomerces bloodline retains the overlord's throne for the majority of Leiber's stories (and were dealt with in the most detail) with the Overtamortes and Arthonax bloodlines book-ending the reign of the Kistomerces. These are the men and women who ruled Lankhmar with varying degrees of corruption and competence during the *Swords* novels. In later stories Lankhmar is ruled over by the Arthonax bloodline, though by this point Fafhrd and the Mouser scarcely dwell in Lankhmar and details of his reign are few.

The overlord is advised and guided by two bodies of advisors, who often have conflicting interests. The War Council is the authority on all military matters, including maintaining law within the city. It is headed by the generals and captains of Lankhmar's military. The Inner Council are the advisors more concerned with political, social and economic matters.

Their number is primarily made up of merchant-princes, scholars, lesser nobles and even a few priests. In the courts of many overlords, the members of the two councils have been known to overlap somewhat. Nothing in Lankhmar is ever as straightforward as it could be.

Readers familiar with the source material will know how loose the timeline of the stories can be at times, with definitive dates often hard (if even possible) to come by. The following descriptions detail the personalities, families and major story hook events of each overlord's rule, allowing Games Masters to decide which imperial scion oversees the running of Lankhmar during their campaigns.

Use of the term 'Demoiselle' in the following sections is a general term for unmarried women of Lankhmar's high society. Few peasants could use the term or apply it to themselves without looking foolish.

Overlord Karstack Overtamortes

Karstack was overlord during the first *Swords* stories, at a time when Lankhmar was neither truly threatened by great conflict nor enjoying noteworthy prosperity. Karstack's reign could almost be considered a boring one, with the exception of the Thieves' Guild at the time and the actions of his niece, Ivmiss. The former matter, when the Guild was controlled by the insidious Krovas, was something of a golden age for the organised thieves of Lankhmar. It is said that Karstack himself answered to Krovas, though whether it was because the guildmaster had influence over the Inner Council or the direct ear of the overlord is unknown.

Characters with ties to either the criminal underworld or the lofty War and Inner Councils can easily find themselves immersed in the secret events that lay under the corrupt reign of Overlord Overtamortes. Thieves' Guild characters might be pressed into acting as go-betweens for Karstack and Krovas, relaying messages and carrying out certain deeds that benefit the ruling elite as well as their criminal backers – killing rivals, stealing trade documents or evidence for court trials, blackmail, threats, extortion and similar activities.

An entire campaign could be developed around the shadowed balance between the overlord's throne and the influence of his underworld advisors. Characters acting as agents of the Inner and War Councils might seek to free Karstack of the Guild's pressures, acting against Krovas and his thieves in order to lessen the corruption in Lankhmar. Other characters might work as double-crossers in the two councils, working to ensure that the Thieves' Guild maintain their hidden grip on the throne. Some councillors (and their agents) will do this in the name of a fat kickback from Krovas, while others might be bound to act because of blackmail or some leverage the Thieves' Guild has against them. Krovas would hardly be above kidnapping family members in order to get his way.

Demoiselle Ivmiss Ovartamortes

In fact, within a few days the Mouser began the hottest sort of love affair with a slightly underage and most winsome niece of Karstack Ovartamortes...

– The Price of Pain-Ease

Ivmiss, the niece in question, was the second exception to Karstack's seemingly dull rule. Even in youth as she neared womanhood, she was exceptionally beautiful and bright-eyed, with a charming and addictive naivety that attracted no shortage of admirers in and out of the overlord's court.

In a decadent city such as Lankhmar, it should come as little surprise that a beautiful girl in a powerful family took her fair share of scandalous lovers. Though the *Swords* novels reveal only her relationship with the Mouser and precious little else about Ivmiss, it stands to reason that she was a nexus for trouble and scandal in her uncle's court. Ivmiss clearly had a penchant for slumming, getting a thrill from sexual relationships with men below her station. The Mouser at the time was less a hero and more an unknown vagabond and occasional sell-sword, so what if he was not Ivmiss's only lover among the lower classes?

Games Masters wishing to use aspects of high society in their campaigns can use Ivmiss as a perfect bridge between the class divide. As her lover, a character will have access to the Rainbow Palace and many of her peers as contacts. Rivalries will certainly build between any of her lovers and her more 'legitimate' suitors in the halls of power, who likely seek her hand in marriage because of her beauty and connection to the Lankhmar throne. Any character getting involved with Ivmiss can expect duels over her honour and attention, whether the character was in it for the pleasure, using her as a stepping stone to real power or even seeking out ways to infiltrate the courts on behalf of the Thieves' Guild. Ivmiss herself might be a willing instrument and ally in the manipulation of her uncle or she could loyally oppose any attempts to pervert the position of her family.

Overlord Glipkerio Kistomerces

At the far end of the sea-blue room, near the circular stair leading up into the palace's tallest minaret, Glipkerio had risen to his feet in excitement from his golden audience couch shaped like a seashell. The fantastic overlord stood a head higher than Fafhrd but was as thin as

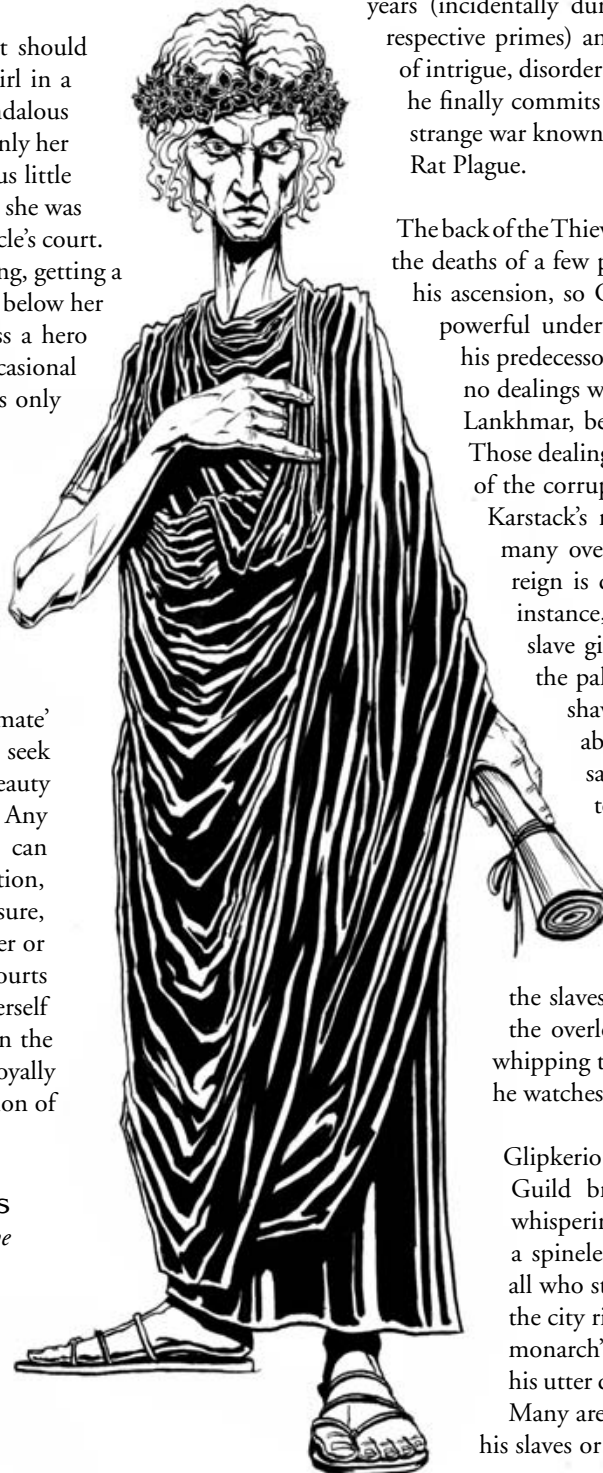
a starved Mingol. His black toga made him look like a funeral cypress. Perhaps to offset this dismal effect, he wore a wreath of small, violet flowers around his blond head, the hair of which clustered in golden ringlets.

– Swords of Lankhmar

Glipkerio features far more prominently in the *Swords* novels than any other overlord, most notably in *The Swords of Lankhmar* when the Grey Mouser had business in the overlord's court. If there is a default overlord to use in Lankhmar campaigns, Glipkerio is likely the one to consider. He reigns for several years (incidentally during Fafhrd and the Mouser's respective primes) and has a lively, busy court full of intrigue, disorder and occasionally disaster, until he finally commits suicide in the outbreak of the strange war known to Lankhmar's residents as the Rat Plague.

The back of the Thieves' Guild had been broken with the deaths of a few prominent guild leaders before his ascension, so Glipkerio is never beholden to powerful underworld elements to the degree his predecessor was. That is not to say he has no dealings with the most powerful guild in Lankhmar, because he most assuredly does. Those dealings are simply never on the scale of the corruption that plagued and shaped Karstack's rule. Instead, like those of so many overlords before him, Glipkerio's reign is defined by his decadence. For instance, he is well known for keeping slave girls and indentured servants at the palace, many of whom he orders shaved bald because of his phobia about hair in his soup. His sadistic bent is also well known to the palace staff and the members of his court, many of whom are forced to either watch Glipkerio ordering his slaves whipped and beaten or in the case of the slaves themselves, having to endure the overlord's palace mistress Samanda whipping them while Glipkerio giggles as he watches from behind a thin curtain.

Glipkerio may not have the Thieves' Guild breathing down his back and whispering in his ear but he does have a spineless streak noticeable by almost all who stand before him. Gossip across the city ridicules the so-called 'beanpole monarch' for his effeminate ways and his utter deference to his palace mistress. Many are the times he will order one of his slaves or subjects to report to Samanda



for punishment as well as to seek her out for a decision that should rightfully be made by the overlord himself. In short, Glipekero is a weak and indecisive man, easily influenced by others. This makes his court that much more interesting, for the power Overlord Kistomerces fails to wield is up for grabs among his courtiers and family. The Guild of Grain Merchants – who have long had ties and often members within every successive overlord's court – have the opportunity to twist Glipekero around their fingers, as long as they stay in Samanda's good books. Her lips are ever the closest to the overlord's ears. It is well established that they are lovers.

Noble characters entering Glipekero's court (perhaps as members of the War or Inner Council) will find themselves walking a fine balance through the halls of power. The overlord is weak and easily led by the supposed wisdom of others, allowing clever characters to further their agendas with the right honeyed words in Glipekero's ear. This means that those who gain the ruler's trust are in exalted positions indeed, while those who have enemies deep in Glipekero's friendship are in for a world of trouble. Lives and fortunes are lost and squandered in the courtly battles for the overlord's favour – all without the distracted, sadistic fool ever noticing.

Despite his well-noted ignorance, Glipekero is generous with his rewards, often bestowing titles and smaller rewards upon those who serve him loyally. Of course, Glipekero has little idea who serves him loyally and who feigns loyalty for personal gain, so he distributes rewards to many of those that care nothing for him and simply see his position as a means to an end. He is markedly fickle, however, often withdrawing his favour at the bat of an unnaturally long eyelash and shifting it to another, apparently more worthy, ally.

In the decadent, corrupt echelons of Lankhmar's great and noble classes, the court of Overlord Kistomerces makes for an ideal political campaign, as well as for casting the rich-poor divide into stark relief if characters from the lower classes have any business within Glipekero's court. More than one husband, wife or lover has sought to steal their loved ones back from Glipekero's slave barracks and harem and some (usually with contacts on the inside or within the Thieves' Guild) have actually been successful. Working off such a massive debt to the Thieves' Guild would hardly be joyful, to say the least.

Palace Mistress Samanda

Behind her, a monstrously fat woman in a dress of thick black wool that went to her redoubled chins and plump knuckles and hid her surely monstrous feet and ankles. Her black hair was dressed in a great round beehive stuck through and through with long black-headed pins, so that it was as if she bore a prickly planet on her head. This appeared to be the case, for her puffed face was weighted with a world of sullenness and hate. Her black eyes peered stern and all-distrustful from between folds of fat, while a sparse back moustache, like the ghost of black centipede, crossed her upper lip. Around her vast belly she wore a broad leather belt from which

hung at intervals keys, thongs, chains and whips. The kitchen boys believed she had deliberately grown mountain fat to keep them from clinking together and so warn them when she came a-spying.

– The Swords of Lankhmar

Samanda is a sadistic and bitter woman, grown obese on the rich foods and opulent sloth her station has brought her. In the overlord's court she is a sneering fat shape of a woman, lording in her role as kitchen mistress and lover of the overlord. She regards everyone around her as either property or an enemy. It is this cruel, hateful creature that is the real power over Lankhmar. Any members of the court that wish to wield any true power must by necessity do so behind Samanda's back or by winning her favour. Both methods are dangerous and difficult.

Samanda is not stupid, despite her slovenly image. She is undoubtedly part of (perhaps even the hub of) Glipekero's network of loyal agents, informants and allies throughout the palace as well as in the city's guilds, allowing the overlord access to unrivalled influence. At one point even the Grey Mouser flirts with her because he recognises her position of influence within the palace. Characters in her good graces could go far in this network, provided they keep the supply of information and successful operations coming. To cement the overlord's position (and therefore her own) Samanda has never been shy of using assassination, torture and blackmail as tools in ending the lives and ambitions of potential political rivals. All of this manipulation is concealed behind the fat face of the overlord's chamberlain.

Characters in her favour might even be wooed in the hopes of an affair, for Samanda is only loyal to her husband when his eyes are upon her. Characters who thwart her operations (intentionally or otherwise) or who have ever shown extreme kindness to palace slaves in her presence are likely to earn her eternal ire. As an enemy, Samanda has many contacts at her disposal, from guild leaders and commissioned military officers to city watchmen and street-level murderers. She can make life very hard for the people she hates within high society, even going as far to poison the food of political rivals that dine with the overlord.

Demoiselle Innesgay Kistomerces

Innesgay, Glipekero's beautiful daughter, is rarely described in the *Swords* novels. It is known that she is betrothed to the Prince of Ilthmar as a matter of political alliance in the years before the Rat Plague but the wedding is called off in the aftermath of her father's suicide, most likely since such a marriage offers little to Lankhmar or Ilthmar when Radomix takes the overlord's throne.

Games Masters have a unique opportunity where Innesgay is concerned. In her father's court she can be every inch the spoiled princess, either lamenting her betrothal and seeking a way out or relishing the thought of a powerful husband. An opposite choice would be for her to be a shrewd political ally, wielding

a measure of power in a court almost rendered useless by her father's decadence. Perhaps if she was a master manipulator, Games Masters might prefer to present her as alternating between these two roles, acting the spoiled princess one moment and a cunning political animal the next.

Demoiselle Elakeria Kistomerces

Elakeria is a plump young woman, fat from overindulgence rather than mere laziness. Some rumours have painted Elakeria as Samanda's daughter because of her corpulence, though the resemblance ends there. The overlord's niece looks like her real mother, the overlord's sister, only much fatter. Whether because of her station or skills in bed (her admirers firmly insist it is the latter) Elakeria enjoys many lovers. Notably, these affairs occur without even a hint of scandal, almost as if Elakeria's indiscretions do not matter to the overlord of his court. This is true to some degree since it is the beautiful Innesgay that presents the most attractive and likely option to be married off in the name of political gain.

Her uncle's lax attitude to her dealings has allowed Elakeria to grow up in a court that largely overlooks her in politics, which places her in an interesting position. Games Masters can choose to present her as largely dismissive of politics, focused on her own pleasure and indulging in any number of admirers over time. She is certainly presented as such in the *Swords* novels, described several times as 'lusty' and a 'devourer of lovers.'

On the flip side of the coin, any political campaign centred around Glipekero's court could feature his niece as a wild card. Elakeria could easily hide political ambitions beneath her actions, using her skills between the sheets in order to make allies and build support for her own agenda.

It should be noted that after the events of the Rat Plague, Elakeria's weight is shed through magical means and she is considered a beautiful young woman almost the physical equal to her cousin Innesgay. At that point, no matter what her previous intentions were, Elakeria might switch from pleasure-driven princess to power-hungry politician or vice versa as she comes to terms with her new body.

Lord Snarve Kistomerces

'Who comes so dramatically a-slither? – by the Black Bones, it's Snarve, our overlord Glipekero's nephew! Who's that he speaks to? – oh, only Tork the Cutpurse.'

– The Two Best Thieves in Lankhmar

Snarve is a perfect example of a blueblood getting in with the Thieves' Guild without needing to pay much in the way of dues. As the overlord's nephew, killing him would cause a world of trouble for the Thieves' Guild. Couple this with the potential for contacts in the aristocracy as well as the possibility of getting information on the house plans of Lankhmar's great and good and it becomes easy to see why noble-blooded freelancers are tolerated by most men that hold the position of Master Thief.

Games Masters can use Snarve as a character capable of bridging the cultural gap between Lankhmar's rich and poor, serving as a contact for the characters wishing to deal on the other side of the social structure. Alternately, players might find Snarve's particular clashing of nobility and thievery provides an excellent inspiration for their own character backgrounds. Snarve is not the only wealthy nobleman's son involved in the underworld – just the most well known.

Radomix Kistomerces-Null

This overlord was a gentle and tenderhearted scholar, who truly loved only his seventeen cats, yet wished no other being in Nehwon ill and who was forever making things difficult for Death by pardoning felons, reconciling battling brothers and feuding families, hurrying barges or wains of grain to regions of starvation, rescuing distressed small animals, feeding pigeons, fostering the study of medicine and kindred arts and most simply of all by always having about him, like finest fountain spray on hottest day, an atmosphere of sweet and wise calm which kept swords in scabbards, brows unknotted and teeth unclenched.

– The Swords of Lankhmar

In the long, violent, complicated and often madness-touched history of Lankhmar's overlords, the man who found himself placed upon the throne after the suicide of Glipekero was perhaps the most beloved and easily the most kind-hearted. Radomix Kistomerces-Null was intensely disliked by his predecessor, mostly because Glipekero knew his cousin was widely admired for his scholarly intelligence and humility.

Perhaps the greatest difference between Radomix and most other overlords, even taking into account wits and a good heart, was the fact that he did not even seem to desire Lankhmar's throne at all. Glipekero's paranoia never allowed him to believe that and he ordered Radomix slain while Lankhmar laboured under an invasion of sentient rats. The scholarly cousin fled into hiding in the slums, taking his seventeen cats with him and hiding out among friends. In the joyous aftermath of the Rat Plague's end, Radomix was seized by several nobles and members of the general populace and carried to the Rainbow Palace (along with his cats) to be hailed as the new overlord.

Radomix also stands out among the list of Lankhmar's overlords because he is actually competent. The *Swords* tales detail four overlords in varying detail, with only one – Radomix – ever earning any praise in his description. After an overlord utterly weak in the face of the Thieves' Guild (Karstack) and another ruled by genuinely sadistic urges and delusions of grandeur (Glipekero), Radomix is known to be a decent, caring and *competent* ruler. He sued for peace among his nobles and he wins it. He takes great pains to educate the populace through the construction of a university dedicated to the sciences. He sends shipments of aid to any regions nearby that have suffered under bad harvests and are threatened by starvation.

In the known history of Nehwon, no ruler – let alone an *overlord of Lankhmar* – has ever behaved so selflessly.

This is all the more tragic since not only was his short few-years' reign ended abruptly by assassination but Radomix was succeeded by a petty and conniving man with no qualms about dealing with the Assassins' Order.

Pulgh Arthonax

...Pulgh Arthonax, penurious and perverse overlord of Lankhmar, who hated heroes of all description – but especially fair-complected big ones like Fafhrd...

– The Curse of the Smalls and Stars

Pulgh, also known as Arth-Pulgh in a strange twist of his formal title, is the final overlord detailed in the *Swords* saga, ruling after the assassination of Radomix Kistomercus-Null. Pulgh is monumentally bitter and petty, as well as tight-fisted when it comes to spending and hoarding money, which is ironic considering that his title makes him one of the wealthiest men in the known world.

Pulgh is also known to have contacts among the less lawful (but just as reputable) guilds of Lankhmar, such as the Slayers' Brotherhood and the Assassins' Order. He is clearly a man unafraid to stoop to any level in order to achieve his ends.

The Citadel of Lankhmar

The Grey Mouser, standing on Squid's gently-dripping prow, sighted the soaring Citadel of Lankhmar through the dispersing fog. Beyond it to the east there soon came into view the square-topped minarets of the Overlord's palace, each furnished in stone of different hue and to the south the dun granaries like vast smokestacks.

– The Swords of Lankhmar

At the very north edge of the city is the Citadel of Lankhmar, also called the Citadel of the Overlord. Here the reigning overlord dwells in the Rainbow Palace, situated amongst sprawling botanical gardens. The North Barracks of the army are housed within the high stone walls that mark the citadel's outer boundary. This gives the palace unmatched protection, with several thousand black-clad Lankhmar soldiers deployable from inside the citadel's walls.

The Rainbow Palace

The Rainbow Palace is one of Nehwon's architectural wonders, known for its strange beauty rather than for any attempts at classic design in its construction. It is comprised of a series of minarets; each made from stone of a different colour, rising from the central building which is itself made from multi-hued stones. It features several stories in some places, a single storey in others and is capped in several places by domes of stained glass. At night, torches and candles that line the walls and windows illuminate the coloured stone, creating an eye-drawing, marvellous effect viewable from almost anywhere in the city.

The rooms of the colossal palace are each themed to reflect the nature of the room or its occupiers' tastes. Overlord Glipkerio's

Blue Audience Chamber was themed as an undersea kingdom, with various blues and greens filling the eyes, decorated in places with beautiful and rare seashells. As evidenced, much of the decoration is tasteless in the extreme, befitting the whims of a succession of overlords all with clashing preferences, several of who were at least partly mad.

The palace staff runs into the hundreds, with every imaginable service provided for the overlord and his guests. As postings go, it is considered a dicey position for an indentured slave because so much of the role depends on the reigning overlord. Slaves serving under Radomix's brief rule were spared beatings and treated well for their service. Those under Glipkerio were beaten for only minor failings and whipped into unconsciousness (or even an early grave) by Palace Mistress Samantha and her glass-studded whip.

Underneath the palace and its hundreds of rooms is an equally extensive labyrinth of dungeons, storage rooms, granaries, wine cellars and basements of varying dimensions. It is said that enslaved servants have managed to escape their servitude by blindly navigating the under-chambers of the Rainbow Palace, though to do so is surely no easy feat.

The Royal Docks are at the very tip of the city, guarded by a sea wall. Here the Lankhmarines are stationed, along with a fully functioning dock for the overlord's personal cruises, visiting dignitaries or the ruler's returning agents seeking to report to him directly.

Lankhmar Below

The next level had shown no rats in sight and been redolent of grain. He had noted bins of wheat, barley, millet, kombo and wild rice from the River Tilt. A good place to hide – perhaps. But what could he gain from hiding?

The next level – the third down – had been full of military clatter and rank with rat-stink. He had noted rat pikemen drilling in bronze cuirasses and helmets and another squad being instructed in the crossbow, while others crowded around a table where routes on a great map were being pointed out. He had lingered even a shorter time there.

– The Swords of Lankhmar

From a thousand rat holes across Lankhmar, tiny rodent-sized passageways lead down into a complex undercity of little caverns, boltholes, corridors and tunnels. The population of this expansive yet miniature nether-realm are almost all rats, with a few enslaved mice, no doubt to add variety and provide some of the manual labour. This strange subterranean kingdom is the city of Lankhmar Below. In many ways it is an imitation of Lankhmar Above, with the exceptions of size and the human-to-rodent population.

Lankhmarts (the real Lankhmarts) spent thousands of years in total ignorance of Lankhmar Below, until an invasion was



launched on the surface by the inhabitants of the under-kingdom. It is believed that the rats had plotted for centuries down there in the darkness, hoping one day to rule the surface city and reign over the men and women that called Lankhmar home. Common tales state that the Gods of Lankhmar brought this invasion to an end through various means. This is not exactly true, as *The Swords of Lankhmar* describes in detail. However, Fafhrd and the Mouser could never claim responsibility for their actions, no matter how huge and well-told their legends were by this point.

Lankhmar Below remains an ignored mystery by most Lankhmarts even after the Rat Plague. Some assume the problem is taken care of for good, while most simply do not believe the under-kingdom is real or are not aware such a thing could even

exist. For the most part, Games Masters should feel absolutely free to ignore Lankhmar Below in their campaigns if they desire. It is an acquired taste, ill suited to the tones of some games.

For all intents and purposes, Lankhmar Below mirrors Lankhmar Above in many ways. There are markets for trading and purchasing goods, there are social strata defining a resident's role and lifestyle in society and there are political factions pursuing their own agendas. Caverns and tunnels are illuminated by caged firebeetles, night-bees and glow-wasps, which are eagle-sized to the rats. The everyday toil and strife of any busy city occurs in Lankhmar Below; the main difference is that every being there is a rat or a wererat.

The Inner Circle of Thirteen

In squeaking Lankhmarese, the rulers of Lankhmar Below issue commands and govern their citizens much like a human government would. These are the rats of the Inner Council of Thirteen, intelligent as humans (more so, according to themselves) and living embodiments of

an old Nehwonese legend that states every breed of animal is ruled over by 13 representatives that are considered the peak of their race. The 13 ruling-rats just so happen to make their homes underneath Lankhmar. They are known among their people as the Supreme Thirteen.

These rulers wear elaborate, jewelled masks and carry staves of office as they go about their business. The correct form of address for one of the Thirteen is 'Nobility,' as in 'many thanks, Nobility.' The Inner Circle is served in turn by the Lieutenant Wardens who oversee each level of the under-city.

Councillor Grig

Never without his sapphire-topped white staff of office, Councillor Grig is an ageing white rat with a severe lisp. He is

slain in the build-up to the invasion of Lankhmar Above when the Grey Mouser slit his throat, bled him out down a privy and stole his clothes in order to impersonate him. Before meeting his rather undignified end, Grig was known as a calm and sedate member of the Supreme Thirteen.

Councillor Skwee

Skwee serves on the Inner Council during the Rat Plague, though he sometimes prefers to go without a mask and other indications of office when in public. He is closely allied to Lord Null and Hisvet and is a remarkable shot with his tiny crossbow.

Lord Null

One of the rare 'breeding evolutions' successfully created by the rats over the generations is the birth of half-humans and true humans from crossbred rodent and human parents. Details on the creation process are scarce in the *Swords* saga, though it appears that with magic potions of growth and size reduction, rats were enlarged and humans shrunk accordingly.

Lord Null, as he is known to the rats of Lankhmar Below, is actually the wealthy merchant Hisvin, a respected member of the Guild of Grain Merchants. He is fully human, though is believed to possess the unnatural power to become a rat when he chooses. As of *The Swords of Lankhmar* he is in his 60s, serving as one of the Supreme Thirteen in Lankhmar Below and plotting the overthrow of the city's human rulers in the surface world. He is an acquaintance of many nobles and a contemporary of many successful merchants. His daughter Hisvet is of marriageable age and attracts her fair share of attention from wealthy bachelors. Beyond his expansive financial interests, little concerns Lord Null except for a rigid devotion to the rats' ascendancy.

Neither Lord Null or Hisvin are considered to be friendly; both identities maintain a guarded air of condescension and impatience with those around them. Games Masters can play these tendencies up to make a memorable villain character, though another option exists: Hisvet might seek to make alliances with potential sympathisers, hoping to use them as allies when the rats next strike the surface world. Perhaps it is an unlikely prospect for any Player Character to go along with such a plan (unless for infiltration purposes) but characters uncovering how far Hisvin's web of surface-alliances stretches can make for some intriguing gameplay through the halls of Lankhmar's powerful social elite.

Demoiselle Hisvet

The Demoiselle Hisvet stood as tall as the Mouser but judging by her face, wrists and ankles was considerably slenderer. Her face was delicate and taper-chinned with small mouth and pouty upper lip that lifted just enough to show a double dash of pearly tooth. Her complexion was creamy pale except for two spots of colour high on her cheeks. Her straight fine hair, which grew low on her forehead, was pure white touched with silver and all drawn back through a silver ring behind her neck, whence it hung unbraided like a

unicorn's tail. Her eyes had china whites but darkly pink irises around the large black pupils. Her body was enveloped and hidden by loose robe of violet silk except when the wind briefly moulded a flat curve of her girlish anatomy. There was a violet hood, half thrown back. The sleeves were puffed but snug at the wrists. She was barefoot, her skin showing as creamy there as on her face, except for a tinge of pink about the toes.

– The Swords of Lankhmar

Hisvet is the daughter of Lord Null of the Council and treated somewhat like a princess among the rats of Lankhmar Below. Like her father, she is a human product of the rat-human breeding process and although she is dedicated to seeing the rats rule the surface world, her efforts are less intense than her father's. For example, she takes a human lover even though he was personally responsible for fouling the surface invasion.

Games Masters have an excellent character in Hisvet to bridge the gap between Lankhmar Above and Below. Though she need not become a character's lover if the storyline does not develop that way, it is admittedly likely that something in one of the male characters will appeal to this capricious and sensual young woman. A tale of love flourishing amongst eerie sorceries and war can make for a satisfying campaign arc for some characters.

Adventures in the City of Thieves

Beggars & Thieves

A host of adventures await anyone who becomes involved with the Thieves' Guild or the Beggars' Guild. Some of the players could be a member of these guilds or perhaps, just like Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser, the party has an axe to grind and must infiltrate Thieves' House.

Another option is for a campaign to be based around Beggars' Guild characters. There is a lot to be said for the kind of roleplaying the characters would be in for, having to act their disabilities and stay one step ahead of rival (freelance) beggars who may or may not have legitimate injuries of their own. Missions to tail a certain merchant or spy on a certain noblewoman would have their appeal for some groups who enjoy the urban underworld, though perhaps the best examples of criminal games would come from mixing the Beggars' Guild with the rogues from Thieves' House.

Details of the Beggars' Guild and Thieves' Guild can be found in the *Guilds and Cults* chapter.

Festival

Setting a story during the time of a festival can provide Games Masters with lots of interesting possibilities and plot hooks. From lowly peasant gatherings to noble masquerades, there is plenty of opportunity for the players to cross paths with characters they would not normally meet. If the players intend

to engage in illegal or unethical activities, a festival can provide the diversion they might need to accomplish their plans. This idea can also be combined with other plot devices that Games Masters wish to use.

Games Masters who wish to incorporate a city or even world-changing event might want to set it against the backdrop of a festival. Whilst the citizens and indeed many of the military are celebrating, Lankhmar is a little more vulnerable than normal. If the city was attacked or it was befallen by some sort of disaster, the ensuing chaos would make things both difficult and interesting for the players.

Forgotten Cults & Forbidden Temples

Places like the abandoned Temple of Tyaa (see page 48) are an obvious choice to base a scenario on. Games Masters might want to present agents of these forgotten cults in their own games because they make fantastic antagonists for the players to face. Opposing dark cults and malicious magic-wielding priestesses are pure Leiber and very thematic to Lankhmar as classic sword & sorcery settings. These pursuits are also perfect examples of how Lankhmar characters encounter and struggle against magic rather than mastering it themselves. Magic is a dark and unwholesome path in Nehwon. These cults show that darkness in a sinister light.

Almost all of these resurged cults have been twisted by time and the death of their god and they are frequently evil (at the very least harmful) to the people of Lankhmar. Tyaa's cult did not wish peaceful acknowledgement and appeasement – the new high priestess wished for mass-worship through fear and used dark magic that reaped a lot of suffering in her bid to attain it. Frankly, it is often easy to see why these old faiths were put down and forgotten in the first place. These are not simply religions that were shunted off the Street of the Gods and out of the Marsh Gate due to unpopularity; they were sinister cults that the heroes of previous centuries put a stop to and did the noble thing in doing so. The resurgence of any evil faith that has been literally banished by an overlord's edict for countless decades is definitely something a heroic group of Player Characters can get stuck into.

Relics of Votishal

The temple of Votishal and its vault has 'story hook' written all over it. Perhaps one of the other guilds in Lankhmar has something valuable they wish returned from the temple? Perhaps the Priests of Votishal have not existed for centuries and their abandoned holy site remains guarded only by these ancient locks and a (presumably) long-dead beast? What other wonders, beyond the jewelled skull of a dead master thief, could lie in the subterranean cellar waiting to be discovered? What curses would be stirred by the booted tread of adventurers finding out the answers to these questions?

Religious Cult

Games Masters can mire characters in a wealth of trouble when it comes to the riches that change hands among the holy

residents of the Street of the Gods. This area might not be home to the urban crime of many traditional fantasy settings but the acts that do take place could only barely be considered more sophisticated and offer just as much in the way of story hooks and plot lines. Characters with a stake in one particular cult, whether as patrons or as the faith's founders, are likely to take umbrage at having to pay off racketeers. This leads to the extortionists shaking down the rituals and prayers taking place on the Street of the Gods and the characters will need to counter these intrusions any way they can. Of course, once one extortionist has been driven off, it merely opens the way for another to take a crack at ruining the defaulting cult's chances at success. Few worshippers wish to worry about beatings and threats every time they pay respect to their new god, so characters that defend their cult from racketeers will need to be creative and clever in ensuring they maintain a viable number of worshippers or their efforts will be for naught when their chosen religion is cast out of the Marsh Gate and replaced by another hopeful priest and his unheard-of god.

Games Masters and players with a passion for Lankhmar's less lawful dealings might find a lot of satisfaction in an extortionist campaign. This is the kind of gritty, street-level roleplaying that some groups love and others loathe, with the added spice of operating almost completely outside the law. Bribes will need to be paid to the local city watch and the Thieves' Guild to keep them off the characters' backs. Elements within both of these agencies might take a more aggressive bent – perhaps the thieves finally decide to make their move and open up their own lines of protection, seeking to kill the characters, clear them off the scene and dump the remains in Bones Alley. A few gold-hearted souls within the city watch might shake off the corruption that plagues Lankhmar's guardsmen and embark on a personal crusade to rid the streets of extortionists, starting with the characters and their operation. Cerebral characters will have the opportunity to exercise their cunning and wit against other extortionists, while more physical characters will be presented with an endless array of foes to face, from the hired muscle in the gangs of their rivals to the constables of the city watch.

A complex but potentially satisfying campaign would involve the Games Master running the game for two (or more) competing groups of players, both of whom head up their own extortionist gangs or work for rival extortionists like Pulg and Basharat. The two groups of Player Characters would move against one another, each seeking to outwit and discredit their direct rivals. Perhaps they might even ally temporarily to fend off other, larger extortionist gangs, before degenerating back into rivalry the moment the greater threat has passed.

The Dead Master Thieves

For campaigns centred around or involving the Thieves' Guild, it can be almost irresistible to use the Dead Master Thieves. They embody the corruption under Lankhmar's surface as well as the archaic, eerie nobility of the Imperishable City and they

have just the right touch of the supernatural to make them frightening and unnatural, yet still acceptable on some level by Lankhmarts.

Games Masters will probably need to use the Dead Master Thieves sparingly to preserve the macabre element of fantastical horror that they bring to the setting. This can be remedied by remembering just what will stir these undead souls to action. Ultimately, the only thing that matters to these revenants is the Thieves' Guild. This allows Games Masters to use the Dead Master Thieves in some interesting ways. An intruder who finds his way into the network of passageways through either the sewers or an adjoining cellar is in for a serious shock if he stumbles into the tomb-basement. The Dead Master Thieves have no reason to harm any intruder unless the character either threatens the corpses directly or has intentions of destroying the Thieves' Guild. On the contrary, the Dead Master Thieves are likely to either ignore the interloper or to converse with him, albeit in breathy, sinister voices and on macabre subjects that few still-living people would ever want to talk about.

The real promise for the Dead Master Thieves to feature in any thief-orientated campaign is for the ancient founders of the Thieves' Guild to take an active interest in what goes on above their heads. This can take the form of a 'walk' up top to slay any thief that is grievously harming the Guild or has offended the founders in some way. This is more of a one-shot deal, though. A Games Master cannot spring that more than once without there being a risk of such a momentous and fearsome event becoming trite and mundane, at least not in a short space of time.

Something to consider is that perhaps not every thief has forgotten the presence of the undead founders standing restless in the cellar. The Dead Master Thieves might have contact with a select few Guild members, the few thieves that come to offer their respects and maybe even seek the wisdom of these mummified elders. In this case, it would be appropriate for the Dead Master Thieves to speak cryptically of Guild politics and member behaviour, even setting the occasional task for their loyal mortal followers, tasks which are designed to reduce any negative influences or actions within the guild. The undead founders might want certain thieves with dangerous or disloyal tendencies removed or killed or the guildmaster replaced or some icon of importance brought to their tomb-cellar.

The Watch

Games Masters might consider a city watch game for their campaigns, based on characters that are part of (or opposing) the constables of Lankhmar. This could be a very satisfying campaign, though the odds are heavily stacked against any characters that wish to bring law to the rugged and ragged streets of the City of Thieves. Deciding which bribes to accept and which to reject can be a tricky balance as well. Characters will need to be aware of any of actions which might antagonise the Thieves' Guild beyond their own abilities to counter. Individually, Lankhmar's criminals will be no match for a dedicated, quick-thinking team of constables and such a campaign might be gritty, intense and rewarding for Games Masters with a taste for such adventures. The biggest danger lies in the myriad lawless elements of the city taking notice of the 'do-gooders' and seeking to put an end to the characters once and for all.



THE LAND OF LANKHMAR

The continent of Lankhmar sits between the Inner Sea and the Sea of the East, joined to the rest of Nehwon by the unreliable geology of the Sinking Land and a thousand ships that carry news and trade to and from the greatest port in the world. At the northern tip of Lankhmar the land, sits Lankhmar the city: the City of the Black Toga, City of Seven-Score Thousand Smokes, City of the Stinking Black Bones.

Lankhmar

A dirty jewel in Nehwon's tarnished crown, the decadent and near-lawless city of Lankhmar serves as the base of almost every adventure of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser. It is dealt with in extensive detail in the *Lankhmar: City of Thieves* chapter.

The Great Salt Marsh

Ahead the sky was bright pink, like the bubbling rim of a great crystal goblet brimmed with effervescent red wine for delight of the gods, while the paler pink glow rising therefrom drove the last stars west. But before the sun could glare one scarlet sliver above the horizon, a black storm came racing out of the north over the Inner Sea – a sea-squall making landfall. It grew almost as dark again as night, except when the lightning stabbed and the thunder shook his great iron shield. The stormwind carried the salty tang of the sea commingled with the foul reek of the marsh. It bent the green swords of the grass flat and lashed into writhing the arms of the thorn and seahawk trees. It pushed black swampwater a yard up the northern side of the narrow, serpentine, flat-topped ridge that was Causey Road. Then came pelting rain.

– The Swords of Lankhmar

Leaving Lankhmar through the Marsh Gate in the city's eastern wall or the End Gate in the southeast brings a traveller face-to-face (or rather, boot-to-slime) with the Great Salt Marsh that stretches out for many leagues to Lankhmar's east. This silty-watered swampland is home to white-bodied salt spiders larger than a big man's hand, vicious marsh leopards gazing down from high trees with glinting blue eyes, poisonous swamp cobras that glide through the shallow water, coiling around ankles and a host of even less pleasant, less friendly creatures. The most notable aspect of the Great Salt Marsh (beside the general consensus that it is a vile place) is the smell. The gassy 'eggs and excrement' reek of the swampland reaches over the walls of Lankhmar's east side on stormy or humid days, creating quite the stench in the eastern parts of the city.

Beasts and bugs of all shapes and sizes call the Great Salt Marsh home. The opportunities for dangerous combats in the knee-

ankle-, waist- and even neck-deep bog water can provide some tough challenges for groups of characters wishing to navigate the swamp. Actually mapping the Great Salt Marsh is an impossible task, what with the muddy, marshy terrain changing with each and every coastal storm. New paths rise out of the muck during relatively dry seasons. Old paths sink into the salty ooze with each rainfall. A cartographer would die of old age before he ever succeeded in accurately mapping even half of the swamp and its various changes and that is in the unlikely event of some poisonous, predatory creature not killing him first.

To the east of the Great Salt Marsh is the Sinking Land. Though traversing the swamp is the fastest route from the Sinking Land to Lankhmar and vice versa, most travellers would rather add a week to their journey than risk braving the foul and vast spread of the black-watered marshland. Given the number of daring souls that never return from an ill-conceived journey through the marsh, this comes as little surprise.

The mechanics for presenting the creatures of the Great Salt Marsh are detailed in the *Creatures of Nehwon* chapter on page 124. One resident of the sprawling swamp bears special mention. Sheelba of the Eyeless Face, the patron wizard of the Grey Mouser, makes his home here. Full details can be found in *Of Sheel & Ning*, page 133.

The Sinking Land

Lankhmar philosophers believe that the Sinking Land is a vast long shield, conclave underneath, of hard-topped rock so porous below that it is exactly the same weight as water. Volcanic gases from the roots of the Ilthmar Mountains and also mephitic vapours from the incredibly deep-rooted and yeasty Great Salt Marsh gradually fill the concavity and lift the huge shield above the surface of the sea. But then an instability develops, due to the great density of the shield's topping. The shield begins to rock. The supporting gases and vapours escape in great alternate belches through the waters to the north and south. Then the shield sinks somewhat below the waves and the whole slow, rhythmic process begins again.

– The Swords of Lankhmar

This unstable bridge of land between the Great Salt Marsh and Ilthmar is the only overland route travellers can take from the continent of Lankhmar to the rest of Nehwon. Its instability and unreliability mean that it sees much less use than might otherwise be imagined, going some way to explaining why Lankhmar City concentrates so heavily on its docks and harbours as its main method of contact with the rest of the world.



Travelling in the Great Salt Marsh

All around him stretched the dismal reaches of the Great Salt Marsh, acres of knife-edged sea grass hiding treacherous creeks and deadly sink-holes and pimpled with low hummocks crowded with twisted, dwarfed thorn trees and bloated prickly cactuses. While its animal population ran a noxious gamut from sea leeches, giant worms, poison eels and water cobras to saw-beaked, low-flapping cadaver birds and far-leaping, claw-footed salt-spiders.

– The Swords of Lankhmar

Adventuring in the boggy expanse of marsh and swampland is not for the faint-hearted. There are many good reasons for travellers to give the Great Salt Marsh a wide berth and anyone risking a march through the bog is likely to meet every single one of those reasons up close and personal. The following section provides a quick reference for Games Masters with a group of players mired in the black foulness of the marsh.

Mist

As a coastal marshland, there is a 20% chance of the Great Salt Marsh being wrapped in fog on an hour by hour basis. The Games Master makes the test every hour to see if the mist remains or burns away under sunlight. If there is mist, a further roll should be made to see if it is a thin mist or deeply dense fog. On a roll of 70% or less, the fog is thin and merely inconvenient. Treat the characters as adventuring in Partial Darkness as detailed in the Illumination rules of the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*.

On a roll of 71% and above, the fog is dense and actively hinders all progress through the swamp, using the Illumination rules for Dark in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*.

Marsh Water

Far more unpleasant and inconvenient than the mist is the unreliability of solid paths through the swamp and the near-constant need to wade through the black-watered, salty foulness that floods the land here. When the marsh water is ankle- or knee-deep (which is most of the Great Salt Marsh) characters are subject to travelling in Slight Adversity conditions, as detailed in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*.

In areas at the Games Master's discretion where the marsh water becomes up to waist-deep (which is still relatively common) characters suffer Slight Adversity and are also considered to be performing Moderate Activity, as detailed in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*.

Lastly, when the black water's reach chest- and neck-deep, characters are considered to be in Great Adversity, though because of the brackish water's thinness, they are still only considered to be performing Moderate Activity.

Games Masters might wish to pay special attention to the rules for Encumbrance. For especially foul patches of marshland, such as sinkholes where the water is unusually deep (or for very short characters...) the Games Master will need to be familiar with the rules for Swimming. The unluckiest characters might even fall victim to the rules for Suffocation.

A host of creatures found in the Great Salt Marsh are described in the *Creatures of Nehwon* chapter. In addition to these, some Games Masters might consider it realistic (and perversely amusing) to assume that many of the bugs, beasts and plants in the swampland are poisonous or venomous to some degree.

Deducing the time frames of the Sinking Land being risen or submerged is no easy feat. Once raised, the land bridge can be strong at first, quickly becoming unstable in hours but remaining elevated for a day or more. Once submerged, a traveller might be waiting within sight of the opposing shore for several hours or days before the Sinking Land makes its impressive rise again. On average, the land bridge rises and sinks several times a week. Anyone caught on the Sinking Land as it begins to sink will

have only scarce minutes to cover the distance remaining to the other side. A general rate of submersion would have the Sinking Land lowering into the water at a rate of 1D12 inches a minute. Water rushes in from both sides as the land itself shakes and wobbles as if struck by an earthquake. Only the fastest horses can hope to outpace the intruding water, which floods across the land at a rate of 20-40 miles an hour, depending on a Games Master decision as to how fast the ground is sinking.

The land bridge is several miles across at its narrowest point and covers the 30 miles between the edge of the land of Lankhmar and the coast of the eastern continent. When fully submerged, the Sinking Land descends from at least a dozen to many dozens of feet down into the mixed waters of the Sea of the East and the Inner Sea.

As geological wonders go, the Sinking Land is one that has claimed more than its fair share of lives over the years.

Tovilyis

The aptly named Beggar City of Tovilyis is a teeming hive of the downtrodden, the destitute, the unemployable and the forgotten folk of the land of Lankhmar. Those with talent and ambition leave the corrupt and squalid city as soon as they are able. The rest live in poverty, work in poor conditions and labour in the less-prosperous grain fields that fail to rival Lankhmar's sweeping plantations to the north.

The Mountains of Hunger

Splitting the land of Lankhmar like a spine of rocks and pinnacle-vertebrae, the Mountains of Hunger are a barren and unwelcoming range, with several dormant volcanoes that occasionally belch gouts of black smoke into the sky. Within the wide valleys formed between the mountains, the Lakes of Pleea are found. These huge lakes are the source of the great River Hlal, which runs past Lankhmar and empties into the Inner Sea.

Quarmall

The city-state of Quarmall houses a civilisation almost unheard of in the sphere of anthropoid organisation. Perhaps the closest analogy which might be made is to that of the slave-making ants. The domain of Quarmall is at the present day limited to the small mountain, or large hill, on which it stands; but like a radish the main portion of it lies buried beneath the surface. This was not always so.

Once the lords of Quarmall ruled over broad meadows and vast seas; their ships swam between all known ports and their caravans marched the routes from sea to sea. Slowly from the fertile valleys and barren cliffs, from the desert spots and the open sea the grip of Quarmall loosened; not willingly but ever forced did the Lords of Quarmall retreat. Inexorably they were driven, year by year, generation by generation, from all their possessions and right; until finally they were confined to that last and staunchest stronghold, the impregnable castle of Quarmall. The cause of this driving is lost on the dimness of fable; but it was probably due to those most gruesome practices which even to this day persuade the surrounding countryside that Quarmall is unclean and cursed.'

– The Lords of Quarmall

Quarmall is a subterranean kingdom in the southwest of the land of Lankhmar. It was once a great empire though now

it has fallen to a mere ghost of its former glory. Where once Quarmallian ships and caravans traded across the known world, now the kingdom is reduced to a single city – one of most unique construction – and peopled by a unique culture.

The domed mountain that shields the Quarmallian people from the outside world is visible from many leagues away in several directions, dominating the skyline among a number of lesser hills that surround it. Though the citizens of this strange and secretive under-empire maintain some cattle stocks outside in the foothills of their minor mountain range, practically the entire populace dwells within the great domed mountain – also called Quarmall – and have done so for generations.

Quarmall is a kingdom no longer truly deserving of the title, bound within a shield of rock to protect its last vestiges from the world that has risen since its ancient fall from grace. To most Nehwonians, it is a cursed place of dark sorcery and black magicians enslaving the masses; a place of people who live their entire lives without ever seeing the sun. The legends that tell of the place match the reality all too accurately.

The society inside the dark caverns and the web-way of near-lightless tunnels is one founded on the backs of a slave caste, overseen by the elite few powerful and corrupt enough to claim authority. The under-city is a huge and sprawling affair, with some sections even disused as the population dwindles and the older tunnels are abandoned or new caverns open elsewhere in the mountain. The upper levels are still close enough to the surface that air flows through the tunnels unaided. The inhabitants of the lower tunnels, however, would be left breathless and gasping without some kind of air circulation system in effect. Indeed, the lower levels would be completely uninhabitable. As such, they are kept aired by teams of slaves manning great, slow moving treadmill-fans that perpetually keep the air moving down into the lower tunnels.

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of Quarmall is what is implied in discussing the kingdom, not what is said. An ancient belief among the oldest and wisest of Nehwon's scholars is that some of the lowest caverns in the bowels of the under-city actually lead to or contain some remnants of the Elder Ones. Exactly what the Elder Ones could be is something both detailed later in the chapter as well as something for Games Masters to chew over.

Life in Quarmall

It was only on such occasions as this that one realised the immensity of Quarmall and these occasions were rare; perhaps once in his life a man would see such an event. As far as Brilla could see small bands of slaves were lined, rank on rank, against the walls of the courtyard, even as was his own band of eunuchs and carpenters. There were craftsmen from the Upper Levels, skilled workmen all in metal and in wood; there were workers from the fields and vineyards all brown and gnarled from their labours; there were the slaves from the Lower Levels, blinking in the unaccustomed daylight, pallid and curiously deformed; and all the rest who

served in the bowels of Quarmall, a representative group from each level.

– The Lords of Quarmall

The daily life of a Quarmallian citizen depends entirely on the station one is born into. Much of the population is made up of slaves or servants, as in any other city, though their lot is generally worse in Quarmall. Slaves are not the indentured criminals and war prisoners of Lankhmar; here they are true slaves, born into the role (or captured and subjected to it) with no hope of freedom until death. Slaves have a number of duties, from body servants to manual labourers, all working themselves to the grave for well-born masters.

Free citizens work in trades just as in any other city, sometimes venturing outside the mountain dome city if their work involves toil in the fields or vineyards spread around the bases of the stone towers that make up Quarmall proper. The other residents of southern Lankhmar, mostly village-dwellers in the main, avoid these farms and wineries as if they were accursed places. No one trades with Quarmall.

Above the slaves and citizens are the lords of the city – a bloodline of sorcerer-guarded aristocrats who are rumoured to be powerful necromancers themselves. In the *Swords* tales, though the princes of Quarmal, Gwaay and Hasjarl display little of their apparent talent for magic, it is noted offhand that their father, Quarmal, performed feats of necromancy and spoke many incantations during his life.

Quarmallian society is divided not only by this caste system but also along a curious geographical divide. The higher-placed one is in society, the higher in the city he lives. The lords and free citizens dwell in the Upper Levels, free to venture out onto the courtyard atop the mountain and the surrounding countryside, though few exercise this right unless they have to for field work. The Upper Levels are ruled by an appointed aristocrat – usually a prince of the current ruler. In the *Swords* tales, this was the deformed Prince Hasjarl.

In the Lower Levels, toiling in the bowels of Quarmall are the slaves and menial labourers, working under the direction of another appointed nobleman. In the *Swords* tales, this was Prince Gwaay, brother to Hasjarl.

Games Masters familiar with the source material will know that little of Quarmall's Upper and Lower Levels is disclosed with any clarity. Therefore, the following locations are presented as thematic possibilities, with the open option of individual Games Masters developing them further or creating more based on their own visions of Quarmall.

The Upper Levels

These caverns and passageways are home to the free citizens of Quarmall as well as the kingdom's nobility. They take the form of a series of large caverns (both natural and human-shaped)

linked to one another by carved tunnels, with winding steps and slopes leading down level by level. The exact number of floors in Quarmall is unknown, though it is apparent that from the size of the strange under-city, dozens and dozens of levels exist – perhaps even numbering a hundred and more.

The Upper Levels shine with the cleanliness of slaves' dedication. Though adornments on the stone walls, ceiling and floors are few, each cavern and tunnel is shaped smoothly and bears polished rock wherever the viewer turns to look. Even the stairs to the Lower Levels are maintained in this way as a point of pride, though the dedication notably ceases at this border between to the two parts of the kingdom.

The largest series of linked caverns in the Upper Levels are the Keep of Quarmall, where the reigning monarch dwells. He holds authority over the entire kingdom, though traditionally he appoints his sons or other nobles to positions of leadership over the Upper and Lower Levels. This leaves the ruler to enjoy a life of contemplation in the highest reaches of Quarmall's mountain-towers as well as the pleasures of his personal harem, filled with women taken from across the world by his agents and brought specifically to please the Quarmallian king.

The very top of the Keep reaches to the uppermost level of the city, where it meets the giant courtyard on the flattened surface of the mountain's stunted dome. Other exits exist from the Upper Levels to the surface world, though these are always guarded by sentries armed with spears, knives and slings. Expert slingers are appointed to be sighters on the roof of the mountains, ostensibly watching for incoming dangers but primarily present to kill any slaves that make a break for their freedom.

The Upper Levels are still close enough to the surface that air reaches these topmost passages and halls without need for additional ventilation. This changes as a traveller walks deeper within the city. The final landing before the Lower Levels features large chutes leading downward and slave-driven fans that waft air through the bowels of the city.

The Fans

Barefooted slaves walk endlessly on heavy leather tread-belts, driving huge wooden fans that force the air to flow downwards into the Lower Levels. These poor souls are forced into this duty for exhaustingly long shifts each day and the fans are never allowed to stop moving, else all in the Lower Levels would die gasping and airless deaths in a short space of time.

Games Masters or players interested in stopping the fans for whatever nefarious purposes should go with the rule of thumb that after 2D4 fan-less minutes, anyone in the Lower Levels will begin to suffer the effects of asphyxiation as detailed in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*.

These fans are mirrored by companion treadmills and great wooden blades of the same construction in the Lower Levels



below. These catch the last of the fresh air as well as the downward-sent air from the fans above, pushing it through the lower tunnels.

The slaves that once trod these tread-belts and drove the fans were normal humans. At some point in history, it is noted in the records of Ningauble of the Seven Eyes (from information gathered by an eons-old sentient cockroach sage called Scraa) that either the 'invention' or 'breeding' of new slaves created servitors better-suited to the monotonous task. These stunted, barrel-chested slaves with wide nostrils seem to have little more intelligence than mules and no mental capacity to resist the orders they are given.

The Market Cavern

This huge cavern is a focal point for the trading that occurs within Quarmall and is the spot where the rare merchants from the outside world bring their wares for the people under the mountain to purchase. A wide and gentle-sloping tunnel leads down from the courtyard atop Quarmall, winding into

the market cavern which is filled with a host of wooden tables bearing trade items and many sellers laying out their wares on blankets spread out across the bare stone floor.

In Quarmall, bartering for goods is much more common than paying with coin. Quarmall uses the same currency as the rest of the land of Lankhmar, though antique Quarmallian gold pieces still exist and see use occasionally within the mountain kingdom. They are accepted elsewhere by their weight, though superstitious dread runs deep among the people of Nehwon and some merchants refuse to take these coins as legal tender. The imprinted images of ancient rulers and accompanying Quarmallian mantras of superiority on the back of the coins is enough to tip most traders as to what they are dealing with when they hold coins from Quarmall in their hands.

The trade goods Quarmall most requires from the outside world are clothes and blankets – really anything made from decent cloth, since the mountain kingdom lacks the resources to make these things within its borders in any great numbers. What Quarmall generally trades in are metal and woodworked items from the city's craftsmen in the Upper Levels. Quarmallian art is exotic and unique among the people of Lankhmar, though it is often considered to have a sinister aspect, as many of the stylised sculptures or brooches evoke some kind of demon imagery in people's imaginations.

Games Masters might choose to designate the market caverns as a regular nexus for the folk of Quarmall to gather and watch their equivalent of street performers and consult hedge magician oracles, much as would take place in a market on the surface. Other Games Masters, perhaps preferring Quarmall to have a smaller population that may not necessarily stand for such mass-interaction on a daily basis, might prefer to use this region as a weekly assemblage for people who wish to trade the goods of their craft, rather than a permanent market of ceaseless activity.

The Ghost Hall

Though the tunnels of Quarmall plunge ever-deeper with each day's digging, some of the halls in the Upper Chambers are abandoned through superstitious fear or simply from being forgotten by the majority of citizens. One such chamber is the Ghost Hall with its many adjoining rooms and tunnels, set far enough from the main hives of activity in the Upper Levels that most of this 'wing' of Quarmall sees little tread of humans. Where once it was a place for nobles to hold parties and sorcerers to chant their dark spells, now it is a mostly-silent area used by guards and slaves as a place to meet their lovers in clandestine encounters.

The Keep of Quarmall

In times past this vast series of cavern chambers and connecting tunnels was the impenetrable seat of the great Empire of Quarmall. Now, it is merely the seat of a shrunken kingdom considered cursed by the outside world. The tunnels and caverns of the Keep are manned at all times by the king's royal guards, who slay intruders on sight.

Situated within the Keep are the eyries of the king, where his falcons are kept and trained by his hawkmasters; a large imperial harem, filled with concubines taken from across the world and guarded by eunuchs; and expansive slave quarters for the servants of the palace to dwell when they are not working. These slaves closest to the Lord of Quarmall are usually chosen for their submissive qualities, with no hint of rebelliousness in their hearts.

In chambers at the very top of the domed mountain (and in adjoining towers that are still considered part of the Keep) are several observatories for astrologer hedge magicians to divine the future by the path of the stars. This is a popular practice in Quarmall, though performed only by the nobility and their trained sorcerers.

Laboratory-caverns are situated in the private chambers of the king, where he may perform his sorcery and necromantic predictions in peace and solitude.

Houses of the Sorcerer-Nobles

The nobles of Quarmall reside in a series of massive chambers, not far from the Keep of Quarmall at the very apex of the mountain. These caverns are decorated to individual tastes, with some bloodlines displaying treasured relics, hangings, war banners and weapons from the glory days of the empire's dominance over Nehwon and others opting to retain the polished stone décor that characterises most of the city.

Since Quarmallian nobles are reared to be magicians and scholars rather than fighters, most noble houses have at least one room dedicated to the pursuit of sorcery – be it a library or laboratory. The bodies of dead servants are sometimes carried to these rooms for the Quarmallian families to use their necromancy, summoning the spirits of the dead for nefarious reasons.

The Lower Levels

The Lower Levels are illuminated by the dim light of discreet torches and the sounds of the great fans blowing air through the tunnels or the *clack-clack-clack* of miners picks digging ever deeper into the earth can often be heard in the distance.

Here the slaves of Quarmall and the lesser citizens toil in the depths. With the empire now a memory, Quarmall's only expansion is downward, pushing deeper into the flesh of Nehwon by lengthening tunnels and opening up new chambers. Many believe there is an ongoing gradual but distinct shift in the population, where each passing year sees another series of caverns abandoned in the Upper Levels and more tunnels in the Lower

Levels becoming inhabited. It is as if the human remnants of the fallen empire are not satisfied with sealing themselves within a mountain to escape the outside world – they seem to be forcing themselves further under Nehwon's surface.

Counter to this belief is the more realistic opinion that the tunnels are extended downward purely to make room for an increasing population. Something that does not seem immediately obvious but has unsettling overtones is that the lords of Quarmall, who order slaves to spend their lives digging through rock and earth, are actually looking for something down there. With the rumours of the unknown 'Elder Ones' somehow connected to the caverns of Quarmall, this possibility chills the blood of any who are aware of it.

The endless tunnelling that takes place in the Lower Levels means that no living soul knows every single twist and turn in the labyrinthine subterranean passageways. Overseers use trained slaves to memorise parts of the network, so that they may navigate it alone to deliver messages to the work parties and find their way back to their Quarmallian masters but the complete host of ever-lengthening, ever-twisting tunnels would take a lifetime or more to map even if they were not being added to in a hundred directions at once.

Slaves

Quarmall's slave-stocks are impressive – at least to those with an eye for trading in flesh. No other kingdom maintains such a high percentage of its overall population as slaves, with the numbers of captured and bound souls serving in the tunnels until their dying days reaching perhaps half of the total population. Slaves are maidservants, miners, tunnel-diggers, shepherds, throne- and litter-bearers, manual labourers (such as those working on the fans under the eyes of a whip-wielding overseer) and last and least pleasant of all, fodder in magical wars.

Games Masters should note that a goodly proportion of characters with the slave cultural background are likely to hail from Quarmall, perhaps second only to Lankhmar in that regard.

A genuine slave uprising would likely bring Quarmall grinding to a halt and finish the toppled empire once and for all, so much does the society depend on its lowest caste. Though slavery in Quarmall is supposed to be for life, spirited (and fortunate) souls have been known to escape their imprisonment in the darkened tunnels. Slingers line the parapets of the domed mountain, sending lethal shot after any attempted escapees. It takes no little skill and a host of luck to make it out of Quarmall alive but nothing in Nehwon tastes sweeter than sunshine and wind on the skin of a man who has spent years of his life in the dim passages and caverns of the under-kingdom.

Mushroom Farming

A truly massive number of caves are given over to the mushroom fields, where slaves grow edible mushrooms on the floors

and walls of the caverns. These fields produce the majority of Quarmall's food supply, with the people of the mountain kingdom eating many different varieties of mushroom as the lion's share of their daily diets. To the tongue of an outsider, these fungi range from the bland to the grotesque, sporting all manner of colours in their soft flesh.

The number of slaves that work in the near-lightless caverns growing and harvesting these repulsive mushrooms is staggering, though necessary given the number of mouths to feed in the kingdom. Rats are considered a rare delicacy in Quarmall, eaten only by nobles and greatly prized at banquets. Between lack of sunlight and the Quarmallians' average diet, it is easy to see why their skins are so pallid and look so unhealthy.

The Lords of Quarmall

Again that muffled vibration, which shook the very bones of those closest it and opposite Flindach, on the other balcony, appeared Gwaay and Hasjarl. Both were garbed alike but for their diadems and sceptres. Hasjarl wore a sapphire-jewelled silver band on his forehead and in his hand was the sceptre of the Upper Levels, crested with a clenched fist; Gwaay wore a diadem inlaid with rubies and in his hand was his sceptre surmounted by a worn, dagger-transfixed. Otherwise the twain were dressed identically in ceremonial robes of darkest red, belted with broad leather girdles of black; they wore no weapons nor were any other ornaments permissible.

– The Lords of Quarmall

The rulers of Quarmall are believed to be the most powerful conclave of magicians in the entire world of Nehwon, excepting Sheelba of the Eyeless Face and Ningauble of the Seven Eyes. Quarmall's sorcerer-lords have been known to engage in underhand and malicious civil wars, as displayed in the *Swords* saga when Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser both find themselves in the employ of opposing dark-hearted heirs to the Quarmallian throne. Most rulers maintain a host of powerful magicians as an inner circle of protectors and advisers, charging these sorcerers with keeping the lords from all magical harm.

In the *Swords* tales, the rulers of Quarmall at the time of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser's primes were Quarmal and his sons Hasjarl and Gwaay. Though the princes meet their deaths in the source material, Games Masters may wish to include the two characters in campaigns set before their demises. Quarmal, of course, goes on to rule throughout the stories and is suitable for inclusion whenever the Games Master sees fit.

King Quarmal

For an old man Quarmal was not particularly hideous until one noticed his eyes. They were peculiar in shape and the ball was rich ruby-red. The dead-white iris had that nauseous sheen of pearly iridescence found only in the sea dwellers among living creatures; this characteristic he inherited from his mother, a mer-woman. The pupils, like specks of black crystal, sparkled with an incredible malevolent intelligence. His baldness was accentuated by the long tufts of coarse black hair which grew symmetrically over each ear.

Pale, pitted skin hung loosely on his jowls but was drawn tightly over the high cheekbones. Thin as a sharpened blade, his long jutting nose gave him the appearance of an old hawk or kestrel.

If Quarmal's eyes were the most arresting feature in his countenance, his mouth was the most beautiful. The lips were full and ruddy, remarkable in so aged a man and they had that peculiar mobility found in some elocutionists and orators and actors. Had it been possible for Quarmal to have known vanity, he might have been vain about the beauty of his mouth; as it was this perfectly moulded mouth served only to accentuate the horror of his eyes.

– The Lords of Quarmall

Quarmal is the ruler of Quarmall, sustained into ancient age by unknowable applications of his powerful sorcery. He is a thoughtful soul, though undeniably malicious and cruel in his deeds and aims. His primary concern in the *Swords* tales is surviving the spreading plots and blooming ambitions of his sons, Hasjarl and Gwaay. Under Quarmallian noble law, it is no crime for brothers to murder their father or one another, though Quarmal's hand was bound by the tradition that no nobleman may kill his sons.

Serving Quarmal is a gruesome prospect, for he expects perfection and is ungenerous with his rewards. Even in giving Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser the rewards they had been promised by Gwaay and Hasjarl, Quarmal attempted to enchant them into returning to the mountain kingdom so he could reclaim his largesse. He also expects absolute devotion, as evidenced by the sacrifice of Flindach, closest agent to the throne, who gave his life in the deception that allowed Quarmal to triumph over his warring sons.

Prince Hasjarl

Hasjarl was the elder; older by only a few months which his appearance and demeanour lengthened to years. His long, misshapen torso was ill-borne on short bandy legs. His left arm was perceptibly longer than the right; and his fingers, peculiarly webbed to the first knuckle, were gnarled and stubby with brittle striated stains. It was as if Hasjarl were a poorly reconstructed puzzle put together in such a fashion that all the pieces were mismatched and awry.

This was particularly true of his features. He possessed his sire's nose, though thickened and coarse-pored; but this was contradicted by the thin-lipped, tightly compressed mouth continually pursed until it had assumed a perpetual sphincter-like appearance. Hair, lank and lustreless, grew low on his forehead and low, flattened cheekbones added yet another contradiction.

– The Lords of Quarmall

There is perhaps no crueller and more malice-driven character in the entire *Swords* saga than Prince Hasjarl of Quarmall. While neither Quarmal nor Gwaay can be considered anything but the basest villains, Hasjarl's snide malevolence is arguably deeper than all others. He delights in torture for the sake of torture, spurns his brother's apparently sincere offer of peace and brotherhood and

commands his subordinate magicians to incant an endless stream of magical diseases upon his rival prince – sorcery that will bring one of the most hideous deaths imaginable.

Hasjarl promises much in the name of acquiring decent mercenaries or champions, yet he is graceless to those in his employ, loathing the fact they might keep secrets from him and bitterly complaining about his straits to anyone who will listen. Couple the ugliness of his personality with the ugliness of his body and one is presented with a truly repulsive creature indeed.

Hasjarl spends much of his time with his eyes closed, yet still appears able to see all that transpires around him. This is not actually a result of his sorcery – which he seems disinclined to use personally – but rather from a degenerate and minor surgery performed on his eyes. A skilled slave pricked tiny holes in each of his eyelids, so that he can see even when his eyes are closed. This cunning trick works to unnerve all that enter his presence, which is just the reaction Hasjarl was hoping for when he coined the idea in the first place.

Prince Gwaay

Gwaay, antithetically, was supple of limb, well-formed and good to look upon. His eyes, wide-set and pale, were deceptively gentle and kindly; for they masked a will as strong and capable of action as coiled spring-steel. His continual residence in the Lower Levels over which he ruled gave to his pallid smooth skin a peculiar waxy lustre.

– The Lords of Quarmall

The physical opposite to his foul-countenanced brother Hasjarl, Gwaay is nevertheless a sorcerer-noble of Quarmall and both bitter and malicious to his very core. Gwaay is even considered less savoury by some (or at least less sane), for his cruelties stem from a more emotionless mind than his brother's; while Hasjarl's malice is fierce, Gwaay orders deaths and tortures with barely a thought. This certainly calls his sanity into question.

Gwaay also wishes to possess his father's throne but is manoeuvred into a more defensive game during the story *The Lords of Quarmall*. His sorcerers work day and night in the eternal dimness of the mountain kingdom, countering the spells of Hasjarl's disease-sending magicians. Characters working for Gwaay find him a more charming and less slobbering master, though he is still dangerous in the extreme.

Adventures in Quarmall

Quarmall's unusual nature and the many secrets it holds from the wider world make for a wealth of potential adventure hooks. Games Masters should have little difficulty dreaming up their own Quarmallian scenarios and the story ideas provided here should help get the creative juices flowing to that end.

A New God in Lankhmar

Worship no more your weak godlets and godlings who provide you no true reward for your loyalty! Instead bring your faith and

coin to me and I shall show you a true god worthy of your belief. What other priests on this Street of so-called Gods allow you to speak with the souls of your lost loved ones? I alone! I alone... Now come, come closer and we shall begin tonight's work to cheat Death himself. Has everyone brought with him an item belonging to his lost love?

New cults springing up on the Street of the Gods is no rare thing – it happens nightly, with new faiths singing the praises of new gods starting at the Marsh Gate and preaching their way westward over time. Also, Hedge Magic allows genuine corpstalkers and talented charlatans to commune with the dead (or fake it) in various ways that are occasionally believed by the populace but unreliable enough that they are considered shams more often than not. Considering the numbers of charlatans aping the tricks of the genuine (and unreliable) seers, Hedge Magic is a service used only by the gullible and the desperate.

Here on the Street of the Gods is a man who hides his Quarmallian origins and simply speaks of a new god that has granted him the power to contact the loved ones of Lankhmarts who join the cult. This is not remarkable because of the claim itself; it is remarkable because it is actually true. He can indeed do as he promises. Maybe the god he calls upon is actually Death, which is a bold claim as well as a false one, but one that is sure to send intrigued chills down Lankhmar's collective spine.

As soon as gossip starts to spread about this talent of his, chances are that the cult will need to go underground else superstitious citizens, honourable adventurers or the constables of the City Watch put the priest out of business and clap him in irons. As religious practices go, this is clearly an unwholesome one and it fair reeks of Black Magic despite the priest's lies and claims of divine gifts.

The trick is that it will appeal to a great many people. Once the word is out that the priest is telling the truth without flimflaming anybody, people will flock to his cult, doing so in secret so that the authorities will not be alerted. Nobles and gutter-peasants alike will seek out the priest, offering faith and whatever payment he deems necessary to have the 'divine gifts' performed. Especially trusted cultists might even be trained as sorcerers to help manage the growing cult.

This is nasty magic. Even though the priest is professing to use his divine gifts for noble reasons, he is essentially using a form of Black Magic to get rich and is manipulating the souls of the dead in doing so. Characters with even a shred of honour will want to put this man out of business and probably slit his throat in the bargain so he cannot try this anywhere else.

Abandoned Halls

The chamber's silence is shattered by the irregular booted tread of footsteps on the stone floor. When you strain your ears, it's almost like you can hear the whispers of the family that once dwelled here and listen to the ghosts of their voices coming down through the years.

As evidenced by Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser hiding out several times during their stay in Quarmall, there are many parts of the kingdom that are abandoned or rarely used by the residents. These may have been thoroughfares or marketplaces that no longer see use because of new tunnels cutting around them or caverns that once belonged to noble families and are now left hollow and empty either out of respect or superstition, perhaps born if the family died under a curse or through a mistake in their sorcery. There is also the chance that the chamber is simply forgotten, left to sit untouched and unused in the absolute darkness within the mountain.

Games Masters can dream up unique uses for these places or allow players to use them as bases of operations or hidey-holes when they inevitably cause trouble with Quarmall's sorcerous noble caste. Things could become interesting if the characters discover that their refuge is also the haven of other people who cling to their own dangerous secrets or perhaps even the meeting point of a cult, where the members gather to chant their strange incantations and perform their hidden rites.

For the Empire!

'Enough of the piteous hiding from the world; too frightened to show our faces to the sky let alone to other humans. No more sunless days and moonless nights under this accursed mountain. We are not protected here, we are imprisoned. And it is time that the world trembled again under the banners of the Empire of Quarmall. It is time to return things to the way they ought to be. It is time to set things right.'

One man's visionary is another man's tyrant. In this hook, a ruler emerges from the sorcerer-lords of Quarmall with one goal in mind: the resurrection of the long-lost imperial glory days. The armies of Quarmall march out from the mountain into the surrounding countryside, taking over the villages of southern Lankhmar and slowly spreading north, recruiting as they go and headed by leaders possessing Black Magic and Quarmallian Necromancy. Eventually, unless they are stopped, they will reach the walls of the Imperishable City and Lankhmar will suffer a siege like no other in its history.

As plots go, most Games Masters will see this as an epic and long-lasting undertaking that will change the face of Nehwon (or at least the land of Lankhmar) for some time to come. Regular adventuring might be curtailed by the advance of the initially small Quarmallian host or it could be enhanced with darker flavour as the characters venture into Quarmall-held lands in the south and see how different things have become under the rule of the sorcerer-lords. Are entire villages to be forced into slavery or to serve as conscripts in the army?

This story arc would probably be most satisfying if experienced characters were caught up in the middle, with their decisions and deeds somehow affecting the outcome of the war. For example, if they hold rank in the military, they might be dispatched as

scouts or raiders into the southern lands, perhaps also tasked with assassination orders should they get the chance to strike at one of the enemy generals.

The actual war with Lankhmar is one that Quarmall will probably lose unless it waits many years to muster its forces or employ some previously unknown sorcery in the siege. Though it is never stated in the *Swords* books, it is apparent that Lankhmar's population and army dwarf those of Quarmall many times. Trickery, treachery and sorcery will be ingrained into the Quarmallian battle plan if it ever hopes to succeed.

Ghostly Eyes and Hauntings

The necromancer tossed a handful of soil from a child's grave on the steadily-rising fire. He could feel the presence in the room with him, though he could not yet see it. 'Spirit,' he intoned, 'attend me now.' He scratched at his pierced ear, setting the ornate gold earring jangling. 'You are to fly to the caverns of the nobleman Urvan. There you will watch and listen to his deeds and return to me at midnight to report all you have witnessed.'

As necromancers, the sorcerers of Quarmall use the spirits of the dead to further their own ends without compunction. Corpses are used to prophesy, through the use of Hedge Magic, mainly by communing with the dead body, meditating in its presence, drinking potions and applying poultices made out of corpse-parts and generally entering the receptive trance-like state of Hedge Magic in order to see the future. In this instance, the future comes as hallucinations or visions as normal and are received by staring into the corpse's eyes or discerning patterns in its entrails.

'True' necromancy, dubbed Quarmallian Necromancy in this sourcebook, is simply a part of Black Magic. A very limited number of spells allow sorcerers to manipulate the spirits of the dead into service, binding them to a task that they are compelled to perform. Fiendish sorcerers use this magic to spy on their rivals at times, though the practise is rare within Quarmall considering the fact that other sorcerers can easily detect intruding spirits and destroy them.

An intriguing possibility is for a Quarmallian sorcerer-noble to use his power to manipulate ghosts outside of Quarmall, creating trouble for the characters and other people far removed from the mountain kingdom. Enemies that the characters have slain might be enchanted so that their souls return from the grave to bedevil their slayers. Ghostly spies can watch the business of the living, witnessing all their magician master's desires and reporting back to him.

Dealing with the undead in any form was never easy for Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser, so it is likely that any characters plagued by ghosts will need to seek out some kind of knowledgeable mentor for aid, such as Sheelba of the Eyeless Face or Ningauble of the Seven Eyes.

Solving the problem might be as simple as the characters undertaking a time-consuming trek to Quarmall and slaying the apparently aggrieved sorcerer who is inflicting these poltergeists upon them or as complicated as somehow finding out what will allow the ghosts to rest in peace – provided the sorcerer's hold over them allows such succour.

Imperial Concubines

'You will find that any resistance will only anger us.' The man in the priestly robes of dark red with a whip in his hands spoke Lankhmarian with an odd accent. 'You are coming with us to the pleasure caverns of King Quarmal and that is final. If you will not come willingly, we will take you by force. Men, restrain her. Do not mark her flesh or you will all answer to my whip.'

This one works for female characters with high CHA characteristics or male characters with female lovers. The harem of Quarmall's ruler is always filled with fresh meat for his decadent tastes. Teams of Quarmallian agents of the throne travel Nehwon from Klesh to the Cold Waste seeking potential lovers for their monarch. In this plot hook, one of these teams finds an attractive female character or the lover of a male character and decides that she is perfect for the harem.

Physically, it is hard to overpower the group of Quarmallians because there are a dozen of them. Female characters should be given the chance to escape of course, with the group of eunuchs hunting her over the course of her adventures with the other characters.

In the case of lovers being taken back to Quarmall, it can be a thrilling chase across the south of the land of Lankhmar as the characters seek to catch up with the kidnappers and save their loved ones.

Matters could be further complicated by the possibility that the eunuchs repel all the assaults made by the characters and the team make it back to Quarmall with their prisoners. The adventurers are faced with somehow infiltrating the mountain city or petitioning the king himself, neither of which have an immediately high chance of success.

Things could become *really* tangled if the prisoner has already fallen pregnant in the harem by the time the characters manage to free her. No ruler is going to allow a woman carrying his heir to flee the kingdom and the characters will have a huge fight on their hands as they flee – a fight that will last until the day they die, for surely the King of Quarmall will send agent after agent to retrieve his son or daughter.

Magic Mushrooms

'A simple task is all I require of you,' snapped Sheelba, his voice rasping like waves breaking on rocks. 'In the blackest pits of Quarmall there are caverns filled with flavoured fungi. This is the food of the citizens. Bring me a handful of the yellow-grey mushrooms that grow in the cavern where the black water flows. Then I shall make you your potion.'

Sheelba of the Eyeless Face is a warlock well-noted by his servants for requiring esoteric components for his spells and potions. Should the characters ever go to him for a specific incantation or magic potion, Games Masters may well consider sending the adventurers on a quest to gather what Sheelba needs to work his magic. This adventure, bound for the Lower Levels of Quarmall where only specially-trained slaves know every twist and turn down there in the darkness, is one that presents quite a challenge and allows players to experience some of the most interesting aspects of the mountain kingdom.

These specific mushrooms are considered a delicacy in Quarmall. They are harvested for the tables of the nobility and are accordingly difficult to find. Slaves will need to be bribed, threatened or set free if they are to guide the characters to the rare patches of these yellow-grey mushrooms and the royal guards are likely to have something to say about the intruders raiding the fields of the kingdom, poaching the food of the nobility.

Slave Uprising

With pickaxes and kitchen knives, the horde moved upward, taking tunnels at random but always seeking out passages that led to the sunlight above.

Though slavery is commonplace in Nehwon, the stripe of servitude that goes on in Quarmall is several degrees harsher than in any other nation, with the exception of perhaps the Mingols. Here, however, it is often sorcery-tainted. The people of the villages in the surrounding countryside around Quarmall know all too well that at times their fellows will walk, apparently soulless and devoid of reason, right from their homes at night to the gates of the mountain kingdom. Quarmall captures slaves by mundane means as well but the sorcerous summonings chill the blood more.

Players might decide that this severe oppression offends their characters and they want to do something about it. This is commendable, if extremely difficult.

Stealing individuals or small groups of slaves out of Quarmall and making a break for it is hard enough. The lords of the city are notoriously reluctant to surrender their slave workers. Instigating or leading an uprising comprised of the majority of the kingdom's slaves is an epic undertaking that will make for a very long campaign as well as, if successful, change the face of Nehwon forever. The kingdom of Quarmall could arguably be considered to be in its death-throes now; the sudden loss of its slave caste would shatter the remnants of the fallen empire and leave a handful of citizens to starve and struggle to survive in their near-empty mountain. That could be considered by many groups to be a satisfying result in itself.

Beginning the uprising is likely to be the hardest part. Spreading treachery and sedition through the ranks of the generally browbeaten and obeisant slave ranks is no easy feat. Many will

harbour great fears of the outside world which they have never even seen (and who knows what propaganda the lords of Quarmall spread?), while even more will live in fear of their sorcerous masters ever discovering treachery. From the *Swords* tales it is clear that few Quarmallian rulers seem to think ill of torture to get their own ends or for simple amusement purposes.

The first stage will likely be to start an underground resistance of escaped slaves that hide in the abandoned parts of the mountain kingdom, stealing food and supplies as they recruit more adherents. For the entirety of the operation, characters will have to contend with the fact that the nobles of Quarmall are magicians and powerful ones at that. Any hints of the growing rebellion will likely trip their sorcerous ire and all kinds of hell will descend on the escaping slaves. Stopping the supply of mushrooms to the citizens might start the onset of starvation but it will also alert the nobles that something is wrong and they will likely use their Black Magic in an attempt to right it.

If the characters are skilled and lucky enough to stand at the head of a horde of slaves that is dedicated to fighting its way to freedom on the surface, an exciting series of running battles is in store. Through vast caverns and confined tunnels, close-quarter fights with citizens, royal guards and the sorcerer-nobles themselves will test the mettle of any adventuring group. Any party that manage to fight their way free deserve their victory and can relish the destruction of the kingdom in their wake.

Sorcerer-in-Exile

'Yes, I know Sheelba and Ningauble. The former is a foolish hermit and the latter spends his time jaw-jacking like a bored housewife. I know them both and I respect neither of them. If you wish to serve a patron with real power, allow me to introduce myself properly, for I am in sore need of capable agents and I will reward you twice as grandly as whatever those wilderness-dwelling weaklings offer you.'

Perhaps Sheel and Ning are not the only powers on the block and characters chance across a new sorcerous mentor who offers more than the two archimages. It is ultimately unlikely that this exiled Quarmallian magician is really the equal or the superior of the two weird and alien sorcerers but such a decision is down to the Games Master to make. In any event, the Quarmallian makes bold assurances of rewards for similar deeds as would be demanded by Sheel and Ning.



Behind his outwardly kind (or at least unthreatening) demeanour, this magician is up to something. His relations with Sheelba and Ningauble go beyond mere acquaintance into something deeper – a rivalry born years ago perhaps when he was spurned as an apprentice, tired of Ningauble's probing into Quarmall, or had lost a wizardly duel with one of them in times past. Eventually, he aims to use the characters as weapons in the resurging war, employing the adventurers to work against either or both of the outlandish sorcerers. For now he is content merely to deprive them both of their most useful servants: the Player Characters.

Sheelba and Ningauble are unlikely to take this without at least a waspish comment from the former or a longwinded tirade by the latter. The Games Master may wish to present the two sorcerers as bitter over the whole thing while playing up the fact that their new patron is so much more generous with artefacts and less irritating when it comes to straight answers. Make it seem like the characters really are getting a good deal – then

spring the truth on them, that their new ally wants Sheel and Ning dead and desires the characters' help. *'And why shouldn't you consider it? After all the help I've given you these past months...'* When Sheelba and Ningauble attempt to dissuade the characters from their new allegiance, perhaps the story they insist is the truth is simply too outrageous to believe.

An interesting way to foreshadow the reality of the situation would be to sprinkle little clues here and there regarding the Quarmallian's magical practices. Perhaps he requires a series of components that become grimmer and gorier the further down the list the characters go. When they are retrieving hairs from the heads of thirty virgins it does not seem overly sinister. When they are asked as their seventh quest to bring the fingers of a still-living king, things can start to seem uneasy. Even if they choose a hated and corrupt monarch, their consciences should at least be stirred by what they are doing. It will only get worse from there, with Sheelba and Ning repeatedly attempting to wean the adventurers away from their new master and back into their service. Of course, they will likely do so in their annoying and hostile ways, which will hardly endear the players to the archimages but they were at least given warning, if not *fair* warning, before becoming too involved with the Quarmallian mage.

If done with enough subtlety, the Big Reveal could come as a delicious surprise, with the characters finally coming to realise they have been working for a hateful necromancer all this time. They will have to redeem themselves by turning on him and ending his malice once and for all.

The Elder Ones

In the pitch darkness of the longest, lowest tunnel, the echoes of the digging ceased abruptly. There was the sound of soft sobbing, as if muffled and the light scrape of flesh on gravelly stone as if something were being dragged unresisting further down the tunnel. With the sound of a great, gulping swallow, all other noises faded into silence.

Given the relationship between early *Sword & Sorcery* such as Howard's *Conan* and Leiber's *Lankhmar* and Lovecraft's *Cthulhu Mythos*, it is perfectly feasible that the Elder Ones referred to in scraps of legend in the source material are in fact beings from the Lovecraftian alien reality. In fact, it is likely this is exactly what the snippets of legend are referring to. Fritz Leiber wrote *Mythos* stories himself, dealing with the alien and inhuman monsters that still terrify so many readers in Lovecraft's fiction today. Some of these beings lay claim to the title of Elder One, applied to them by the few wise souls that are aware of their presence in the world.

All that is known of the Elder Ones in the *Swords* tales is that they left the world of men in times past and that Ningauble of the Seven Eyes suspected some trace of them to remain in the deepest reaches of Quarmall. He worked to infiltrate his agents into the under-kingdom in the hope of discovering these traces

for certain and maintained contact with a slave who toiled in the lowest tunnels, expanding them ever downward. This man apparently saw nothing, though that does not mean there was nothing to see.

Games Masters who are familiar with the *Call of Cthulhu* and other works by H.P. Lovecraft have a wealth of potential material to exploit in Quarmall. Ningauble, as a patron to the characters, is desperate to learn more of the Elder Ones and clearly seeks out traces of their presence – it is not hard to believe that the Seven-Eyed One would send out competent servants to seek evidence of the Elder Ones' passing. It could even be that for several adventures that the characters have performed for Ning, they have been treading in places where the archimage suspected such evidence might be found and only now, before the group's adventure into the depths of Quarmall, does he reveal what he has been seeking all along.

Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser did not battle *Mythos* entities by the horde but they were involved in many adventures where they had to investigate and come to understand a strange magical evil in order to counter it or simply survive. Characters beginning adventures with clues regarding the Elder Ones walk similar paths and while blasé contact with the mind-aching beings of Lovecraftian imagination would likely be anti-thematic, a single confrontation with a deadly and powerful alien of the *Mythos* might never be explained fully and thus retain most of its mystery. Such a scene may even become a high point of the campaign, when afterwards the players discuss the monstrous creature their characters battled in the bowels of Quarmall – a being that had not seen sunlight during millennia of a long, long sleep.

The Secret Trader

'Ah, so you have found my little corner of Quarmall. And behold what wonders await you as reward for your discovery! Come, come and feast your eyes on this rarest of treasures – the blade of Pezeen, sword-champion to the third emperor of Quarmall back in the days of imperial glory. And over here we have...'

Tucked away in the Great Market caverns, easily-overlooked in his little cubby hole set in the rocky wall of a side tunnel, is a wizened old man selling what he claims are the ancient treasures of Imperial Quarmall. He asks the expected prices for such antiques, which reach thousands of Rilks in some cases and seem awfully strange when presented by a wrinkly old tradesman who lives in a little wet cave, who possesses fewer teeth than he has fingers and dresses in clothes that look like he stole them from a dead slave. Judging by the smell in the little cave, the slave had been dead for some time before this smiling old fellow relieved the corpse of its attire.

These antiques and artefacts are almost certainly magic or at the very least extremely valuable, be they weapons that offer combat bonuses, gemstones that graced the tiaras of long-dead princesses or more defined items that resemble the

artefacts occasionally bestowed by Sheelba or Ningauble to their faithful servants.

If the characters wish to do business with this gentleman but lack the funds (which is likely), he will offer to barter the items in exchange for odd services rendered or esoteric objects that the characters will have to hunt for. These quests could range from collecting ice from the foothills of Stardock in the Cold Waste and bringing it back to Quarmall somehow un-melted or retrieving a vial full of the invisible blood of a Ghoul warrior. If the characters do as the old man asks, he will be true to his word and hand over that which he promised.

Games Masters can essentially play this scenario in one of several ways:

'These are obviously fake.'

The most obvious scenario here is that the old man is, for want of a better word, *crazy*. He is no more than an old beggar selling pieces of scrap and detritus ("These are the seventeen mushrooms of immortality, I tell you true!") in the hopes of conning someone as unheing or disturbed as himself.

Either that or he is somehow in the business of crafting incredibly beautiful and accurate fakes. Given the lack of a tourist trade in Quarmall – this sort of thing would work much better in Ilthmar – there is probably an interesting reason behind why he is doing this, let alone how he acquired the skills to do so. Either way, the scenario might not stretch into a full story but will certainly make for an interesting scene.

'I think he is telling the truth...'

Somehow, as unbelievable as it might seem, this old coot is actually telling the truth about his wares. The sword really is the blade of a historical imperial champion. That sapphire over there really did once rest in the tiara of Princess Naavi, an ancient emperor's daughter. This bronze ring-mail shirt really does glow softly in the dark, illuminating the surrounding area and negating the need for torches. It is just a shame that they all cost so much, really.

This scenario presents two points of interest. Firstly, just how did the old man come by all this stuff? Is it stolen from the storage rooms of Upper Level nobles? If so, how did he manage such a series of daring thefts? Secondly, what exactly can these items do to benefit adventurers?

Games Masters will likely wish to reserve any powerful magical items for experienced characters, rather than handing over potentially game-unbalancing artefacts to new characters that will use them to easily overcome their future trials.

If the Games Master decides the items are real, further difficulties will arise from the players owning them. Firstly and

most obviously, anyone with knowledge of ancient Quarmallian history (and the Lankhmar Thieves' Guild has information on the *oddest* things, sometimes) will know that a wandering vagabond is now carrying the highly-valuable Sword of Pezeen, which legend states slays foes in a frighteningly short space of time. This is inviting trouble on a monumental scale. Characters will have to be diligent in holding on to their new property, while expecting the number of apparently random thug attacks and professional assassinations attempted against them to increase tenfold.

Allowing characters unlimited access to powerful magic items is not particularly thematic with the Sword & Sorcery genre or the source material itself. It might then be better to bestow such an item on the characters but ensure that keeping hold of it is an adventure in and of itself, with several forces intently seeking the artefact.

Ultimately, one force will probably succeed in getting it, though not before the character has had some fun with the thing. Games Masters should probably be frugal with these items of unusual power, given that Nehwon is such a low-magic setting following the Sword & Sorcery themes.

Also, note that while it can be galling for a player to know that his character's magic jewel now sits in the dusty vaults of the Thieves' Guild in Lankhmar, the attempts to get it back can be just as fun as owning it in the first place. Try not to tease or frustrate players, though.

'These are worthless but that one...'

An intriguing possibility that is perhaps more likely than the idea of the old man telling the whole truth is that somewhere between the elder's ravings and his collection of garbage for sale, one of the items is actually what he says it is: a relic of ancient imperial Quarmall. In this instance, the story can proceed as detailed above, only with a single reward at the end of the adventure.

'The Devourers menace Quarmall!'

Here is the big one. As revealed in the *Swords* tales, the Devourers are strange planar-travelling merchants who establish the Bazaar of the Bizarre in Lankhmar. Here, with the old man hawking what appear to be incredible wares (and at suspiciously low prices in this version of the scene), it could just be that the Devourers make a second attempt to enter Nehwon. The old man may in actuality be the Iron Statue encountered by Fafhrd or he may be some other sorcerous being intent on selling trash to the people of Quarmall and expanding his trade to wider Nehwon afterwards.

Characters facing the Devourers here will likely need the assistance of Sheelba and Ningauble to see the truth, just as Fafhrd did in Lankhmar during the *Swords* stories.

Klesh

The dark-skinned southerners that travel north to Lankmar originate in the thick and mazy jungles of Klesh, which completely dominate the southwest of the continent. Unlike the so-called barbarians of the savage Mingol tribes, the Kleshites that dwell far removed from civilisation and its accompanying decadence are rarely motivated by war. Klesh as a jungle nation has never opened its borders to outsiders but much of the reason it remains mysterious and exotic is because of its distance from all other significant Nehwonese nations.

Trade is sedate but not nonexistent between Klesh and the rest of the world. Ivory, tobacco, jungle spices (for both foods and teas) and several rare herbs used for poultices in healing various ailments, which bleed north in a steady trickle of trade, are all found in Klesh. The trick for enterprising merchants is to find a commodity that the Kleshites need, for they are a remarkably self-sufficient and admirably independent nation. The Grey Mouser has discovered that ambergris is more valuable in Klesh than rubies and profits accordingly. Similar discoveries no doubt await enterprising players with mercantile characters.

Metal weapons which would widen the eyes of any primitive culture are received half-heartedly and reluctantly here, almost as if such inventions were below Kleshites' notice. With Kleshites rarely going to war and their own handcrafted weaponry serving well enough in the jungles, this last assumption is probably true. Weapons of war are only of use to warriors. The Kleshites are hunters, not soldiers.

A popular tale told of the black-skinned southern folk is that they hoard incredible reserves of gold beneath the jungle canopies, which the right trade offer (or the right army) could 'entice' the

Kleshites into sharing. The merchant and explorer expeditions that have left to learn the truth of this matter have never returned. Some say this is because the Kleshites are a secretive and private people, killing all intruders found deep-walking in their jungles. Others state that because Kleshites are largely peaceable folk, it is much more likely that these foolish entrepreneurs were lost in the alien southern jungles and killed by the-gods-only-know-what creatures living there.

Kokgnab

Scarcely mentioned in the *Swords* tales, Kokgnab is known to be a distant and small nation of seafarers, fisherfolk and farmers, located at the opposite end of the land of Lankmar to the Imperishable City. Its exoticism is mentioned more than once and given the nature of the region's name (which is Bangkok spelled backwards) it might be considered a Nehwonese approximation of medieval Thailand.



THE EAST

To the east of the Imperishable City lies a great continent many times the size of the land of Lankhmar. Here in the north are the Parched Mountains and the City of Ghouls, while the south sees the delights of Horborixen and the southeast is known as the Eastern Lands. In the farthest east lies the Empire of Eevamarensee, while the centre of the region is taken up by the expansive Poisoned Desert with the Sea of Monsters to the north of that blasted, hateful terrain.

Ilthmar

Later that day the two swordsmen waylaid an insufficiently-guarded Lankhmar-bound merchant, depriving him of the two best of his four cart-horses – for thieving was first nature to them – and on these clumping mounts made their way out of the Great Salt Marsh and across the Sinking Land to the sinister hub-city of Ilthmar with its treacherous little inns and innumerable statues and bas-reliefs and other depictions of its rat-god.

– The Circle Curse

Ilthmarts are a somewhat heartless people and much given to gambling. Besides, they welcome sharks into their harbour, since it makes for an easy way of disposing of common criminals, robbed and drunken strangers and slaves grown senile or otherwise useless and also assures that the shark-god's chosen victims will always be spectacularly received.

– The Wrong Branch

Ilthmar is a city in which even a minimally prudent man dare not sleep soused, while the endless repetitions of its rat-god, more powerful even than its shark-god, in sculptures, murals and smaller décor (and in large, live rats silent in the shadows or a-dance in the alleys) make for a certain nervousness in newcomers after a few hours.

– The Wrong Branch

Ilthmar is not Lankhmar. Whereas the Imperishable City is by turns decadent and populated by thieves, murderers, sell-swords and deceivers, the citizenry is balanced (or at least, filled out) by hard-working labourers, cultish priests of a hundred gods and the most powerful merchant league in the world. When Lankhmar is described as decadent and grand, it is because the great city has the blue-blooded social elite and the vast wealth necessary to make the description stick. Ilthmar is not decadent, nor is it grand in any but the most ironic use of the word. Ilthmar is Lankhmar's filthy, penniless twin and decadence would actually be a step up for the place. Lankhmar is unarguably corrupt. For Ilthmar to be corrupt, it would mean there would have to have been a shred of

goodness to be corrupted in the first place, which is arguable. It is a city not rife with corruption but *saturated* with it.

There is a Nehwonian saying that *'most adventures have a tendency to begin in Lankhmar'* and this certainly bore true for Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser. There is a Nehwonian saying about Ilthmar, as well: it is where *'most adventures have a habit of ending'*. It is a dangerous place at the best of times and times are rarely that good in Ilthmar. 'Adventures ending' speaks of death and treachery, not pleasant retirement.

It is Ilthmar, not the City of the Black Toga, which stands as the hub-city of the world. Ilthmar is north of exotic Horborixen and the great Nile-like River Tilth which floods and feeds the Eastern Lands, east of Lankhmar itself, south of the Land of the Eight Cities and the ever-raiding Mingols of the Steppes, west of the mysterious Eastern Lands and the murky Shadowland. Adventurers might consider Lankhmar their spiritual home and the first step on their many journeys but wanderers, merchants, vagabonds, travellers and mercenaries alike all eventually come through Ilthmar, Nehwon's central city; the nadir of what civilisation has to offer.

What sets the criminal elements of Lankhmar apart from their Ilthmarish counterparts is the level of professionalism and organisation displayed by the criminal guilds of the City of Thieves. The robbers and thugs of Ilthmar are no more than thieves and muggers – disorganised on the whole, murderous almost to a man and serving no higher law or purpose than their own rumbling bellies, keen fists or lust for gold. This is not the only way criminals operate in Ilthmar but it is definitely the method of the majority.

The city is also known for its obscene taxation. The taxes in Ilthmar range from petty inconveniences to the extremely demanding and overall the average citizens are relatively poor. The nobility of Ilthmar (a term ironic enough to make any Nehwonese scholar laugh out loud) are immeasurably richer than the peasantry but still do not approach the fortunes of the Overlord of Lankhmar and the most important members of the Guild of Grain Merchants.

So why would anyone live here? Ilthmar is a dirty city by all accounts but it is still a city. Most of the civilised Nehwon population cling to cities for safety – safety against the creatures of the wild, safety against wars with other nations, safety against murderous Mingol hordes and safety against rampaging ghouls. Ilthmar might be a nasty place but it is one of Nehwon's largest

cities and is remote enough from potential invaders that it presents an unappealing target for siege, yet central enough for travellers and traders that it becomes the one place all must visit at some point during their journeys. There is no other city so centrally placed that lies across so many trade routes and travel paths. In a perverse way, Ilthmar feeds off its tourism, biting the hand that feeds it and knowing the hand will keep offering food. No matter how many muggers, extortionists, murderers and thieves ply their trade, Ilthmar remains Nehwon's hub-city. It is a foul necessity in the minds of many travellers, made all the more sinister because the gates of Ilthmar are always open and the city itself tries to be so inviting.

The Throne of Ilthmar

The city's rulership is never explicitly detailed in the *Swords* tales. Games Masters wishing to set their campaigns in the filthy streets and rat-icon temples of Ilthmar have a choice as to how they wish the city to be run in their games. The following section details the many potential possibilities, exploring the effects each would have on the city in various campaigns.

If the players are also familiar with Ilthmar from the *Swords* stories, it might be worth talking beforehand to discuss everyone's opinion on how the city should be ruled. Many players may not care overmuch, since if Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser never saw fit to observe the way Ilthmar was governed, it stands to reason they might also have little interest in the matter. The choice belongs to the Games Master and comes down to his own impressions of Nehwon but there is nothing to say that more than one of these options is not possible, such as an overlord supported by a council of prominent nobles and advised most closely by an archpriest of one of the animal cults.

The Overlord of Ilthmar

The notion of a ruling Overlord is one not just confined to Lankhmar: Movar, the Overlord of the Eight Cities, is mentioned in the *Swords* tales as well. It is likely that Ilthmar – as the second of the three largest cities mentioned in the source material – has a similar ruler to Lankhmar and Kvarch Nar.

It is exceedingly unlikely that such a soul is elected by the populace, instead rising through a rare and powerful criminal guild, religious cult or – most probably – either following a hereditary bloodline through the ages or simply being chosen by the other nobles of the city.

An Overlord of Ilthmar has a great deal to contend with. Certainly some can relax on their laurels and spend the vast wealth that comes from obsessive taxation but this seems an unusually calm and untroubled existence that many overlords will desire and few will attain. Ilthmar is a bustling and lively city. Such places tend to require an active government. Where Ilthmar is concerned, a continuous flood of new taxes is something even the most slovenly overlord will need to busy himself with dreaming up.

Authority & Influence

Ilthmar's overlord will have a great deal of authority over his city but practically none over the surrounding landscape. Unlike Lankhmar, Ilthmar has no vast spread of grain fields to maintain and watch over, nor does it boast the army and naval power of the Imperishable City to the west. Most of the authority wielded by the Overlord of Ilthmar arises from the fact that the taxes make him very rich and his city is so important for trade in Nehwon.

When the overlord is not occupied by planning new taxes, amending old ones or overseeing his own financial interests in the city's large shipping and land trade industries, chances are he will spend his time among his fellow bluebloods throwing parties and balls matched only by the soirees of Lankhmar. The elite of Ilthmar might not be the fantastically-rich souls of Glipkerio Kistomerces' court but they are certainly wealthy enough to enjoy their gains in typical aristocratic fashion. Ilthmar's overlord will head a court of arranged marriages, political alliances growing strong or turning sour over time and the ever-present potential for assassination.

As political leverage goes, the Overlord of Ilthmar will have little sway in global politics, short of threatening to seal the city's gates, which would strangle well over half the land-based trade routes in the known world. It is possible that a son or daughter of Ilthmar's overlord would be considered eligible for marriage to another city's noble but the union would lack the value of, say, Overlord Movar's son or an heir to Lankhmar's throne. Ilthmar threatens no one so it never needs to be appeased. No marriages of alliance are necessary. Worse still, with the vast trade between Lankhmar and the Eight Cities, Ilthmar will always be considered the poor cousin. It might be the hub of many trade routes but it has nothing on the trade relationship of the City of the Black Toga and Kvarch Nar. In land trade, Ilthmar dominates any other nation but Kvarch Nar and Lankhmar are flourishing port cities, leaving land trade to lesser merchants and doing most of their massive trade with one another on fleets of merchant vessels sailing across the Inner Sea. This reduces the eligibility of the marriageable members of Ilthmar's noble class by some degree, at least to outsiders.

Within Ilthmar's walls, the overlord's rule is absolute. While no ruler has yet cracked down on lawlessness, the taxations are enforced with rigid, ruthless intensity. It is likely that crime simply does not concern any but the most idealistic of Ilthmarish overlords. So as long as their own coffers remain full, the issue is not a problem for the upper classes. If the criminal elements of the city ever found a way to put a dent in the collected taxes, there would likely be blood on the streets. No overlord would take such a slight without seeking either justice or revenge and recompense.

The overlord does not possess the same large armies under his command as the Overlord of Lankhmar. Instead, Ilthmar's ruler

calls upon a significantly smaller royal guard, reinforced by the local soldiery (several hundred-strong) stationed in barracks.

The Ruling Council of Ilthmar

A related possibility would be for Ilthmar to have a council that oversees political decisions rather than a single overlord for the city. Games Masters with a penchant for political games will find this possibility offers the most leeway for scheming and plotting, with shifting alliances, broken promises and usurped council seats serving as the bulk of the campaign's storylines. With any number of councillors, each sharing the responsibility and largesse that would otherwise be enjoyed by a lone overlord, ambitious members will always try to get an edge over their colleagues. That means assassins will see a lot of employment, hired sell-swords will dispatch nobles in waylaying ambushes under the orders of aristocratic rivals and it will be extremely busy to spend time in the courts of Ilthmar. There is only so much money to go around and the efforts of the high and mighty to claim what they can will be redoubled.

With a council made up of nobles or merchants, the governing body of Ilthmar is likely to be deadlocked or divided on many issues, even the introduction of new taxes. Each aristocrat or trader prince will have his own agenda and interests, many of which are likely to be financial. Overall, Ilthmar's nobles will probably butt heads over matters of prestige and social station as well as trade issues, while merchants focus principally on matters of coin. Rivalry for respect and money (as well as the allocation of the city's mass-taxes) will be cause for a great deal of infighting between the ruling class. With the exception of hired outsiders such as mercenaries, assassins and thieves, these are battles that the populace will rarely know anything about.

Just as Lankmar's Guild of Grain Merchants holds a large measure of power in the city, Ilthmar's Wine Merchant's Guild will likely hold the same type of influence in their city. Games Masters who prefer the Ruling Council system should bear in mind that any body of powerful merchants and aristocrats will probably number a majority of wine merchants, grown rich on the trade of Ilthmar's many fine wines to other cities.

The Archpriest of Ilthmar

Ilthmar is mentioned many times in the *Swords* tales as being a very religious city with emphasis on its people worshipping and revering their rat-god and shark-god. It stands to reason that the government may not be overseen by a single monarch or a ruling council but rather be formed into a theocratic body. In this case, Ilthmar will be ruled by a council of cultists, almost certainly led by an elected archpriest who makes the final decisions.

This has endless potential for Games Masters who are running campaigns that deal with Ilthmar. The strange cults of the city that are filled with devout animal-worshippers are enigmatic and mysterious enough but coupled with an archpriest holding supreme power in the city, any time spent in Ilthmar begins to

have a very sinister atmosphere about it. It is the city of people who worship rats and sharks, after all – and they are ruled by the most pious fundamentalist in the form of the archpriest.

The atmosphere of an archpriest-ruled Ilthmar will be further flavoured by the animal cult the religious leader belongs to: either shark or rat. The rat-god is by far the most popular among the citizens and the associated cult holds more sway among society and has many more members than the other. However, there is always the possibility that a charismatic leader will rise to ascendancy from the cult of the shark-god and take the position of archpriest.

Ultimately the Games Master might decide that whichever god the ruler worships has no bearing on his vision for the city. Or perhaps it makes an insidious difference that cannot be ignored...

Archpriest of the Rat-God

With the rat cult in a position of power, Ilthmar becomes a city of filth and secrets. This is the Ilthmar most Nehwonians know and loathe.

The nobility, who are likely to be as pious as any other souls among the population, emerge from their rat-honouring sermons every week or even every day and take to secretive plotting to remove their rivals. Infighting is common, with many assassinations taking the form of poisonings and secret murders where the victims' bodies are never found. If the bodies are found, they are usually picked clean down to the bones by vermin.

Disease is rife in the streets – not a constant presence in the life of most Ilthmars but definitely coming in frequent enough outbreaks every few months to unnerve any casual visitor into leaving before too long. Ilthmar's reputation as a place of filth and vermin intensifies during these periods, though plague rarely breaks out severely enough to disrupt trade, generally being confined to certain quarters of the city.

Archpriest of the Shark-God

With the shark cult in a position of power, Ilthmar becomes a city of murder and revenge through cold-hearted justice. Aspects of this Ilthmar are present in the common stereotypes of the city, only now they rise to prominence.

The nobility turn their infighting into vicious confrontations, where duels, scandals and crimes of passion are much more common than plots, poisonings or secret assassinations. Some even go to war with one another on their estates outside the city, though most remain within Ilthmar's walls and sacrifice blood-offerings to the shark god to make their rivals suffer.

The streets remain relatively filthy and lawless but criminals are punished much more severely. Even minor acts such as theft

or even slander against a noble are punished by execution. Over time, the murky waters of Ilthmar's harbour are turned red-brown by the sheer number of condemned souls fed to the dozens and dozens of sharks that await the next execution feeding frenzy. Lawlessness is never really reigned in, no matter how harsh the penalties become. New thieves and throat-slicers always appear to fill the alleys and side streets, replacing those that died awful deaths for their crimes.

Ilthmar Justice

No matter how the city is ruled, Ilthmarish justice remains well known across the world of Nehwon for its swiftness and its barbarism. Execution is the penalty for many crimes, which results in the condemned criminal being eaten alive by the sharks of Ilthmar docks. Massive crowds gather to watch these executions, with bets shouted and money wagered on how long

any given victim can survive before losing a limb, being pulled under the water for good or simply pulled apart completely until his screams end.

Perhaps at one point these executions were supposed to act as deterrents for criminals. Now, beyond the main purpose of appeasing the shark-god and offering blood and souls in worship to him, the only other drive behind these grisly executions is their appeal to the masses as a popular bloodsport. It is believed agents of the government actually blend in with the crowds on execution days, amassing money for the city leaders by betting with the masses and driving up the odds in order to make a profit.

A by-product of the shark host cutting through the cold waters of the harbour is the fact that any sailors or dockworkers that fall in by accident are likely to die. This also serves as a great amusement for the people lining the docks, who miss no opportunity to wager on the survival (or rather more commonly, the number of seconds before death) of any unfortunate soul who falls into the water. Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser experienced this nasty and vicious game themselves when arriving in Ilthmar on the collapsing *Black Treasurer*. They received no help at all, instead hearing the jeers and cheers of the people wagering on the dock while the two heroes fought for their lives against the harbour's toothy, ever-hungry predators.

Religion in Ilthmar

Religion is the third of the three things Ilthmar is renowned for, after the filth and the unnervingly vicious crime rate. As in many other respects, religion in Ilthmar comes across as a dirtier, darker version of religion in Lankmar. Where the Lankmarts worship a host of saints and godlets on the Street of the Gods, auditioning and discovering new ones as older deities fall out of favour, Ilthmarts pay mass-worship to the inhuman rat- and shark-gods. The menace and eeriness behind these cults cannot be overstated. The Gods of Lankmar, those brown-boned mummies wrapped in leathery skin and scraps of ancient black togas, are rarely spoken of and worshipped even less often by the people of their city. Ilthmar seems to have no similar sense of fear or any shame regarding its faith in its own sinister gods. Instead, the city celebrates them.

Statues, mosaics, bas-reliefs and murals of the rat-god are everywhere in Ilthmar. The statues themselves, as befitting the unscrupulous and tight-fisted nature of the Ilthmarts themselves,



are rarely made of precious metal or marble, with plain stone or low-quality bronze being the most common material used. In the wealthier districts of the city, the mosaics have less dirt ingrained between each tiny tile, the murals are kept cleaner and the statues are better made, using quality stone and in some extremely rare cases even marble or gold.

These images, whether crudely done or the work of a master artist, all depict a gigantic rat, often man-sized, with black eyes and dark fur. There is rarely any glorification in an icon of the rat-god – Ilthmars seem to accept the creature as the king of vermin and attribute no greater virtues or glory to it. To outsiders, the religion itself is dirty and confusing. To Ilthmars it is just the way of things. Civilisation is filthy by its nature. Cities are dirty places. Humans live alongside rats more than any other creature, both races sharing the cities of Nehwon in vast populations, while all other animals are kept at bay by towering walls. The rat cult of Ilthmar accepts these things as unchangeable truths and welcomes rodent vermin within the city in return for the rat-god's favour. Games Masters may wish to take this a step further, playing up Ilthmar's famed dirtiness by highlighting the fact that trash and detritus are left to rot in alleys and on the streets, perhaps in honour of the rats and their rodent deity.

The shark-god occupies a similar role; his physical representations are welcomed into the harbour and fed very well indeed with the blood and flesh of Ilthmar's criminals. The Inner Sea has a large shark population, though the largest swarms of these underwater predators are seen around the coasts of Ilthmar and the waters nearby. The sharks of the harbour are large and healthy (benefits of a good diet) and the terrifying feeding frenzies that result from multiple executions are considered holy to the shark-god, who is believed to bless Ilthmar's docks and vessels – or at least remain appeased to do them no harm.

Statues and mosaics of the shark-god are nowhere near as common as those to the rat-god. They are most commonly found down on the docks, though certain merchant families occasionally erect a shark statue in their grounds for luck or out of piety.

The Underworld of Ilthmar

Lankhmar's Thieves' Guild sets the exemplary standard for criminal organisations in all of Nehwon. Ilthmar, darker and dirtier than its Inner Sea cousin in all ways, has a somewhat less cohesive underworld but one that is all the more vicious and violent for that fact. What Ilthmar's lawless souls lack in organisation, they more than make up for in diligence and ferocity.

Much of the city's reputation as a den of filth and villainy comes from the scum that lurk on the streets. The thieves and muggers of Ilthmar are not governed by intelligent and forward-thinking guild leaders the way Lankhmart criminals are. Instead, rather than thievery becoming a vocation (albeit

Ilthmar's Atmosphere

Games Masters have a powerful tool for atmosphere when dealing with or describing the city's religions. Only in Ilthmar could several hundred people watch sharks turn the churning water red, feasting on live prisoners and each other when the frenzy reaches its height and consider such a display holy. Displays of worship such as allowing rats to crawl around the floors of houses and feeding screaming criminals to sharks are effective ways to highlight just how different from Lankhmar Ilthmar really is in matters of faith and social attitudes. The irony is that by most people's standards, Lankhmar is bad enough. Ilthmar goes somewhat beyond the pale.

If Games Masters find in their campaigns that *players* find Ilthmar interesting but that their *characters* are edgy about remaining there for any length of time, it is likely that they are hitting the mood perfectly. Most travellers have to come through Ilthmar at some point but few do so with any joy at the prospect. The fervency of the inhuman religions can make it uncomfortable for almost anyone not raised in the region. Bloodsports exist elsewhere but even the victims of the gladiatorial pits in Ool Hrusp get the chance to fight back against their fate, unlike those sacrificed to the sharks of Ilthmar. Even Lankhmar's cobblestone slum-streets are swept clean by the owners of the stores and tenements who take care of the areas outside their doors. In Ilthmar, trash accumulates in the streets, often ground into the muddy roads by coastal rainfall. The only souls who feel no discomfort at spending time in Ilthmar are likely jaded to poverty, filth and suffering or inured because they were raised in similar conditions.

a lowly and unscrupulous one) as it is in Lankhmar, mugging and alley-bashing is the recourse of the desperate, the brutish and occasionally the deranged. There are no standards to adhere to, no guild-mandated code of conduct and little fear of the law. The law in Ilthmar is certainly stricter and better enforced than in Lankhmar but the sheer number of criminals means that the constables are overstretched and overworked and the odds greatly favour the thieves. With no Thieves' Guild educating the unskilled or killing the unnecessarily brutish members of the trade, Ilthmar's streets are packed with people who clumsily slit throats for a living and earn their wage by taking coin-purses off corpses. Truly skilled thieves and murderers do exist, of course. It is just that the number of unskilled amateurs is something completely unseen in Lankhmar and other cities.

Games Masters can use this fact to scale their criminal antagonists according to the skills and competency of their Player Characters. The plain fact is that adventurers in Ilthmar

will fall foul of criminals at some point, be they cutpurses or throat-cutters intent on stealing the characters' coin. The skill level of these antagonists is likely to vary wildly from one to the next, with one being a veteran of the streets who has made his living by pick-pocketing in taverns for over a decade and another being an excitable amateur with a stolen sword and no guilt about ending lives with it.

Whether characters are dealing with experienced criminals or careless amateurs, the largest benefit to confronting Ilthmar thieves over Lankmar thieves is that if the adventurers kill their assailants, there is no vigilant Thieves' Guild ready to wreak revenge for the slaying. It also means that for characters who take to thievery themselves, there is no Master Thief needing to be paid off with kickbacks for the 'privilege' of working independently, nor is there a guild coffer to be filled with a percentage of each take.

Ilthmar offers a great deal of competition for thieves. It also offers unrivalled freedom. There is a Thieves Guild in Ilthmar, which is detailed on page 117 of the *Guilds and Cults* chapter.

The Hospitality of Taverns

Ilthmarish wine is noted for its quality, coming in various tastes and textures from light to bubbly to fruitful and all fetching great profits when exported to taverns and the tables of noble families in other cities. In Ilthmar, the vigorous wine trade means that even gutter-taverns and dockside inns usually have excellent wine selections – and the drinking establishments in the richer areas of the city offer wine fit for the Overlord of Lankmar and the King of Kings in distant Horborixen.

It is a stark paradox then that wine of such quality is quaffed by the patrons of Ilthmar's taverns, since theft does not only occur on the streets. A large number of Ilthmar's many taverns and travel-inns cater to wanderers, adventurers and merchant caravans and also do a brisk trade in robbing the unwary of their coin. Sleeping in an inn is safer by far than spending a night on the streets, though depending on the establishment, it is hardly a guarantee of honest clientele and a restful night.

Night-murders are not common in Ilthmar inns, though they happen with enough frequency that they are gossiped about often enough and are something of a legend to many visitors. Tales told of landlords slipping poison or sleeping draughts into nightcaps or suffocating sleepers with a pillow do the rounds every once in a while. Sometimes the tales are bloodier and in these cases, the city watch have been known to get involved. In cases of innocence, murderous tavern staff are usually fine. In instances of guilt, the landlord and any workers in on the scheme are likely to feed the sharks at dawn. Bribery does not always work as easily or smoothly as in Lankmar – Ilthmar needs a steady supply of criminals to appease the shark-god, after all.

Most landlords that stoop to such tactics in order to rob their customers are careful to choose the kind of visitors that are

unlikely to return to the city in the future. A merchant with a fat coin-purse who makes regular trips through Ilthmar might make a good target for mugging by street thugs but to rob him while he sleeps (or worse, kill him and take the money) is a less desirable notion for most tavern landlords. The rich victim is unlikely to return to a tavern where his money was stolen on a previous journey and if he is slain there will be no further journeys at all. When choosing victims for night-slayings or room-robblings, landlords tend to focus on short-stay customers who are simply travelling through Ilthmar on the road to elsewhere. That way, if the victim dies, there is little loss of any potential future trade.

The majority of short-stay customers moving on to other things are, of course, adventurers. That means Player Characters fall right in the range of preferred targets for this kind of crime. If vagabonds and sell-swords turn up dead in their beds with their coin stolen, few Ilthmars will bat an eyelid.

The Black Shark

A faded sign, washed by years of wet coastal winds and rainstorms, swings in the breeze. Originally sporting the image of a black shark curled around the stylised writing of the tavern name, the wooden sign now shows a greyish blur with streaks of mould growing in the grain lines of the wood. The tavern is close enough to the docks for you to hear the sloshing of the filthy harbour water against the piers. Once you go inside, the raucous noise drowns out the outside world, immersing you in a dimly-lit atmosphere smelling of spilled wine. The tables are made from flat wooden boards resting on standing barrels and there are three dozen drinkers talking and shouting... and three dozen ill-concealed knives glinting in the torchlight.

The Black Shark (named after a legend of the shark-god's avatar swimming in Ilthmar harbour on midwinter night) is a perfect example of Ilthmar's dangerous dockside taverns. The decoration (what there is of it) takes the form of chunks of sunken ships taken from the harbour, old score sheets from betting on the executions and a portion of the wall much-nicked from knife-throwing contests.

On any given night, characters entering the Black Shark can expect to find a bustling crowd of sailors, thieves and pirates, many of who will be betting on dice games or knife contests. Hustlers work the port area, known to the locals but still finding work fleecing travellers and visitors out of their coin by pretending to be unskilled and suddenly raising their game when the big bets are laid down.

The bullies employed by the landlord are quick to use their fists and boots in a fight but they only do so if the staff are threatened by any altercations that break out. Even murders are tolerated in the bar brawls that go on here, since a killing results in the body being dragged outside a short way and dumped into the harbour. Clever characters might even use the tavern (or a similar ale house) as a means of literally getting away with



murder, since the authorities simply never find out about the deaths that go on here.

Where other establishments might fret about the destruction of furniture, since most of the tables and chairs are scavenged with driftwood and detritus from the docks and slapped together with a few nails, the landlord sheds no tears over any wreckage resulting from a fight. In fact, most customers with an eye for improvised weapons find The Black Shark an interesting battlefield with plenty of possibilities.

The Rampant Buck

The tavern's large glassless windows stream yellow light into the street, coupled with the sounds of drinking, talking and general good cheer. The sign above the door shows a rearing stag, proudly-antlered and the name of the establishment written in the wood in burned-in letters. Outside, a burly man with an iron-shod club hanging off his belt nods to you as you walk in. 'Welcome to the Buck,' he says with a slight nod of his head.

The Rampant Buck is one of Ilthmar's finer establishments, which means it boasts fine wines and criminals that behave themselves while inside. Order is enforced by the fact that the clientele tend towards the wealthier and more 'civilised' end of society, as well as half a dozen armed bouncers who are all veteran ex-mercenaries.

The prices are high for Ilthmar but the wine really is of the best quality – many of the labels seen behind the bar here are also seen

on the table of Glipkerio Kistomerces, Overlord of Lankhmar, as well as in the dining rooms of the Imperishable City's richest moneylenders and grain merchants.

The Rampant Buck is (perhaps surprisingly) not known for its snobbery. While it has a reputation for cleanliness and order right along with its high prices and quality wine, it is a venue where anyone with the necessary coin is welcomed and served by pretty, slender serving girls who also double as courtesans in the private rooms upstairs. Many notables in the Wine Merchants' Guild drink coffee or light wine here while they discuss business.

Astorian's Light

The sounds of fighting are evident as soon as you come near the place. A sign, fallen from its perch and propped up against the front wall of the tavern, shows a brightly-painted star ringed by the words 'Astorian's Light' in smooth-lettered script. Inside, the heavenly name seems even less appropriate, with bare-knuckle fighting taking place in a sand-floored corner and a raucous, noisy bar filled with what look like fighting men of every stripe – slender dirksmen, towering axemen, scarred men who are likely retired soldiers and younger men, still really boys, who carry new weapons in unmarked scabbards. The majority of the clientele are somewhere in-between, scarred with experience and still close to their prime, whether shy of it by a few years, enjoying it currently or inching past it day by day.

The loftily-named Astorian's Light (named after the brightest star in the Nehwonian night skies) is in Ilthmar's expansive slums, which take up most of the city. The tavern is a well-known haunt for mercenaries and adventurers, popular for the entertainments on offer and because the landlord and his serving wenches have never appeared to have intentions on the lives of their customers. Accordingly, the only designs on their customers' coin-purses are legal in nature, encouraging the spending of ale money, betting on the fights going on in the sanded corner or buying the favour of the barmaids for an evening.

Astorian's Light is rough. Brawls are very common because the wine is so cheap and tempers flare among fighting men whether they are drunk or not, anyway. Adventurers looking for a quiet inn (or even one with the usual amount of violence) should look elsewhere. Whenever a brawl starts out, the regulars are quick to shove the combatants into the sand-floored corner where they can fight it out and bets can be made on the outcome. The most common fights there are bare-knuckle battles, pre-arranged between combatants of the semi-professional, largely underground Ilthmar fist-boxing scene. Customers (as long as they have purchased at least one drink) are welcome to join in and have bouts free of charge.

Very rarely, a fight will involve weapons and end in the death of a fighter. Since several of the regulars here are burly members of the city watch who are involved in the fist-fighting tournaments, they are easily bribed into silence by the landlord, who hires porters to take the bodies to the harbour and dump them in the water. The fees for this service are surprisingly high upon first consideration, though given the dangers of getting caught by the city guard in Ilthmar's streets carrying a corpse, the 'danger money' is a necessity.

Games Masters may find that players of combative characters want to get involved with the fist-fighting tourneys that go on here. The rewards for success in these contests are far above what local labourers will earn but the landlord takes a hefty 25% cut of the profits which he jokingly refers to as 'the fight tax'. Money is made betting on oneself to win, with the tavern owner taking all wagers and paying out honestly each time, right after the fight is finished. Fight fixing has been heard of at times in the past, though offenders that are discovered trying to arrange the results of matches or bribe fighters into taking falls are given severe beatings and barred from ever entering the tavern again.

The Pilgrim's Rest

The cracked sign shows a crude approximation of a bed with a white pillow and blue blanket. An expansive side alley reaches to a fenced-off yard around the back, clearly a place for storing coaches and wagons. Snickering and whinnying horses can be heard from the yard, where a large stable is kept. Double doors at the front of the timber and white-painted building are always open unless faced with the harshest gales. To all outward appearances, this five-storey inn seems to emanate welcoming warmth to any weary traveller, while the scent of good food indicates the handiwork of a skilled cook and a busy kitchen.

The Pilgrim's Rest represents the vicious irony found in many of Ilthmar's 'treacherous taverns'. Despite being a welcoming establishment with good ale, affordable wine of high quality and bullies that enforce order in all but the mildest and good-natured of bar brawls, the Pilgrim's Rest has a secret. It is not simply a great place for merchants to pull up their wagons for a night before selling stock the following day – it is also a murderous den where customers of a certain type are lucky to leave with their lives.

Merchants and nobles who stay here are generally safe. Adventurers and lone travellers are prime victims, often falling prey to the landlord's murderous greed. The beds of certain rooms (saved for potential victims) are positioned with their headboards against an adjoining wall. The landlord or one of the staff can enter the room next-door while the victim sleeps, slide back a secret panel in the wooden wall and quietly loop a strangling cord around the throat of the sleeping victim as he lies abed.

Obviously, if this happened too often the local gossip would have travellers steering clear of the Pilgrim's Rest as if it were a plague pit but the exact opposite is true. Many merchant customers return to the establishment over and over again, which helps spread the sterling reputation of the place. Local beggars and gossip-mongers are heavily bribed into also praising the inn when travellers come asking for a decent place to stay. They are paid with leftover food from the kitchens each night and sometimes allowed to sleep in the stables if they are not full, which goes a lot further than a few coins in the eyes of most beggars.

Taxation

Ilthmar's taxes are legendary across Nehwon. The money-grubbing city leaders have a reputation for bleeding visitors and residents alike dry of every coin they can find a tax for. The common joke is that even breathing is taxed in Ilthmar. Depending on the government in power and the current level of taxes, few Ilthmars laugh at such jests.

Residents pay taxes according to the number of heads in a household, much as in Lankhmar. The vast number of petty taxes to be paid in Ilthmar would daunt any Games Master that attempted to enforce them. Instead, consider adding a few Tiks, Agols or Smerduks onto anything the characters pay for: if the item or service costs Tiks, then add extra Tiks, if it costs Agols, add Agols. This method neatly represents the expenses of Ilthmar, which are usually levied through purchases anyway.

The following taxes are the exceptions to that general rule and must be paid separately.

Gate Tax

Entering Ilthmar by any of the city gates levies a toll of one Smerduk per person, one Agol per horse and one Rilk per wagon. Leaving Ilthmar again necessitates the exact same payment. Bribing one's way out of these payments is next to impossible, with a -50% to -90% to any Influence checks, depending on the number of guards present at the gate. The more guards on duty, the less likely it is that the already-difficult bribe will be well-received.

Weapon Tax

Carrying weapons in Ilthmar is perfectly legal, provided the character has paid the tax to do so. It costs three Smerduks – paid upon entry – and the character receives a coin-sized leather token imprinted with the rat-god's image. The city watch are empowered to stop anyone and demand that the token be shown. Those without tokens are offered the choice of paying one Rilk to purchase another one immediately or to stand trial for disturbing the peace, which comes with a fine of up to thirty gold Rilks if found guilty (which is almost certain).

Resisting arrest is cause for 1D6 years of indentured servitude. Causing the death of a watchman while resisting arrest is cause for execution.

Mandatory Tithes

Street preachers exalting the rat-god in fervent cries have the authority to demand tithes from those they come across. Since the tithes are usually in the region of a handful of Tiks or a few Agols, most Ilthmarts of a pious nature will not flee into side alleys or convenient shop doorways and will simply pay the tithe in return for the rat-god's blessing (or appeasement). Impious Ilthmarts and visitors are less thrilled with the chance to offer up money to mandatory tithes, especially considering that preachers walking the streets of Ilthmar are hardly rare by any stretch of the imagination. Religious donations have bankrupted more than one adventurer over the years.

Adventures in Ilthmar

The unique atmosphere of Ilthmar presents Games Masters and players with a variety of plot hooks and potential storylines. This section details some Ilthmar-specific ideas that readers might wish to incorporate into their campaigns.

Agents of the Throne

The characters may be in the position of working for the Ilthmar throne, whether this is a literal throne in the case of the Overlord or Archpriest or a metaphor for any council system. Agents of the throne will likely be specialised in a certain area, most likely espionage, diplomacy or assassination. Spies are tasked with entering other cities and retrieving information that will be of value to the Ilthmarish leadership. Diplomats are dispatched to other nations in order to strengthen relations and prevent hostilities. Assassins are used in areas where diplomacy has failed or greater advantage lies in treachery. Ilthmar has interests and needs in all these areas, so characters with the right skills may well be able to find employment and patronage.

A mercantile or aristocratic council will need spies to hit the streets as well as the courts of rival cities to gather local street-rumour as well as listen in on the talk of the well-born. The same council will need diplomats capable of bending the ears of powerful merchants and nobles in the name of furthering Ilthmarish profits on the Inner Sea and assassins that have no difficulty entering noble estates, fighting their way or moving unseen through dozens of guards and striking the target down either in fury or in stealth, depending on the delicacy of the situation. Sometimes guile and subterfuge matter. Other times, results are all that count.

A religious council or an archpriest likely wish for little more than the spread of the rat-god or shark-god's respective faiths, depending on the priests' allegiance. Characters of a more religious persuasion may find themselves sent to Lankhmar to improve the position of Ilthmar's rodent deity on the Street of the Gods. A tricky proposition because of the sheer unappealing

The Septinocular One

Dwelling in caves near Ilthmar is the enigmatic sorcerer, the 'Gossiper of the Gods' himself: Ningauble of the Seven Eyes. If the characters have ties to Sheelba of the Eyeless Face and Ningauble, it is much likelier that the paunchy warlock will be the one they deal with during their adventures in and around Ilthmar, purely because of his proximity to the filthy city. In the same way that Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser occasionally went to Sheelba because of his closeness to Lankhmar, Ningauble could serve as the first point of contact and sorcerous wisdom for Ilthmar-based players.

nature of the god (when Lankhmar's godlings thrive by their charismatic preachers relating all godly deeds of interest) and the situation only becomes harder in the wake of the Rat Plague. Between fending off extortionists, fellow priests and preachers and dealing with suspicious Lankhmarts who are unreceptive to the very idea of a rat deity, a campaign revolving around getting Ilthmar's chief god anywhere westward on the Street of the Gods is an uphill siege.

Belly Treasure

Given the number of ordinary sailors, travellers and plain clumsy, unlucky people that have lost their lives after falling into the dock water, coupled with the fact that sharks can and will eat anything carried by or worn by their human prey, it is almost certain many of the harbour beasts have undigested coins, jewellery, weapons and armour in their bellies.

Getting to this grim treasure is a risky but extremely rewarding prospect. Firstly, a group of adventurers will have to manage the physical challenges of actually capturing the sharks. Harpooning is probably the safest way to go about this, dragging the dying shark on board once it is impaled and slitting its belly open once it has been bled out or died gasping in the air. Even this relatively simple method, which certainly beats diving in and wrestling with the beasts, has an important secondary concern. Namely, the Ilthmarts will not take kindly to adventurers 'fishing' for sharks in their harbour. It is this kind of blasphemy that can really get a pious population's collective backs up.

As ever, where lawlessness in the name of profit is concerned, inventive and cunning Nehwonians find a way around such problems. Nighttime down at the docks is significantly less busy, so if blasphemy is on the cards it is probably best to wait until after sunset. This is when the last of the fishing vessels have tied up and their owners are drinking away their meagre profits elsewhere in the city. This leaves only the big sailing ships like merchant vessels to deal with.

On one hand, most of the crew of these ships will be in port rather than on the vessel itself and few lookouts and sentries will worry themselves about what is happening out in the harbour.

Their eyes will be on the quayside, like as not. On the other hand, Ilthmar's port is a busy one at all times of day and night, even after nightfall when the fishing fleet is docked. It is all fine and good committing secret blasphemy against the shark-god and getting rich from the bellies of his dead beasts but if a giant incoming merchant three-master smashes the characters' tiny sloop to pieces when it sails right through them into Ilthmar harbour, the scene will take an ironic turn for the worse. Any shark-hunting therefore necessitates a great deal of stealth and awareness. It is easy to see why so few adventurers would bother – the risks are pretty significant.

A final consideration that may well slip past all but the most spiritual of characters is that even if all incoming ships are avoided and the Ilthmars themselves are none the wiser about the shark-based religious desecration going on out on the nighttime waters, blasphemy is still blasphemy. The shark-god himself (or rather *itself*) may take grave offence at such behaviour.

The gods of Nehwon are not known for grand, bold curses against those who earn their displeasure. Something subtle yet undeniably cold-hearted and malicious is likely to be the shark-god's reaction to this kind of violation. Perhaps when one of the sharks is being cut open, it turns out not to be as dead as the characters believed, wrenching about and thrashing around just enough to bite off a nearby hand. Perhaps the rigging snaps under the feet of a character next time he climbs to adjust the sails and he falls into the harbour water. Perhaps he finds something he really did not want to find in one of those bloody, stinking bellies, like his lost wife's wedding ring or his father's dagger. Petty, spiteful (and frequently ironic) vengeance is the order of the day for Nehwonian deities and the shark-god is no exception.

Cultist Civil War

The two faiths generally ignore one another with cordial nonchalance. This need not always be so. Conflict between the shark- and rat-god's cultists would spread chaos and strife through Ilthmar. Neither side could generally be called humane or pleasant (at least not honestly or with a straight face) but depending on which side stoops lower, a clear 'lesser of two evils' may emerge. Sorcery and assassinations take place in the shadowy temples and murder is committed under the lifeless, staring eyes of shark and rat statues.

The rat cult, by far the more prominent and dominant of the two, might become the aggressor in this civil war if the shark faith takes a sudden rise, stealing worship from the rodent god. Likewise the shark cult could declare the secret war if the current leaders tire of the rat-god hoarding most of the respect and attention in Ilthmar. In truth, it is probably more likely if the conflict between the two faiths arises from conflicting personalities heading up both cults. Black Magic-wielding archpriests each holding personal grudges against each other can make for some thematic and frightening antagonists. Characters will have to decide which side to take, if they wish to get involved

at all. It might not be possible to stay out of matters, especially if the spells and murders start to hit the nighttime streets or the characters lose a patron or contact in the secret war. The adventurers might even take the stance that *both* cults should be deprived of their malicious leaders, embarking on a quest of infiltration, investigation and ultimately assassination.

If the magical war reaches a dangerous degree of potency, it is likely that Sheelba of the Eyeless Face and Ningauble of the Seven Eyes will get involved, especially if the warlocks have previous associations with the characters. The adventurers might even be loaned useful magic items like the Blindfold of True Seeing and the Cloak of Invisibility in order to get close to their targets.

As Sword & Sorcery stories go, hunting through an eerie temple, confronting a cult and killing the magic-wielding archpriest is about as thematic as Games Masters can get.

Ilthmar Below

Given the controversial aspects of Lankhmar Below with its civilisation of sentient rats and rat-sized people, many Games Masters may wish to axe all mention of a similar culture beneath the muddy streets of Ilthmar. It is an idea that polarises many fans of the *Swords* tales, with like and dislike running strong on both sides. Accordingly, Games Masters should be wary of including it within their campaigns set in Ilthmar because even though it seems likely that a companion 'under-city' would be found in the city of the rat-god, it is never explicitly mentioned in the source material.

The leaders of the rat city, the Supreme Thirteen (at least, those that survived the Rat Plague) generally dwell in Lankhmar Below but nothing says they cannot relocate to Ilthmar at least temporarily. Even one of the rat-rulers might be enough to lord it over the rodent culture under Ilthmar, though the sheer number of his subjects would be staggering, putting the Rat Plague in Lankhmar to shame. This is the key to running a campaign where the rats come to the surface of Ilthmar as they did in Lankhmar: the size of the rat horde here would make the Rat Plague detailed in *The Swords of Lankhmar* look like a joyous, citywide celebration. A rodent uprising in Ilthmar would flood the streets and floors of buildings with endless carpets of dirty, filthy rats.

Any such invasion occurring in Ilthmar raises a worrying question: why? This is a city that devotes a great deal of time and worship to the veneration of the rat-god. What could displease the deity so much that his children swarm the streets? Some sinful acts of the clergy? Impious leaders reigning in power?

And how would the uprising be quelled? Ilthmar has no bell-towered Black Temple of the Gods of Lankhmar to turn to for supernatural aid and canonically-speaking the whistle to summon the War-Cats is (or was) in the possession of Fafhrd. Games Masters might wish to challenge players to find their own ways of putting down the invasion, which could well make for

an interesting campaign. However, some sorcerous aid should be forthcoming, most likely in the form of a black magician in the rat-god's cult or the ever-meddling Ningauble of the Seven Eyes.

Seeds of Corruption

The idea of a Ruling or Merchant Council does not immediately present Games Masters with a host of thematic Sword & Sorcery possibilities in the way a tyrannical overlord might. Arguably, it would be better suited to campaigns geared towards exploring the political landscape, for players with a love of scheming and backstabbing their way through noble courts. However, there are always ways to return to the themes of the *Swords* tales.

The potential for immorality among the thoroughly corrupt upper classes is magnified in Ilthmar since the city itself has such a violent and black heart. While this means that most of the councillors will have skeletons in their closets (or wherever else they hide the secrets and the bodies) it also means that when these men and women fall into darker practises, they lose all shades of grey in their actions. A ruthless and ambitious council member might easily fall into learning the rituals of Black Magic in order to achieve advantages over his rivals.

Characters either working for rival councillors or merely stumbling onto the depths of the councilman's unwholesome ways are almost certainly going to have to put an end to such dark deeds before things get out of hand. If a man stoops to sorcery in order to achieve his own ends, there might be worse yet in store. What if he unleashes terrible magic on those that earn his displeasure in the future? What if his dabbling in the occult allows evil creatures or demons to gain influence over his soul?

Son of the Overlord

One of the characters with the Aristocrat Cultural Background could be the child of the Overlord of Ilthmar and potentially an heir to the throne of the filthy city. Several characters might even share the same bloodline, each with a claim to the position of overlord. Ultimately the choice of heir will come down to the current monarch's preference or the electing council's decision. Either way, as rulerships go, there are more desirable thrones in Nehwon than Ilthmar's. Blue-blooded characters seeking to escape their responsibilities might find no more apt a place to flee from than the dirty city on the east shore of the Inner Sea.

Interesting events are likely to occur around the heir to the Ilthmarish throne. Firstly, the overlord might stop at nothing to have his son returned to face his duties like a responsible adult, leaving the 'adventuring' to the commoners of Nehwon. Hired agents dispatched to capture the wayward son might include professional soldiers and explorers, local thieves, bounty hunters or even a magician.

In Ilthmar, nobility is little protection against the dangers of the streets. Killing the overlord's son or daughter is something even the Thieves' Guild of Lankhmar cannot expect to get away with in the Imperishable City but in Ilthmar life is notoriously cheaper

and harder to keep hold of. A slit throat and a body dumped in the shark-infested harbour leaves no evidence to tell any tales and many of Ilthmar's resident scum would be all too happy to butcher the overlord's own children if it meant the corpses would be carrying a few more iron Tiks than the usual prey.

Escaping responsibility to the Ilthmar court comes with its own share of problems, not all of which are immediately obvious. Royal blood (or less pleasant body matter) also sometimes plays a part in Black Magic, used as one of many esoteric spell components. It is likely that any magician seeking such a commodity would prefer to hunt down the unprotected vagabond son who is known to frequent certain taverns and keep certain acquaintances in the city (who may be bribed), rather than go through all the effort of infiltrating a castle or palace to take blood from a king while he is surrounded by hundreds of loyal guards.

The Old Faith Returns

Faiths change over time. In Lankhmar, the worship of ancient gods was banned centuries ago by the Great God and newer faiths alter with each step they take west on the Street of the Gods, with new deeds and new ideals surfacing to maintain a popular following. Ilthmar might not be so different from its larger, grander Inner Sea cousin.

Worship of the rat-god has been the official faith of Ilthmar since time out of mind but what if the form the religion exists in now hardly resembles that which has come before? What if exponents of the 'old ways' came forward and decree that all Ilthmars must return to the forgotten methods of worship?

There could be the possibility for the players to uncover that the so-called 'traditional' faith was actually a sham and its preachers were either sorcerers with some kind of evil agenda, harmless priests believing they had fallen upon an ancient truth or con artists out to corrupt as many people as possible while growing rich and fat on the proceeds.

It might be much worse if the new preachers are actually telling the truth. Their claims to have uncovered a pure strain of the faith which demands that the city become filthier and pay blood-price to the rat-god in unholy, unhealthy rites is, to put it glibly, the very last thing Ilthmar needs. It is already a city where the inhabitants dump slop buckets in the streets and rats outnumber the people not in secret but in plain sight on the streets and the floors of many houses. Disease is never far from Ilthmar's doors and this conversion back to a darker time (which was probably best left untouched and was forgotten for a good reason) could be all that is needed to pitch the city into a full plague.

Characters might discover that the resurfaced cult bears a resemblance to the Temple of the Hates in Lankhmar – a secret order dedicated to bringing about lesser suffering in order to avert greater suffering. Perhaps the diseases that spring up in the wake of the unwholesome rites are actually designed to appease

the rat-god and prevent future plagues that would devastate the city. Of course, any preacher who makes that claim is going to have a hard time convincing some people but this *is* a city where the populace worship the god of rats – and the new belief is not a million miles away from what they might easily believe. Of course this will happen much to the amazement of outsiders who, it must at least be noted, have their own beliefs that seem odd to the Ilthmars; take the Street of the Gods as an example of odd religious practices.

Sarheenmar

On the Inner Sea's eastern coast is the city-state of Sarheenmar. To the east, a mountain pass winds through the southern tip of the Barrier Mountains, past the Sea of Monsters and leads to the City of Ghouls. To the south is a road leading to Ilthmar and the Sinking Land. To the north, the road leads to Klelg Nar.

Sarheenmar, like Ilthmar, is a multicultural city, seeing visitors from all over Nehwon. The city itself is an unremarkable place, more a travel-stop for most than an actual home. Continuous sackings and razing by the Mingols sweeping down from the Steppes make living in Sarheenmar an unattractive proposition. It certainly seems to bear the brunt of the hordes' assaults and lacks the coin to hire a large enough standing army or mercenary force to form anything more than a paltry defence. Games Masters wishing to have a band of heroes set up some kind of worthy defence of Sarheenmar are going to have an epic campaign on their hands.

The City of Ghouls

After an instant's shock, Fafhrd realised these must be ghouls, whose flesh and inner organs, he had heard – with much scepticism but now no longer – were transparent except where the skin became sallow or rosily translucent on the genital organs and on the lips and small breasts of their women.

It was said also that they ate only flesh, human by preference and that it was strange indeed to watch the raw gobbets they gulped course down and churn within the bars of their ribs, gradually fading from sight as their sightless blood assimilated and transformed the food – granting that a mere normal man might ever have the opportunity to watch ghouls feast without becoming a supply of gobbets himself.
– The Swords of Lankmar

On the western coast of the Sea of Monsters, the mysterious City of Ghouls is renowned primarily not for its architecture or location but for its eerie residents. Ghouls are ostensibly human, though their flesh and innards are transparent, revealing only a thin outline of skin and leaving bare bones visible beneath. They are an exceptionally skinny and rangy folk, even counting their near-invisible flesh in the equation of physical size. The animals of the region are similar in appearance, most famously the herds of horses maintained in and around the city, often used as war mounts.

Ghouls earn their name not from an inhuman or undead state but from a propensity to eat only flesh, never bread, fruit or vegetables. The flesh they do eat must always be raw and never cooked. Some scholars insist this curious feasting is for religious reasons, others cite other barbarous traditional factors, pointing to the fact that even ghoul horses are flesh-fed and blood-hungry. Ghouls have a fearsome tendency to take their raw flesh by eating some of their human victims while still alive, biting arteries and drinking blood before feasting on the struggling skin and muscle-meat of the dying victim.

In times past, many centuries ago, ghouls were known for lurking around graveyards to eat the flesh of the dead and buried. It is believed that modern ghouls are beyond such primitive and foul desecration but the stories are still told around tavern tables and campfires. The ghouls of Nehwon's current speak High and Low Lankmarese rather than Old Ghoulish, though experts in that ancient dead tongue do still exist.

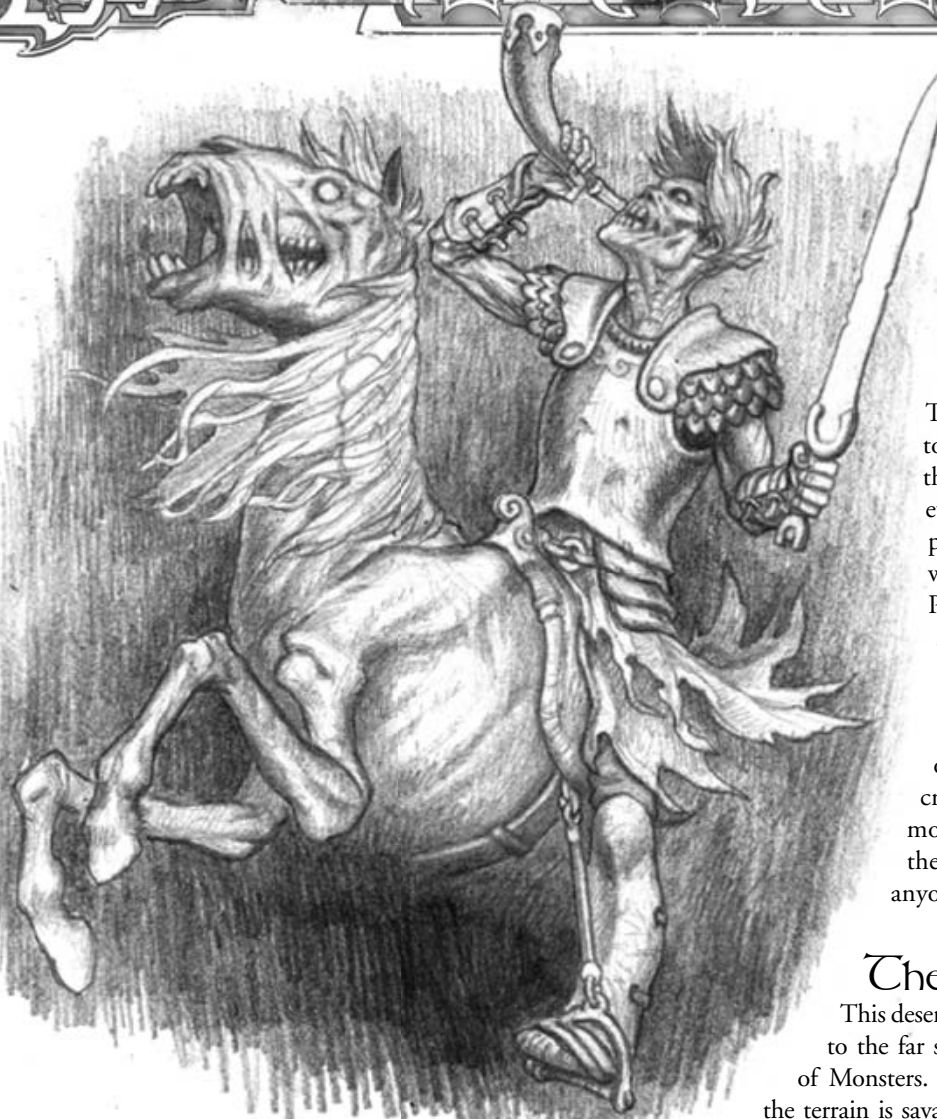
Ghoul society is warlike, with many citizens of the City of Ghouls trained in the bearing and use of weapons. The city has been known to muster armies to attack the easternmost Eight Cities on many occasions, sometimes coordinating (or at least coinciding) their assaults with the Mingols' in order to overwhelm the Eight Cities' defences. Sarheenmar suffers a burning and razing in the *Swords* novels, as the result of a three-way war between the city, the ghouls and the Mingols.

In addition to these more concerted war efforts, veteran travellers are well aware of Ghoul cavalry bands hunting down groups of humans wandering through the territory close to the City of Ghouls. As with the Mingols, the Ghouls seem to greatly respect strength and skill on the field of battle.

Ghouls

The ghouls are somewhere between human and monstrous in nature. They eat flesh (preferably human flesh from live victims) and they are a race noted for their violent ways and eagerness to butcher people in unprovoked wars. With their transparent flesh, they appear as little more than bones; a trait that has somehow passed on to their horses. When the horns of war sound from the ghoulish battle lines, a legion of skeletons ride skeletal steeds towards their foes – a sight that is, put bluntly, terrifying.

Fafhrd had a short relationship with a ghoul woman, Kreeshkra, after slaughtering her allies and kidnapping her – neither of which she seemed overly concerned about. After making love, speaking for several hours and him only leaving her with great reluctance (the Mouser was in dire need of his assistance), Kreeshkra was still tempted to plant an arrow in his back as he rode away. Here, the *Swords* tales present us with the most 'sympathetic' ghoul character we meet in the entire saga. With the source material to go by it is easy to see how normal humans can hate and fear the ghouls so fervently.



The City of Ghouls is never explained or revealed in any detail at all. It is highly probable that humans are barred from ever entering, given the undisclosed mystery of the place and the fact that when Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser go seeking Kreeshkra near there, ghoulish riders repeatedly chase them away. This means that Games Masters have free reign to flavour the ghouls as beastly or as unknowable as they desire for their own campaigns. If the ghouls are enigmatic and secretive, play up what little most Nehwonians know of them. If the ghouls are ravenous, flesh-hungry monsters with only a grudging ability to remain human (and humane) at times, that will work, too. Flipping between the two is a neat way of preserving the suspense when encountering these rare and frightening beings.

Ghoul Non-Player Characters are created as normal, as are any other ghoulish creatures that Games Masters wish to create. The only difference is their physical appearance, aggressive traits and the need to eat raw flesh.

The Parched Mountains

The Parched Mountains are an arid, inhospitable, almost supernaturally barren range of imposing peaks and crags. They stand on the border of Shadowland, between that region and the

Poisoned Desert to the south and the City of Ghouls to the east, warding all sane mortals away from entering Death's dark realm. Dead trees long expired from thirst are occasionally seen here and there but mostly it is clear that little plant life was ever born in this dusty, rocky soil at all.

The top of the mountain range begins to the east of the Sea of Monsters, while the tail end of the chain stretches south even past the Poisoned Desert. Two passes cut through these murderous, waterless mountains. The Northern Pass, once used by the Grey Mouser in the *Swords* novels, is located east of the Sea of Monsters. The Southern Pass, once used by Fafhrd in the same story, is located in the northwest part of the Poisoned Desert. All other crossings take a traveller over harsh mountainous terrain and add days to the journey – days that spell death for anyone without a goodly supply of water.

The Poisoned Desert

This desert is an expanse of arid and lifeless plains to the far southwest of Shadowland and the Sea of Monsters. Travellers rarely venture here because the terrain is savage on any wanderer and to the direct northwest is the Parched Mountains – an equally barren patch of Nehwon and uncomfortably close to Death's realm.

The Eastern Lands

Split by the crop-watering, trade-giving River Tilth, the Eastern Lands are formed from plains and deserts in equal measure. They are situated to the southeast of Ilthmar and to the south of the Poisoned Desert. Little is said of the Eastern Lands in the *Swords* novels, though it is known that the land is split again by the great range called the Mountains of the Elder Ones, which legends state are at least partially the remains or the stone tombs of dead gods.

Horborixen

The capital of the Eastern Lands is smaller than Lankhmar but in many ways grander. Its wealth is displayed in beautiful architecture and the arts of the most skilled craftsmen and women in the wide world of Nehwon. The capital itself, sheltering the Great Golden Palace at its centre, is known by the grand title of Horborixen, Citadel-City of the King of Kings.

The King of Kings has absolute and ultimate power over the people of Horborixen. He has the right to claim any woman he

finds pleasing and have her brought to his harem to live until he tires of her. No protest can be made – at least not if the protester wishes to avoid an execution. The King of Kings extends his powers of life and death over his subjects to the point where none in his presence, ‘even his own vizier or most-beloved son or favourite queen,’ are allowed to speak the name of Death’s realm, Shadowland, and escape with their lives after uttering it. Instant execution is the lot of any soul speaking the word within earshot of the ruler of the Eastern Lands.

Games Masters will note that this is a perfect example of the unstable, often insane rulers holding the thrones of Nehwon’s lands. Clearly, Lankmar’s Radomix Kistomercus-Null was a wild exception in the world’s long line of spineless, mad and corrupt kings. This is probably part of the reason why Death took such a personal exception to the peaceable scholar-king of the Imperishable City.

Tisilinilit

A distant outpost of the Eastern Lands is the mystic city of Tisilinilit. The architecture is unique among Nehwonese cities, with slender, towering, opalescent spires bedecked with colourful banners. Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser travel through Tisilinilit, perhaps purely for the joy of seeing it first-hand but do not adventure there.

Empire of Eevamareensee

To the far, far reaches of the east lies the diminished and diplomatically-subtle Empire of Eevamareensee. Information is scarce regarding the nation beyond its weak and ineffectual presence among the kingdoms of Nehwon. It was once a great empire with claims to large tracts of Nehwon’s land, though it is now a skeletally-shrunken echo of its former glory. Curiously, the empire is described as ‘so decadent, so far-grown into the future, that all the rats and men are bald and even the dogs and cats are hairless.’

Little information is provided of the empire in the *Swords* novels. Little in the way of adventure seems to be on offer in the region, at least if the travels of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser are anything to judge by.

Shadowland

The heavy overcast, which began at the watershed of the Parched Mountains, thickened, though not a drop of rain or atom of mist fell. The air was cool and moist and, nourished perhaps by underground water of most distant source, thick green grass grew and an open forest of black cedars sprang up. Herds of black antelopes and black reindeer nibbled the endless grass to a lawn, yet there were no herdsmen or human folk at all. The sky grew darker yet, almost a perpetual night, odd low hills topped by congeries of black rock appeared, there were distant fires of many hues, though none blue and each vanished if you approached it and you found no ash or

other sign of it at its site. So the Mouser and Fafhrd well knew they had entered the Shadowland, death-feared by the merciless Mingols to the north, by the bone-proud, invisible-fleshed ghouls to the west...

– The Price of Pain-Ease

The Shadowland, set in the northeast of Nehwon and ringed by the Parched Mountains, is the realm of Death himself. One of Nehwon’s greater Powers, answerable only to the invisible forces of Chance and Necessity, Death resides here in a black castle, watching over the souls he has claimed and choosing, one by one, the lives he will end in the future.

Adventuring in the Shadowland is a grim prospect at best and a horrifying one at worst. Characters might come face to face with their dead loved ones or slain enemies or worst of all, attract the attention of Death himself. In the case of the latter occurrence, Death is likely to take great offence at being confronted in his own realm. There is no proof or defence against Death – if he decrees that a man dies, the man immediately dies – though heroes occupy a special place in Death’s attentions and he is loath to kill them without arranging to do so in some grand and amusing fashion.

The Black Pavilions

Dotted around the Shadowland are dark-cloth tents, luxurious in craft, slightly wetted by the endless light drizzle that marks the unchanging weather in Death’s realm. These pavilions are home to the spirits of the dead, wherein each soul appears gaunt, slightly blue of skin and at times unnaturally still. Living mortals that come to the Shadowland have been known to enter these tents in order to speak with the shades of their dead loved ones and companions, though it is unknown by Nehwonese scholars whether the pavilions exist for everyone in fixed places or whether a man will only find the tents of those shades relating to his life.

No one has successfully ‘rescued’ a dead soul from the pavilions and returned it to the lands outside Death’s dark country. Strangely, all souls seem calm and content with their lot; perhaps with death comes an acceptance of mortality.

Death’s Castle

Blue flame, silent as the grave, flares up from the towering central chimney of an ‘open-gated, open-doored, low, vast black castle on a low long hill’. This is Death’s home, his black granite palace, where he reclines on his throne and decides the deaths of all Nehwonese mortals.

Visitors may or may not find Death at home, depending on what Nehwon’s least of the Three Great Powers is doing. If he is in residence, he might be open for conversation or he might decide to strangle any intruders in a fit of pique. Death is a being not known for his predictability and it is difficult to work out what such an alien and godlike being is thinking or what mood he is in.

THE NORTHLANDS & BEYOND

The themes of the Forest Land, the Cold Waste and Rime Isle are different from the heavy urbanisation of Lankhmar and Ilthmar. This section is designed to give Games Masters some ideas when their characters venture into the Land of the Eight Cities and the frozen north beyond. Civilisation peters out, settlements become more rare, the beasts of the wild become bolder, stronger and more monstrous and finally a traveller reaches Rime Isle – a place many Nehwonians believe to be no more than a myth.

Land of the Eight Cities

The common room was another wonder of polished wood – Movarl's kingdom was so young that its forests were still its chief wealth. Most of the windows showed green leaves close beyond. From walls and ceiling jutted fantastic demons and winged warrior maidens all wood-carved. Here and there against the wall leaned beautifully polished bows and spears. A wide doorway led out to a narrow courtyard where a bay stallion moved restlessly under an irregular green roof. The city of Kvarch Nar had twenty times as many mighty trees as homes.

– The Swords of Lankhmar

In the vast woodlands north of the Inner Sea and south of the Cold Waste, a nation of scattered city-states exists, thriving on trade with Lankhmar and a lively lumber industry. The Forest Land, Land of the Eight Cities, sprawls across the north of known Nehwon.

The region is one of deep forests offering endless wilderness adventures, surrounded by danger. The hostile tundra of the Cold Waste lies to the north, accessible through treacherous mountain passes. The pirate-laden waters of the Inner Sea are to the south, thick with merchant ships, freebooters and even sea serpents. To the east are the ever-present twin threats of the Mingol hordes and the armies of the ghouls, both of whom regularly prey on the easternmost of the Eight Cities.

Much of the architecture in the Land of the Eight Cities is shaped and cured wood. Almost all buildings in the city-states are created of timber, with lumber being the principal foundation of the Forest Land's economy. Successful timber merchants in, say, Kvarch Nar are the local equivalent of grain merchants in Lankhmar.

The Land of the Eight Cities is made up of eight city-states unified by an overlord who rules from Kvarch Nar, the largest of the settlements. He is served in turn by dukes appointed to govern each of the other city-states. During the *Swords* tales, this

overlord is Movarl, who is revealed to have a friendly relationship with Overlord Gliplerio Kistomerces of Lankhmar, even if the two nations are not exactly allied. Trade flows between the two nations across the Inner Sea, with Kvarch Nar and Lankhmar doing more trade with one another than any other cities in the world.

To Lankhmarts, no civilised settlement outside of Lankhmar itself truly deserves the title of 'city'. This rings true beyond a mere sense of Lankhmarese superiority, as no other city rivals Lankhmar in size and the Eight Cities themselves are more akin to large towns by any fair measurement. The settlements that make up the Eight Cities are: Illik-Ving, Gnamph Nar, Klelg Nar, Kvarch Nar, Mlurg Nar, Ool Hrusp, Ool Krut and Ool Plerns. 'City' is a grand word for the reality of some of these locations, which are closer in size to towns and in some cases, villages.

Gnamph Nar

One of the larger of the Eight Cities, Gnamph Nar is a port city on the northern shores of the Inner Sea. For its size (which nowhere approaches Lankhmar's vastness) it is a bustling port with lively, chaotic docks and no shortage of taverns catering to sailors. It is perhaps most famous for a problem with piracy and is a known haven for both pirates and crimps, the latter of which press-gang people into serving on the ships that ply the warm waters of the Inner Sea.

Gnamph Nar sees a great deal of north- and south-bound trade running to and from Cold Corner. Though it is far removed from Cold Corner by the entire width of the Great Forest, many trade routes up to the Cold Wastes begin and end at Gnamph Nar. The lax customs authority and flood of 'privateers' mean that merchandise can be found on the cheap more often than not, as can plunder that is sent north to earn a pretty penny from the barbarians or be looted in turn by the bandits plaguing the Trollstep passes.

There is a significant amount of illegal trade in narcotics, fencing, contraband and smuggled weapons sold to the Mingols, running straight from Lankhmar to Gnamph Nar. Players wishing to get involved in Inner Sea piracy or with nautical backgrounds featuring a spice of freebooting will find Gnamph Nar to their liking.

The Anchor

The Anchor is the largest and busiest inn within Gnamph Nar and its location near the docks makes it the first port of call for

many sailors and merchants when they arrive at the city. Anyone wanting to seek passage on a ship or do business with the less reputable traders will usually find their way here.

This popular but rowdy establishment is owned by Dreskin Mott, a rather large individual with short hair and an unkempt beard. Dreskin understands the needs of sailors and adventurers and always makes sure he stocks a good selection of ales and spirits.

The main bar in the Anchor is very large and furnished with a good number of well used tables and chairs, many of which have obviously been broken during the frequent brawls that occur here. The walls are decorated with various seafaring items such as flags, steering wheels, rudders and of course a large anchor firmly fixed above the bar. Through the bar is a smaller and somewhat quieter room where gamblers try their luck at cards and dice.

The first floor has rooms of various sizes, providing simple but cheap accommodation for those who require it. The second floor, referred to as 'the top floor', is where Dreskin's whores do their business and by all accounts they do it rather well.

Illik-Ving

Illik-Ving is a small town that straddles the northernmost border edge of the Great Forest. It is one of the two main supply stops and convoy rests along the trade route to Cold Corner and sees a great deal of traffic at certain mid-seasons. Illik-Ving is at the south end of a reliable pass through the Trollstep Mountains.

Bands of mercenary groups are known to make their camps around Illik-Ving – some are hired to protect the city from Mingol raids, some are employed as caravan guards and some simply camp out there as bandits, waiting for the time to strike north- and southbound merchant traders.

Klelg Nar

To the east of Gnamph Nar lies Klelg Nar, another port with the Inner Sea lapping at its southernmost edges. Two main factors make Klelg Nar a riskier proposition for bringing in cargo. The first is that the laws against piracy, crimping and freebooting are nowhere near as lax as in Gnamph Nar, so Klelg Nar is one of those rare Nehwonese port cities to rely mainly on legal trade to provide its economy.

Secondly and perhaps more importantly, Klelg Nar has borne the brunt of vicious Mingol assaults many times over the years. Though it maintains a large enough ducal garrison and no shortage of mercenaries also funded by the duke, Klelg Nar is regarded as a lodestone for attracting Mingol trouble. In the *Swords* novels, when Lankhmar suffers the Rat Plague, it is said that Klelg Nar endures yet another Mingol siege but emerges unburned and relatively whole after the conflict.

Kvarch Nar

Directly opposite Lankhmar is Kvarch Nar, which sits at the mouth of the bay where the Mangrishik River flows into the northern waters of the Inner Sea. This is the capital of the Land of the Eight Cities, where the overlord's palace is located. It is also the second busiest port in all of Nehwon, what with the massive amount of trade occurring between it and Lankhmar.

Kvarch Nar is typical of Eight Cities' life. It is a beautiful city – it would surely be a wonder of the world if explorers could ever agree on just what constitutes a Nehwonian wonder. It is a settlement that almost seems to blend in the with

the Great Forest in places, with the city limits merging into the surrounding woodland rather than being marked by solid walls of stone as in other cities. Craftsmen – sculptors and architects specialising in wood, mainly – are prized and respected members of the community here, as they are across the Forest Land.

As the capital of a nation that lives and dies by the success of its lumber trade, the major export across the Inner Sea from Kvarch Nar is quality timber to Lankhmar and Ilthmar. The docks are busy day and night, busier and more crowded than Ilthmar's harbour yet lacking the feverish cluster of the port in the Imperishable City. Movarl's navy also docks many of its ships here, with the others stationed in various other Eight Cities ports – always on the hunt for pirates. Characters pulling into Kvarch Nar harbour can expect to find between two and 12 of the overlord's vessels at any one time. The overlord is known across Nehwon as an insightful and skilled sea-commander and his troops are purported to be almost the equivalent of the Lankhmarines in terms of training and competency.

Little piracy trade comes through Kvarch Nar. Freebooter captains usually divert their ill-gotten gains to Gnamph Nar where the laws and military presence are both lax. Kvarch Nar has its share of criminals among the leafy beauty of the wooden city but pirates are rarely among them. Movarl takes great pride in keeping his port free of privateers, which is the primary duty of the navy when not engaged in war.

Kvarch Nar is technically vulnerable to attack because of its lack of traditional city walls. However, since no invading armies have penetrated the Great Forest as yet in a bid to claim the Eight Cities capital, the people are hardly fearful of conquerors. Even the Mingols and ghouls that regularly siege the Eastern settlements of the Forest Land impress little worry into the hearts of Kvarch Nar citizens. These threats are distant and easily ignored by the folk who dwell in the beauty of the capital, far from the fires of invasion and the swords of enemies.

An interesting social tradition is for Eight Cities men to treat their women (especially in Kvarch Nar) with special reverence. Accusing a woman of an indecent act or casting aspersions on her honour, whether factual or false, is the fastest way to initiate a duel with the nearest skilled Eight Cities swordsman. Note that the men of the Forest Land generally believe women are allowed to get up to whatever they want – it is just the accusations and aspersions that earn a man the duel or the beating.

The Wooden Palace

The overlord's home is a palace of surpassing craftsmanship and beauty, made entirely from Eight Cities lumber. Here the ruler of the Forest Land enjoys the luxurious lifestyle of all Nehwonian nobles, though it is suggested in the *Swords* tales that Movarl is a more competent (at least militarily) and less decadent monarch than, say, Glipkerio Kistomerces of Lankhmar. The palace itself is shapely and artistically made, though like the city surrounding it, it is without defensive walls.

When the Dukes of the Eight Cities gather to discuss their realm, the rulers of each of the Eight Cities are accompanied by their guards and advisors to the overlord's palace in Kvarch Nar. This is an infrequent occurrence, since the cities tend to rule themselves by and large.

Docklands Market

As its name suggests, this market is situated by the Kvarch Nar docks and is perfectly located for traders to sell their wares to anyone coming to and from the docks. Several established lumber merchants have stands here but most stalls are the standard fare that one expects to find in markets selling a variety of food, crafts, clothing, as well as shipping supplies such as crates, ropes and netting.

The market is open all day long and is usually quite busy, both from shoppers and those who are simply passing through between the main city and docks. Market Street is the main thoroughfare between the city and the docklands and anyone in a rush to get to their destination will find it difficult and frustrating to negotiate this road quickly.

The Lantern

This tavern is the roughest and loudest in Kvarch Nar, which has made it a popular choice for most sailors who visit the city. As one would expect, the Lantern is the best place to meet individuals of dubious ethics and purveyors of 'exotic' goods. The owner, Tinsem Orr, turns a blind eye to most of the dealings that take place in his tavern, an attitude that brings in a lot of custom but has also been known to draw unwanted attention from the city watch.

Tinsem is also well known for hiring buxom women to work for him. Many quit after the first night from the constant grabbing and abuse by the unruly patrons, only the stronger and more capable women remain.

The Seafarer's Inn

At the end of Market Street is a popular establishment by name of the Seafarer's Inn. Ironically, most sailors who frequent Kvarch Nar prefer to drink in the Lantern, so the Seafarer is much quieter and civilised than most people expect. Due to its location and atmosphere the inn has become favoured by the market traders who usually stop in after a long day's work.

Mlurg Nar

Of all the Eight Cities, Mlurg Nar is the most curious, serving as a meeting point for barbarians, Mingols, thieves, merchants, brigands and miners – all in one melting pot of a mining town. While most other cities in the Forest Lands focus on their lumber trade, Mlurg Nar is situated in the northeast of the forest, near the Mingol Steppes. Here can be found an unreliable pass through the Trollsteps into the Cold Wastes, as well as many rich veins of ore within the mountain range itself.

This is a recipe for conflict, which would be greatly exacerbated if only the city were not so small. In the forested wilds, bandit groups roam the woodlands preying on ore-laden caravans in order to sell them on elsewhere. Bands of sell-swords also exist in the forest, hired to protect Mlurg Nar and the extensive network of mines from Mingol attacks. Within the town, thieves, extortionists and cutthroats prey on the wealthy ore merchants and their small metal-trader guilds whenever they can. Couple this with south-venturing Cold Waste barbarians come to trade or adventure and west-walking Mingols come for the same reasons and the instability (and crime rate) of Mlurg Nar suddenly starts to make a very uneasy kind of sense.

Games Masters setting campaigns in Mlurg Nar, or having their players travel through the town, are spoilt for choice when it comes to encounters with a variety of Non-Player Characters.

No-Ombrulsk

Set far to the northeast, many leagues past the borders of the Great Forest and almost considered part of the Cold Wastes, No-Ombrulsk is the only Eight Cities port on the Outer Sea.

Wooden structures are rare here, at least compared to the rest of the Eight Cities, as the Great Forest is so distant. The people of No-Ombrulsk are hardy, sea-faring fisherfolk, who often must contend with their harbour being frozen in the icy winter season. The black ramparts of the city's walls are visible many miles from the shore, making a distinctive skyline to sail by.

Ool Hrusp

Ool Hrusp has built a name among Nehwon's cities but not for anything grand or noble. Situated on the northwestern edge of the Inner Sea and ruled during the *Swords* novels by Mad Duke Lithquill, the small city-state is known for its large cattle trade and guild of livestock farmers but is truly renowned for its gladiatorial arena. This arena was established by the murderous Mad Duke and features battles to the death between any people Lithquill's soldiers and agents imprison. Sometimes they are Cold Waste barbarians or Mingol travellers who venture too close to the wrong outpost of civilisation, though frequently enough the Mad Duke watches trained gladiators butchering unskilled prisoners who were once traders, craftsmen, farmers and thieves.

Lithquill's bloodlust has a powerful influence over his heart but so does his paranoia. At all times the Mad Duke is guarded by several highly trained retainers, all experienced in battle and well-armed as well as well-armoured.

Ool Krut

Perhaps the smallest of the Eight Cities is the west coast town of Ool Krut, bordering the edge of the Outer Sea. The most prominent export here each season is hundreds and hundreds of sheets of stout canvas. Ool Krut sail canvas is expensive in the extreme and only purchased by the wealthiest of captains.

Those residents not involved with the making of Krut-canvas sails are usually fishermen or workers in the town's disproportionate number of taverns.

Ool Plerns

Situated on the western coast of the Forest Land is the least of the Eight Cities – Ool Plerns. In truth, this settlement is little more than a frontier coastal village manned by woodcutters and their families.

Adventures in the Eight Cities

This section presents a series of story hooks and campaign possibilities for Games Masters who situate their stories around the Eight Cities. They can be used wholesale as scenario ideas or cut and pasted in a bid to combine elements of them into a larger campaign, however the Games Master sees fit.

A Nation at War

The Land of the Eight Cities is no stranger to warfare. Both the ghouls and the Mingols lay siege to the easternmost cities of the Forest Land with painful regularity, though it is often Sarheenmar, an independent city-state to the south, that takes the brunt of invaders' aggressions. Games Masters dealing with the gritty, violent throes of war in their campaigns have a lot of room to manoeuvre here.

Games Masters wishing to set campaigns close to the Steppes and have players deal with the Mingols will find Klelg Nar a good potential base for the game. Combative characters are especially likely to find a place (and a busy career) in Klelg Nar, though enterprising merchant characters might enjoy the trials and struggles of raising a merchant empire in the shadow of Mingol attacks and harsh contraband laws.

Crackdown in Gnamph Nar

The thief crouched in the darkness of the alley mouth, listening to his racing heartbeat and the sounds of the Watch's spear-butts clacking on the cobblestone street. When he had regained his breath, a quick bolt through the back alleys led him to the docks, where the port authority officer, escorted by yet another half-dozen watchmen, stood right by the gangplank onto the thief's ship. 'Lately' the thief thought to himself, 'Gnamph Nar is getting to be more trouble than it is worth.'

The Duke of Gnamph Nar somehow resists the minefield of bribes and payoffs that keep his port thriving on illegal activities and finally decides to restore order to the city. In areas where the city watch are not enough, he hires mercenaries to patrol the streets, clamping down on criminals and pirates. His own ships take to the waters in pursuit of infamous pirate captains, crewed by hired sell-swords as well as his own Eight Cities men. Put bluntly, this is the biggest crackdown on piracy the Inner Sea has ever seen, with the so-called 'pirate port' no longer a safe haven for freebooters.

Characters can be part of the hired groups who set out to catch named pirate captains, perhaps even hunting for the heads of legendary buccaneers who have passed into Nehwonian legendry because of their deeds. Alternatively, pirate characters will be run ragged trying to evade capture and secure both a new port as well as black market contacts in cities other than Gnamph Nar. Whatever side of the fence the players are on, they will almost certainly end up in the Anchor where a lot of illegal trading takes place.

Ducal Assassination

Rival aristocrats, spurned noblewomen lovers, jealous heirs tired of waiting for the throne, merchants with a grudge against a certain tax – there will be no shortage of people in Nehwon that want one of the Eight Cities' dukes dead for whatever reason. In this scenario, Games Masters have one of the liege lords recruit mercenary bodyguards, either out of apparent paranoia or keen good sense. Their duties are to investigate the threat of a conspiracy against the ruler, whether by a cult or a guild of some kind. This campaign blends a decent mix of investigation and combat, with the assassins having a variety of potential attacks, from crossbow bolts in the duke's back to poison in his drink at a negotiation. It is down to the characters to work through a network of ducal agents and their own contacts to find out who has designs on the duke's life, discover why and work out how they can be stopped.

The difference with this taking place in the Eight Cities is that it presents Games Masters with the opportunity to distance themselves from the utterly decadent and self-indulgent nobility of Lankhmar, creating the room for a genuinely likeable noble if such a character is desired for the story. Admittedly, part of the appeal of the gritty and dirty campaign setting is that Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser served knaves and villains many a time and were well-received for doing so but Games Masters wishing for a change of pace might prefer to have this particular patron as an efficient and caring ruler, dedicated to watching over his people.

Fire!

When the Eight Cities burn, they *burn*. Whether because of siege, arson or merely an accident, when the settlements of the Forest Land go up in flames, swift action is required to either prevent the town burning to the ground or to get out alive.

Games Masters and players can use fire in several ways. Anyone hunting the characters for specific reasons (bounty hunters, debt collectors, vengeful thieves) who have no moral issues with fire spreading through a crowded city can use arson as a means of trying to kill the Player Characters. In this instance, fire can serve as the assassination tool of 'morally flexible' enemies. It can also spice up the resulting fight scenes and will rolls to avoid falling hunks of buildings and dodging the spreading flames.

Rescuing someone from a burning building (or beating someone to a pulp and leaving them in one) is likely to appeal to some

characters, especially if the victim is a loved one and the enemy is a hated foe for the characters are desperate to see dead. Kvarch Nar and the other Eight Cities are useful places for murder by arson and leaving unidentifiable remains.

Little magic will cause as much harm to any of the Eight Cities as a potent fire spell. A magical spell that causes fire to rage through one of the cities will have the responsible sorcerer hunted by those brave and skilled enough to do so. Games Masters could make an adventure out of having the characters seek out a sorcerer rumoured to be talented at manipulating fire with his spellcasting, paid by the city-dwellers to bring the magician's head back to the local duke.

Fire ravages the eastern cities when the Mingols or the ghouls manage to breach the defences and sack the settlements. Sarheenmar, north of Ilthmar and not actually one of the Eight Cities, also suffers the same fiery fate when the invisible-skinned flesh eaters or the nomads of the Steppes go to war. Characters or Non-Player Characters from these eastern cities may have a significant grudge against either the ghouls or the Mingols (or both) and this will likely flavour interactions with either culture.

Pirates of the Inner Sea

If the Games Master envisions a campaign of piracy on the high seas, boarding actions where freebooter cutlasses clash with straight soldier blades and plundering fat-bellied merchant ships in the name of stealing, then the Eight Cities are likely to feature in the story quite significantly. Lankhmar and Ilthmar have their share of pirates but the majority of privateers operate out of Gnamph Nar on the north coast of the Inner Sea.

An Inner Sea pirate captain has endless choices when it comes to ships to prey on. The main trade across the waters of the sea is timber going south to Lankhmar and Ilthmar but there is also grain going north to the Eight Cities from the City of the Black Toga.

These simply comprise the majority of what is on offer for the discerning captain and a keen crew, not the entire vista of opportunity. In addition to these essential yet rather mundane items, pirates have a wealth of Ilthmarish wine to plunder, as well as Kleshite silk from the caterpillars of the southern jungle caves that comes north to the Inner Sea through Lankhmar and a host of luxuries like Eight Cities art, shipments of gold from one merchant to another and Lankhmar-forged weapons bound for another port. Literally any trade item is bound to find a buyer somewhere, if it is not something like grain or weapons which the pirates can keep to themselves and use without selling.

Whether plundering luxuries, selling on essentials at prices to undercut the true merchants or weapon-smuggling for thrills and profit, life as a pirate offers great rewards. Maintaining contacts in various ports is essential, as is keeping palms crossed with silver and negotiating on the black market for the best prices

for loot. These characters answer to no law but that which they make themselves and any number of supernatural adventures at sea can result from their careers.

There is a downside. Life as a privateer is never as easy as it sounds, primarily due to the serious enemies one makes while plundering the ships of the high seas. The Lankhmar navy make regular patrols in the Inner Sea, the navy of Overlord Movarl take an even greater dedication to eradicating the pirate presence and merchants hire mercenaries to voyage with precious cargo – these are all skilled fighters who must be overcome but perhaps most dangerous of all are other pirates who scent a successful plunder and hunt down a captain's ship while it is slowed by stolen cargo.

The Navies

Generally speaking, the navies of the Inner Sea will be the most deadly of the threats pirate characters face, purely because the ships will be flush with well-trained fighters. An average three-master will be manned by up to 70 sailors working in two shifts, as well as up to 30 marines trained specifically for fighting in boarding actions and at sea. If the characters are operating a modest pirate outfit from the deck of a six-man sloop, such as Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser had been known to do on occasion, their only chance at surviving such an encounter would be to flee, preferably over coral formations that their shallow-hulled craft can glide over but that would hole a larger vessel.

The navies are a dangerous threat, true but also a rare one given the amount of sea there is to sail and the sheer number of vessels. Few overlords will feel a great need to pour money into their navies to baby-sit merchant vessels across the Inner Sea, when so many merchants are prepared to pay for mercenaries to serve as protection instead. If the characters encounter the navy, it is usually by chance or because the characters have done something very illegal indeed that evidently warrants their arrest and probably their execution.

The most common traps set by the Lankhmar navy are the positioning of 'bait ships' in the southern Inner Sea which are considered Lankhmar's own waters. These appear to all intents and purposes to be heavy-hulled merchant ships riding low in the water, apparently fattened by cargo if their depth and speed in the sea is anything to go by. In truth, these are manned by a skeleton crew of naval sailors and weighed down purely by ballast. Lying in wait only a few minutes' distant and out of sight is another navy vessel, ready to run down the pirates that take the bait ship. Inner Sea pirates are not always the three-mast vessels of Hollywood movies, of course. Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser pirated with a faithful sloop and encountered triremes and small merchant cutters in their illegal Inner Sea activities. Likewise, the smaller and faster naval vessels carry only a dozen men in total – these are the ships that tend to catch the pirates rather than the big troop-laden vessels.

Characters with contacts (or even rank themselves) in the military can of course bribe the admirals or captains in charge of the vessels currently slicing the waters of the Inner Sea, so that the pirates need only run up an agreed-upon flag to escape pursuit by the authorities. Perhaps the characters are owed a favour by a merchant they once performed a service for who can in turn bribe the admiral or perhaps they encounter a local captain deep in his cups in the tavern and offer him a cut of the profits if he will keep his crew away from a certain patch of water for the next few weeks. This kind of devious bribery shows some clever thinking on the part of the players and should probably be rewarded by having things (mostly) going their way. Nothing is ever quite perfect, of course. Trouble breaks even the best-laid plans.

Mercenaries

A common threat is that many merchant ships with cargo worth stealing hire on additional help in the form of sell-swords and trained fighters in order to assure that any pirates who board their ship meet violent, bloody deaths before they can get their thieving hands on anything of value. The answer to this is simple, from the characters' point of view; they just need to be better than the mercenaries they face.

Games Masters have a lot of leeway here. Extremely valuable cargo will be defended by greater numbers of sell-swords or guarded by expensive mercenaries who are likely notorious for the skills. These encounters are going to give most characters some trouble, which is as it should be. Other encounters, with Slayers' Brotherhood hired goons bearing clubs and ordered to defend a few crates of grain are going to be less of a trial.

The combats that can occur in the high seas scenario have great potential for thrills and disasters. Grappling hooks need to be cast in order to bind the ships together and boarding will likely take place under a rain of arrow fire before the combat really even gets going. Battles on the rigging will call for excellent DEX and failed Dodge rolls by the ship's railings might even result in a character falling over the edge into the water below. Games Masters should always bear in mind that the layout of fighting on a ship is much more variable and interesting than a pitched battle on plain dry land, so players should be encouraged to use the scenery to make things more exciting. Likewise, Non-Player Characters will have a solid grasp of their own ships' layouts and can use the scenery to their advantage.

Other Pirates

Probably the most common threat (and therefore the most dangerous from a certain point of view) is that in the waters closer to the Eight Cities, pirates become more numerous and prey upon each other without mercy, like sharks in a feeding frenzy.

Any successful haul makes characters a target of other pirates, who have no qualms about plundering others in their line of work and sending their rivals' ships to the bottom. Games

Masters might prefer to have the pirates of any given region cling to a code of sorts, where they cease hostilities against one another but the pirates of Gnamph Nar will still draw blades when they cross paths with pirates out of Ilthmar.

Cold Waste barbarians are no strangers to piracy, of course. A barbarian raider crew getting into the thick of things in the Inner Sea can make for a great campaign idea for the characters or an excellent choice of enemy in the case of rival pirates.

The City of Kvarch Nar

Games Masters wishing for a large city-based campaign set away from Lankhmar might find Kvarch Nar an excellent choice. Nearly the same levels of trade, thievery, culture and decadence exist here as they do in Lankhmar and travel between the two cities is cheap and regular. Certainly any merchant-based games that take to the Inner Sea will find a port in Kvarch Nar once or twice, as the trade opportunities are varied and tempting. The majority of merchant vessels cutting the waters of the Inner Sea in a southerly direction are shipping quality lumber to Lankhmar. The majority heading north from the Imperishable City are, of course, shipping grain to Kvarch Nar.

The Lumber of Ool Plerns

Ool Plerns is little more than a woodcutter community, using the timber that it harvests and sending the significant excess overland to Kvarch Nar and the other port cities to be shipped on to Lankhmar and Ilthmar. To navigate the Great Forest and keep the wagon drivers safe from bandit attack is a job for down-on-their-luck mercenaries and characters that find themselves running out of money in the wilderness, with little else to do on their way to a sizable city. In this respect, Games Masters can use these lumber caravan scenarios for desperate characters as a way of giving them something to do on the way to civilisation. Bandits are unlikely to strike for the wood itself but the wagons and the coins in the driver's money belts make such raids profitable enough to be worthwhile.

In the *Swords* stories, Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser establish a minor trading route from Ool Plerns to the mostly-treeless Rime Isle in order to provide timber for their new island home. Characters can emulate this if they wish, for there is certainly profit in bringing wood to the wealthy Rime Islanders. If this vein of profit is discovered by any other merchants willing to risk the long voyage north, the characters can expect some tense competition, with both sides likely stooping to sabotage and assassination in order to bring the money into their pockets.

The Mad Duke of Ool Hrusp

The most infamous of the Eight Cities' dukes is Duke Lithquil, also known as the Mad Duke of Ool Hrusp. He is a man with definite sadistic passions, relishing in bloodshed and the pain of others. He commonly hires adventurers in order to help him experience these passions and not all of his hirelings survive.

In Ool Hrusp is Lithquil's arena, constructed so that he and his citizens can watch the bloodsport-born pleasure of men butchering one another. Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser served Lithquil for a time, creating bold battles and mock-deaths to satisfy the duke's appetite and bloodlust. His interest in these false fights waned, of course. He desires the real thing.

Games Masters can run with a classic fantasy trope here, by pitting combative characters against each other within an arena. Voluntary entrants will always be welcome but the duke is not above having potential fighters beaten into submission and dragged to cells under the arena, forcing them to fight for their freedom, earning it through victory in a certain number of matches. Characters can either be in the thick of the arena battles (which raises a dark question should two of them ever face one another) or seek to rescue a friend from the pits under the battle area, saving him from a death purely to please a madman.

When Animals Attack

In this scenario, a sorcerer emerges from his hermitage to wreak havoc on the woodland cities of the Eight Cities. He uses his magic to control the minds of fierce local animals like bears, cougars and wolves, using these feral servants to attack the folk of the settlements in the Forest Land. At first the attacks are focused on the small woodland villages that see little contact with the rest of the world but soon the beasts are stalking the nighttime forests at the edge of Kvarch Nar and the other Eight Cities. Perhaps the sorcerer even manages to call some of the white wolves, ice cats and polar tigers of the Cold Waste into his beastly army, in preparation for moving on into the coldest climes of the north once he has finished with the Forest Land.

The sorcerer's reasons for doing this are an integral part of making the scenario believable and interesting. It could be a possibility that much like Tyaa and her forgotten religion in Lankhmar, the magician wishes to bring to the Forest Land or the Cold Waste a faith unseen in the region for many centuries – a religion based on appeasing a chosen few or risking the wrath of Nature.

Another possibility is that the sorcerer is a Mingol sorcerer, mastering the beasts as part of a greater war effort. If this is the case, it might also stand to reason that the man requires some very dark sacrifices to make that amount of magical control sweep across such a large swath of land.

Related to this idea is that the Mingol is an Eight Cities version of the monstrous Khahkht of the Black Ice; a living legend for the people of the Steppes, spoken of in tones of hatred and fearful awe all at once. Just as Khahkht uses Its magic to plague the people of Rime Isle, this sorcerer could use his power to bedevil the residents of the Land of the Eight Cities. To the Mingols, depending on their current cultural inclination, this legendary figure could be a hero or a demon, though either choice comes with a hefty amount of wariness about the man.

Games Masters may decide that this powerful hermit could become a potential mentor or patron for the characters, perhaps in direct competition with Sheelba of the Eyeless Face and Ningauble of the Seven Eyes for the Player Characters' service. If this is the case, it is likely that their new Mingol patron has a whole host of reasons the characters should never trust Sheel and Ning, while the bickering archimages likewise tell tales of the Mingol's dark past. The characters are trapped in the middle of an unfolding sorcerous civil war, trying to tell fact from fiction and decide which side to ally with.

The Cold Wastes

Not quite arctic tundra but certainly not far removed, the Cold Wastes are a region of skin-chilling winds, colossal mountain ranges and alpine and foothill forests, as well as home to wild beasts and monsters found nowhere else in the world of Nehwon. Ravines split the land like canyon-scars on the Cold Wastes' icy skin, while ivory-white mountains pierce the sky on every horizon – snow-blanketed giants fencing in this inhospitable wasteland of tundra plains and forests.

To the north is the Frozen Sea and Rime Isle, beyond which the endless reaches of the northern polar ice cap stretch on as far as mortal man could ever travel. To the south, past the Barrier Mountains and the Trollstep Range where the temperatures rise sharply, the Great Forest and the Land of the Eight Cities reside in warmer climes. To the east, as the land slowly sinks with each passing league, the Great Steppes are home to the Mingol hordes.

This is the Cold Wastes, then – a place of oppressive loneliness and cold comfort, where life is rare in the endless desolation and what life does survive is rarely in human form.

Trollstep Mountains

The range known as the Trollsteps is a craggy chain which marks the southern border of the Cold Wastes. The temperature here is at its highest by Cold Wastes standards, though the winters remain comparatively harsh to the rest of Nehwon. Travelling south over the Trollsteps brings a wanderer into the Great Forest and the Land of the Eight Cities. Illik-Ving, one of the eight city-states that comprise the nation, is situated near one of the most reliable and oft-used passes through the Trollsteps. Avalanches and rock-falls are common in most other passes through the range.

Bandits plague the long, treacherous passes that wind through the Trollstep Mountains but only at certain parts of the year. The pickings in this part of the world are too slim to warrant a permanent residence, so the brigands that make their way to the region do so at times of best opportunity – when the southern traders come north mid-winter and mid-summer to trade with the Cold Waste barbarians.

The amount of business that goes on between the arctic nomads and the southern folk can be surprising to green brigands in the foothills for their first banditry. The nomads sell their rainbow-dyed bear, wolf and snow cat furs, wooden carvings of exceptional craft, shards of amber and ambergris, snow-diamonds visible only at night, cured (and sometimes glossed) animal pelts for use as rugs and ice-herbs found only in the frozen northern climes.

The traders come north to sell woven fabrics in styles unseen by the barbarians, as well as hot spices to flavour food, the curious wines of various cultures, vast quantities of blued and browned iron to be shaped into weapons, honey and similar preserves, waxen candles, fire-powders (that flare with a coloured roar) and other products from the civilised south.

A great deal of white snow potato brandy is consumed and traded in these meetings, with the barbarians never shy of sharing their specialty alcohol. Few southerners ever develop a real taste for the brew, however.

If a brigand group time their northern excursion just right – perhaps by operating out of Illik-Ving or another nearby Eight City settlement – the profits can be significant. Hitting the merchants on the way back when they lead wagons loaded with money and exotic northern stock seems to be the best way to make a living by this particular approach to banditry. Of course, many merchants travel in groups and hire caravan guards to ward off such attacks, providing Games Masters with an opportunity to present a trade- or travel-based storyline with the characters on either side of the law in these freezing mountain passes.

Cold Corner

Like a deep, black scar in the tundra's face, Trollstep Canyon is a deep gorge that half-rings the large patch of territory known as Cold Corner. Here, the Cold Wastes tribes traditionally gather each mid-winter (and at other times of year, depending on tribal tradition) to deal with the southern traders. More than this, Cold Corner also becomes home to a number of performance troupes that travel north to entertain and earn coin from the barbarians. Musical performance pieces, dances of various cultures, monologues, mime, plays, singing and any circus-like or theatre-like entertainment is possible, depending on the types of troupes that come north.

Traditionally, if the performances involve any female nudity, the women of the tribes are barred from attending the show. This can lead to resentment and comically violent snowball fights between the barbarian women and both their own husbands and the female performers, which can occasionally lead to deaths if the missiles have been rock-loaded or frozen first. The males of the tribe are expected to bear these indignities with stoicism. The females in the performance troupes learn fast to travel in groups for fear of a snowballing or, worse, a beating.

The tribes of the north tend to follow a simple naming scheme. The *Swords* novels mention the Snow Clan, the Ice Tribe, the Frost Companions, for example. These matriarchal clans wander the near-arctic regions, making their tent villages across the tundra as they follow the whims of their leaders and hunters. Cold Corner is the only established gathering place for the northern barbarians to meet in one place (outside of tribal wars or chancing across one another in the wild) and is commonly accepted as neutral ground. It is also a place where the ice sorceries of the barbarian women are eerily strong.

Godshall

Godshall on the inside was a tall crazy longship of chill blackness inadequately lit and warmed by an arc of candles in the prow, which all the rest of the year was an altar but now a stage. Its masts were eleven vast living pines thrusting up from the ship's bow, stern and sides. Its sails – in sober fact, its walls – were stitched hides laced tautly to the masts. Instead of sky overhead there were thickly interthrusting pine branches, white with drifting snow, beginning a good five man's-heights above the deck. – The Snow Women

In Cold Corner, Godshall is the main structure around which all other tents are pitched. At the altar end are the tents and wagons of the performers and merchants. At the opposite end rest the dozens, perhaps hundreds of tents set up by the visiting tribes. While Godshall is used to worship the barbarians' gods for most of the year, it becomes the performance hall for the midseason shows when tribes and traders converge on Cold Corner.

In later stories of the *Swords* saga, it is said that the Snow Clan were massacred to the last soul by a horde of Ice Gnomes.

Life among the Northern Barbarians

Each Snow Woman, usually with the aid of the rest, worked to maintain absolute control of her man, though leaving him seemingly free and it was whispered that recalcitrant husbands had been injured and even slain, generally by some frigid instrumentality. While at the same time witchy cliques and individual sorceresses played against each other a power game in which the brawniest and boldest of men, even chiefs and priests, were but counters.

– The Snow Women

The matriarchal society of the Snow Tribes is an indirect (some would say insidious) presence in the culture. Many of the men fear their mothers, wives, sisters and daughters and this leads many of the more adventurous souls into a life away from the Cold Waste. The majority that stay with their clan tend to make frequent excursions, spending several months of the year pirating on the waters of the Outer and Inner Seas or adventuring across the world to experience much of what Nehwon has to offer a strong warrior. Fafhrd left, of course, never to truly return. This is likely not uncommon given the harshness of his experiences with the Snow Women of his tribe.

The Snow Women are also known for their ice magic, one of the reasons they are feared by their men. Ice magic is a form of sorcery and is detailed on page 153.

The northerners are prideful people and their warriors and hunters are generally skilled in arms beyond the average city-dweller and with a love of sailing and raiding. In this they appear to be based on a perception of the historical Norse of the real world. Though the cold climes limit the contact the tribal peoples of the Cold Waste have with the rest of Nehwon, the barbarians are rarely as unanimously hostile as the Mingols of the Great Steppes. Sea-raiders and barbarian brigands are one thing for Eight Cities folk to deal with but at least they never face the combined might of several Cold Waste tribes uniting to lay siege to cities. Perhaps this is because the northerners lack the numbers of the Mingols (these latter are called 'hordes' for a reason) and this is why the barbarians never clamour together for a unified war in the south. It might be that they desire war but lack the population to make it feasible. This is certainly an option for Games Masters wishing to play up the warlike aspects of the culture.

On the other hand, Games Masters might prefer the cultural temperament to turn towards a harsher pride and contentment with the isolation of the icy northern climes. In this instance, rather than a lack of hostility, the relative peace between the barbarians and the folks of the Forest Land directly to the south is born out of the northerners' disinterest in the Eight Cities folk and their own vanity.

Beyond the inner fear the northern men share of their women, the main reason for warriors (and female characters as well, though less often) to leave the Cold Waste to live elsewhere in Nehwon is boredom. This is closely followed by a dislike of the hostile northlands. If boredom drives a soul south into warmer climes, he is likely also driven by curiosity about the rest of the world which only fuels his dissatisfaction at living a life of hunting in the foothills of mountains, foraging for a living and seeing nothing more than the faces of mountains and endless white tundra. In the cases of those who take a dislike of their home, it is easy to see why: the Cold Wastes are dangerous and inimical to human life. Between ice magic at home and white-furred giant worms in the wild, as well as harsh weather and difficult living all year round, it is apparent why the men of the Snow Clans treasure their midseason visits to Cold Corner in order to meet with southern traders and performers.

Fafhrd was described several times as wearing hammer-beaten metal jewellery and the furs of the northern animals he had slain. Though he was a relatively civilised fellow by southern Nehwonian standards, he still often 'dressed the part' of his cultural roots. Barbarians who do the same, turning up in the southern cities clad in the pelts of white wolves and wearing vambraces and necklaces of beaten bronze, are likely to cause

a minor stir wherever they go. Although the Eight Cities along with Sarheenmar see a small trickle of northerners come south or go back north every year, places like Lankhmar and Ilthmar are still rarely home to wandering barbarians. The most contact 'civilised southerners' have with the Cold Waste barbarians is in the Inner and Outer Seas, when the sailors are likely to be the victims of barbarian raids.

Mountains of the Giants

Early one evening, weeks later, the sky's grey cloud-armour blew away south, smashed and dissolving as if by blows of an acid-dipped mace. The same mighty northeast wind contemptuously puffed down the hitherto impregnable cloud wall to the east, revealing a grimly majestic mountain range running north to south and springing abruptly up from the plateau, two leagues high, of the Cold Waste – like a dragon fifty leagues long heaving up its spike-crested spine from icy entombment.

– Stardock

This is the largest range of mountains in Nehwon, with the peaks taller than all rivals, the climbs all the more treacherous and the inhabitants even more unusual. These sky-piercing peaks and their lesser foothill cousins run through the north of the Cold Waste like the region's spine, with the Bones of the Old Ones even further north and the Great Rift Valley to the east.

Here among these stone giants, the most skilled climbers and rock-scalers in Nehwon's history have come and died on the icy slopes with only a rare few surviving to return with tales of success. From south to north, the mountain chain that draws the eyes above all others is the one consisting of The Hint, Gran Hanack, Obelisk Polaris, Stardock, White Fang, the Tusk and the Ripsaw.

Gran Hanack

'Then a far vaster snow dome, true queen to the Hint's princess, a hemisphere of purest white, grand enough to roof the council hall of the gods that ever were or ever will be – she is Gran Hanack, whom my father was first of men to mount and master.'

– Stardock

Another vicious climb, though nothing compared to White Fang, is Gran Hanack. At the base of this great mountain, the Snow Clan pitch their town of tents as part of their nomadic but regular roaming pattern around the Cold Wastes.

Obelisk Polaris

'After Gran Hanack and nearest to us of them all, a huge flat-topped pillar, a pedestal for the sky almost, looking to be of green-shot snow but in truth all snow-pale granite scoured by the storms: Obelisk Polaris.'

– Stardock

Obelisk Polaris is one of the tallest mountains in all Nehwon, falling short of only White Fang and great Stardock itself.



Anyone risking the climb to Stardock's peak, such as when Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser made the ascent in the *Swords* novels, is wise to use Obelisk Polaris as a base for the climb. It is regarded as a 'reliable' mountain, short on avalanches and creature ambushes, though of course it still takes many days to reach the point where Polaris meets Stardock. The flat-topped peak of the Obelisk reaches only halfway up the height of Stardock, so a climber's journey is far from complete once he masters Polaris and makes the leap or quick-footed crossing to the greatest mountain of all.

Stardock

*'Who mounts white Stardock, the Moon Tree,
Past worm and gnome and unseen bars,
Will win the key to luxury:
The Heart of Light, a pouch of stars.
The gods who once ruled the world
Have made that peak their citadel,
From whence the stars were one time hurled
And paths lead on to Heav'n and Hell.
Comes, heroes, past the Trollstep rocks.
Come, best of men, across the Waste.
For you, glory each door unlocks.
Delay not, up and come in haste.
Who scales the Snow King's citadel
Shall father his two daughters' sons;
Though he must face foes fierce and fell,
His seed shall live while time still runs.'*
– Stardock

Legends surround mighty Stardock as if it were the eye of a story-storm. Tales of treasure atop its peaks are written into scholarly texts and found in the scrawls of madmen. Stories of invisible creatures and gnomes that walk its ridges and snow-capped plateaus are told around tables in taverns of the civilised south. Armies of white serpents, snow wolves and ice cats are rumoured to slither and stalk across its stone skin and a hundred barbarian camp-tales all forbid ascent up this one mountain above all others.

Scaling Stardock, even from the top of Obelisk Polaris, is a feat of legends only achievable by characters with heroic endurance and indomitable spirit. For those wishing to attempt such a feat, failure is almost certain but a well-known route up the mountain's side does exist. Part of this is tied into Stardock's appearance. In certain lights, perhaps also when a traveller is affected by thirst, starvation or exhaustion, it can seem as if Stardock's towering west side has a beautiful female face.

The effect is drawn from the colouration and angles of the mountainside. At the base of Stardock is her 'skirt,' better known as the White Waterfall. Her head is made up of the Tresses and the Face. The Tresses are two slopes of avalanche-prone snow on either side of her Face, which seem to move with the continuous flow of ice and frost falling down them. The

Face is noticeable for the dark patches of stone that appear to make up the woman's beautiful visage.

The Hint

'The Hint, she's named or the Come On. Little enough she looks, yet men have frozen knighting on her slopes and been whirled to death by her whimsical queenly avalanches.' – Stardock

The Hint represents a deceptively difficult climb. More a giant snow-dome than a cloud-piercing peak, it is the smallest and southernmost mountain in the range. The route to the top of the crag is actually plagued by frequent avalanches and rockfalls that thunder down the gently rolling slopes. Unfortunately for any climbers seeking to use the Hint as an easy beginning before joining another mountain halfway up, it only joins with Gran Hanack in a particularly difficult section of scree slopes and overhanging rock.

The Ripsaw

'Travel your eye to the first great northerly upthrust,' he told the Mouser, 'that phalanx of heaven-menacing ice spears shafted with dark rock and gleaming green – that's the Ripsaw.'

– Stardock

The Ripsaw is the northernmost peak in the range, formed of a cluster of jagged slopes and skyward-reaching rocky blades. The Ripsaw thrusts up above most of the Mountains of the Giants, dwarfing all but its greatest siblings in the rest of the range. Though the several mountains that make up the Ripsaw's spiky face are not as tall as the other giants in the range, the formation is known for being un-scalable. The Ripsaw has claimed many lives over the years, as the jagged climb means cuts and infections for even experienced climbers and even short falls can be lethal as the climber lands on spiny rocks below. Scaling the Ripsaw would earn a man bragging rights around the campfires of any Cold Wastes tribe, though he would need the scars to prove he had done it.

The Tusk

'Then, dwarfing them, a single ivory tooth, unscalable by any sane appraisal – the Tusk he's called.'

– Stardock

The Tusk is the second mountain from the north of the Mountains of the Giants, a peak of smooth slopes and few handholds so that any ascent is next to impossible. The Frost Companions tribe are known to pitch their sprawling tent-village in the shadow of the Tusk from time to time.

White Fang

'Another unscalable then, still higher and with south wall a sheer precipice shooting up a league and curving outward toward the needletop: he is White Fang, where my father died – the canine of the Mountains of the Giants.'

– Stardock

The true un-climbable peak is that of White Fang, the third mountain from the north in the range. Many sections of White Fang are completely sheer, especially on the south side, making any ascent a bone-aching, wearying proposition of spiralling up the mountain seeking outcroppings and hand holds. The bones of Nalgron, Fafhrd's father, were found low down on White Fang. After the fall that led to his death, perhaps by the ice sorcery of Mor, Fafhrd's mother, he was taken and buried at Cold Corner. White Fang attracts many daring climbers and rewards most of them with naught but death.

Bones of the Old Ones

Further north than even the Mountains of the Giants are the Bones of the Old Ones. This range is situated near the north-western shore, serving as the final boundary before the land becomes sea and the sea in turn becomes polar ice cap. Few who make it overland this far north ever return.

The Great Rift Valley

This vast, dipping valley marks the border of the Cold Wastes and the Great Steppes. The lengthy gash in the land is deep below the level of the Cold Wastes – almost a league, in some places – making the landscape warm, pleasant and (compared to the Wastes) a paradise of wildlife and vegetation.

The Rift Valley is marked as the end of the hostile tundra terrain making up the northlands and the start of more temperate climates. A forest runs through the Great Rift Valley, which the Mingols of the Steppes occasionally venture into to hunt.

Adventures in the Cold Wastes

The harsh conditions of the Cold Wastes and the culture of the barbarians provide Games Masters with a number of campaign settings and adventures.

Cold Corner

Games Masters have a variety of ways to bring characters together and conduct adventures in Cold Corner. Southern characters could come north to trade, escort merchant caravans, perform for the Cold Wastes barbarians or simply travel to learn more of their culture. The barbarians themselves are well known for their nomadic ways and males are especially likely to see the appeal in travelling back south with the troupes and merchants once the few weeks' of entertainments are finished. Fafhrd himself leaves Cold Corner in the company of Vlana, a mime artist and culture dancer, heading south to pursue her vow of revenge against the Thieves' Guild of Lankhmar.

Mountain Pass

Games Masters wishing to set their campaigns in inhospitable climes need look no further than the foothills and peaks of the Mountains of the Giants. Here the beasts and harsh conditions of the Cold Wastes are at their most prominent and powerful. Characters can find themselves tied to the Mountains of the

Giants by the challenge of adventure, such as the Grey Mouser seeking to climb Stardock in the name of treasure-hunting or by aspects of their character background, such as Fafhrd looking at the towering peaks and wondering if he could make the kind of climb that killed his father.

Fafhrd is hardly the only man to lose a relative or a companion in the mountain range and a bitter, tense and energised storyline could result from a group of Player Characters seeking the bones of a lost friend who never returned from a climb, in order to give him a proper burial or hunting the classic rumoured gemstone treasure at the peak of these towering stone giants.

Another consideration is one of mining. No permanent mines exist in the foothills of the Mountains of the Giants, both because the region is so inhospitable and too remote to transport the metals back to civilisation with any speed. However, there are surely some very valuable veins of ore in the range and perhaps even the potential for gems (especially given the legends about Stardock). Games Masters might want to consider having an intrepid and optimistic soul set up a mine in the Mountains of the Giants, with the characters as factors in the control of the operation. Lankhmar is undoubtedly too far for the trip to be worthwhile but such an operation might start up in or near one of the northernmost Eight Cities, such as Illik-Ving or Mlurg Nar.

Firstly, the convoys of supplies to and material from the mine would need guarding from any bandits and any creatures that seek to prey on the people manning the supply line. Secondly, the mine site itself would need protection, both from the inhuman residents of Stardock and the many creatures that call the mountain range home. Thirdly, characters might also be charged with seeking out any legends of gemstones on or around Stardock; they might be paid to find any such gems and either bring them back to their employers or test the area for gem-mine potential.

While the Cold Wastes can seem desolate and empty at first glance, Games Masters can find story hooks in even the most empty and foreboding places – in fact, with a little effort these can sometimes be the most promising areas of all. There is a lot to be said for scrambling chases across loose shale halfway up a mountain, fighting white-furred giant serpents that lash out from rocky snow-topped ledges and discovering just what lives down in the blackness of the caverns beneath Nehwon's greatest mountain range.

Northern Legends

The Cold Waste barbarians have a host of legends, each dealing with some aspect of their frigid homeland or the struggles of humans dwelling there. These tales spread across Nehwon over time, since they are the exact kind of fireside stories that inspire the courage and the glory-lust of brave and greedy men alike. Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser were drawn here to seek out the truth of one of these legends, which resulted in the events of the story *Stardock*.

Travelling in the Cold Wastes

'As a child you would climb up and down the Obelisk before breakfast?'

– Stardock

Games Masters with a penchant for sticking to terrain and weather rules will find the Cold Wastes an exciting mix of difficult conditions and dangerous going for their players. The following is a reference guide to help Games Masters plan the journey conditions of their character groups as they traverse the icy realms of northern Nehwon.

Tundra

The frozen north can be an unpleasant and difficult place to journey through. Much of the region is desolate tundra, occasionally covered in a thin later of snow. This has no game effect other than ensuring characters will need to wrap up warm and carry supplies or risk Exposure as detailed in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*.

Approximately half of the Cold Wastes are made up of deeply packed snow fields in the winter, 30% in the autumn and 10% in the spring and summer. This denser snowy terrain imposes Slight Adversity conditions on adventurers, as detailed in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*.

Snowstorms

The tundra and ice fields may not always be hard-going on their own but blizzards are common enough to make marching across even the relatively flat tundra a matter of willpower and muscle endurance. The Games Master is the ultimate arbiter of the weather in his campaign but a realistic assumption would be to have snowstorms appearing on approximately 10% of days in the summer and spring and 50% in the winter and autumn. Many of these will be little more than light or heavy snowfall but there is a further 10% chance that snowfall in the summer or spring will really be a freak blizzard come out of nowhere and in the autumn or winter that rises to 30%, representing the frequent seasonal storms of the Cold Waste.

In snowfall, the conditions are considered Slight Adversity as detailed in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*. Coupled with dense snow terrain, this becomes Moderate Adversity. During a true blizzard, no matter what the terrain conditions, any adventuring out of doors takes place in situations considered Great Adversity. In addition, Illumination is considered Dark due to the reduced visibility.

Climbing

'We had rather late breakfasts then.'

– Stardock

The real tests of strength and stamina in the Cold Waste come with attempts to climb the Mountains of the Giants. Climbing kits are practically essential.

The mountains are physically climbable, though the effort and skill required means that all but the most gifted and dedicated climbers will probably fail – possibly winding up dead. On each of the Mountains of the Giants, climbers do not need to roll most of the time, using the standard climbing rules and only making tests when the surface becomes significantly more difficult. On Stardock, White Fang and the Tusk, frequent tests are necessary, with a 30% penalty to the Athletics roll. If the weather is stormy or windy, this penalty rises to 50%.

Climbing with a team makes things at least a little easier. The rules for Assistance are especially useful to adventurers helping each other out on the treacherous climbs. Since the ascent of each mountain is a matter of days or even weeks, reliable companionship is paramount.

Any attempts to climb these mountains are considered Medium Activity. The exceptions to this rule are the mountains Stardock, White Fang and the Tusk, which all count as Heavy Activity, no matter how slowly they are climbed. Frequent rests are par for the course.

Games Masters may want to pay close attention to levels of characters' Fatigue and Encumbrance. The rules for Falling might also come in handy for particularly unlucky dice rolls.

Games Masters will find that these rich northern tales of legendary deeds and vast wealth are likely to attract many characters, no matter their origins in Nehwon. For that reason, it can be interesting to develop such legends for the characters to stumble across or learn of in the course of their travels. It is not unusual to discover teasing hints of adventures in the scraps of library-stored parchment, in scholarly amendments in the margin of explorer's journals and around the fires of mercenary camps.

Once the characters have gathered all the clues they believe they need, they can set out on a northward journey which will no doubt test them to their cores. Few adventurers survive a jaunt into the Cold Waste. If the beasts of the region do not get them, the hostile weather does. If the weather does not end their lives, the truth behind the legend they are pursuing often will, as it did for Gnarfi and Kranarch who beat Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser to the summit of Stardock.

To help Games Masters generate their own Cold Waste legends, here are some potential guidelines for the stories that will lure characters northward.

Stories based on the achievements of Cold Waste barbarians in the past are popular in the region. Fafhrd's father Nalgron was called the Legend Breaker for his mountain climbing skills; he scaled peaks that no living soul had managed to climb before. These are the kinds of stories that stick in the prideful hearts of the northerners and are likely to spread around the world with the boastful telling when barbarians speak of the culture to southerners.

Stories of chieftains who killed powerful beasts, raiders who sacked well-known settlements or sank famous ships or warriors who took the heads of mighty enemies in battle are also likely to feature in these boasts, though the only way they will draw treasure-seekers is if they feature some kind of long-lost valuable reward that modern adventurers can find, such as buried gemstone plunder in the foothills of the Mountains of the Giants, perhaps left by a raider captain as an offering to Kos or for his clan should they ever fall on hard times. Likewise the tale of a great war-leader with a magic weapon or centuries-lost item will attract brave, curious and greedy souls who desire the object for their own adventures or to sell on at an incredible profit to some decadent southern noble.

The legends of monsters or great beasts in the wilderness will always have a place of prominence in the stories of the Cold Waste. The inhabitable landscape as one ventures further north is suitable only for beasts and the region even where the clans dwell is surely populated by more wild animals than people. Characters who seek the respect that comes from claiming an unrivalled hunting trophy could do worse than taking on the biggest polar tigers or bears in the Cold Waste – provided there are not some unknown and deadlier creatures in the frozen wilds. It need not be the characters who decide to make the

adventure, of course; nobles who hear of these kinds of stories who also possess a passion for the hunt may recruit the characters as companions or servants on the journey north.

An intriguing possibility is for tales telling of an ancient cult of Snow Clan witch-women to spread slowly south. Perhaps these witches still exist in some form or perhaps they rise again in the north and seek to unite the clans into a force capable of attacking the Land of the Eight Cities and sweeping further into Nehwon. Much like Fafhrd and the Mouser during the resurrection of Tyaa's faith, characters can become accidentally caught in the resurgent religion and destroy it purely so they may survive. Though the ice sorcery of the Snow Women is subtle and insidious rather than violent and flashy, it is still dangerous for all that. A coven that has honed their powers beyond the normal abilities of the tribal witches would be a force to be reckoned with.

Performance Troupe

A campaign based around a performance troupe can make for an interesting and unusual story. The troupes that visit places like Cold Corner travel far and wide, providing Games Masters with a great way for their players to explore the lands of Nehwon, visiting settlements, cities and perhaps even performing in the Lankhmar Theatre.

As revealed in *The Snow Women*, troupes have a variety of people, each with their own rivalries, ethics and agendas and are not above selling their own into slavery. This setting lends itself well to character driven scenarios as the players deal with the internal politics and rivalries of their fellow performers. As the troupe travels the lands of Nehwon, you can also combine this setting with many of the other suggestions listed within this book.

The Great Steppes

Lowland grassy plains sweep out endlessly to the east, taking up a vast patch of northern Nehwon. Here the Mingol tribes roam this northeastern land, claiming the region of the world from the northern ice cap to the Empire of Eevamarensee in the south.

The Mingol people are considered savages by the people of the civilised south and west. Banding together in nomadic tribes of horse-mounted warriors that protect their women, children and tent-villages, the Mingols are renowned for their aggressive attitudes towards foreigners. Intruders into a war band's territory are captured, enslaved and in the case of women, ravaged. Some men are simply cut down in battle by a thunderous horse-charge, lanced through the chest by a crudely made spear or slain by an expertly swung scimitar.

In all of Nehwon, no people are considered more hostile and barbarous than the Mingols. Open warfare is not unknown between the Steppes hordes and both the Land of the Eight Cities and Lankhmar. Each assault is repelled, usually at great

cost and many scholars wonder just what the horseback nomads really desire out of such war, if there even is any desire beyond the thrill of bloodshed and the barbaric honour of killing others. When the Mingols are not openly at war with other nations (and it can be a hard thing to judge) roaming bands attack settlements intent on plunder, pillage and murder.

Battle between the Mingol tribes is also a common occurrence. Travellers moving through the Great Steppes have reported many times of seeing skirmishes between Mingol tribes, with the stocky plains ponies of the nomads carrying dozens or hundreds of shrieking warriors into battle. It is said in Lankhmar that swords clink together as often as coins. In the wild plains of the Great Steppes, any clashing metal is always sword or axe against blade or armour – little trade ever goes on between the tribes and the rest of Nehwon.

It is a misrepresentation to assume *all* Mingols in Nehwon are simply violent barbarians. For all their warlike nature and reputation as fearsome blood-letters, Mingols can be prodigious travellers and explorers, curious about other nations and climes rather than burning with the desire to invade them. Mingols encountered in the civilised lands to the south and west of the Steppes make livings as cartographers, explorers, traders, craftsmen and sell-swords much like anyone else. Lankhmar, as a haven for any and all people on both sides of the law, attracts many Mingols, drawn by the dual lure of decadent civilisation. The Imperishable City boasts no few Mingol-born traders, sailors and thieves, as well as a horde of slaves put into indentured servitude for their crimes in the city or as prisoners of war.

Mingols

The Mingol hordes are akin to the Mongols of our world and are seen through western eyes as little more than barbarous warrior-nomads. This is a stereotype but an effective one and can make for some fear-inspiring enemies on the walls of a city or in the bitter house-to-house fighting that floods the streets of a besieged town.

Mingols will fight ferociously but are not without their own code of honour. They are loath to break oaths, for example. Ourph, Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser's Mingol slave, experienced great unease when he was allowed to go back on a promise, though he ultimately decided against violating his oath of service. Despite their apparent honour system, the Mingols are well known for the torture they inflict upon captives. Games Masters might choose to have a reason beyond barbarism or sadism for this behaviour. For example, perhaps the Mingols torture their war prisoners not out of sadistic glee or spite but because they believe that the more pain one suffers in death, the higher a man's rewards in the afterlife. As such, they reserve their greatest tortures and agonies for those they respect the most.

In the end, Games Masters might decide that a belief like this lends too much of an air of sympathy to enemies that are acknowledged as raping, pillaging and razing the people and towns of the Land of the Eight Cities. Irredeemably evil antagonists are a powerful trope of Sword & Sorcery and can

easily be used effectively here. Perhaps the best examples of this are saved for the warriors that spill across into human lands from the City of Ghouls.

Forbidden City of Black Idols

'As for us four – Teevs, Larlt, Ouwenyis and I – we were ignored but not abused. We had our amulets to keep off evil magics. We were sworn slaves to the death. We were men of the Forbidden City. We made no mutiny.'

– The Bleak Shore

The Forbidden City of Black Idols is situated in the south eastern corner of the Great Steppes, where the grassy plains meet the desert. The Forbidden City is mentioned several times in the Lankhmar novels but never in any detail. This gives Games Masters several options if they wish to use this ancient and enigmatic city in their games. A number of suggestions and guidelines are listed here that can be mixed and matched as desired.

Architecture

Whether Games Masters wish to focus on the religious nature of the idols or other aspects of the Forbidden City, the Black Idols should certainly be the focus of the architecture. They can be anything from effigies of dark gods to statues of past rulers and should represent the type of city that the Games Master has decided to use. As their name suggests, the idols are made from a dark coloured material such as obsidian, blackrock or forged from metal.

The rest of the city's architecture should be a similar style to the idols with most, if not all, of the structures being made from the same material (unless the statues are made from metal). Ourph's tale in *The Bleak Shore* also implies that this is a walled city when he states 'I suspected it when they spared our lives under the very walls of the Forbidden City'.

Another interpretation is that the city was subject to a raging fire at some point in its history, leaving little behind except blackened statues, broken city walls and ruined buildings. The inhabitants will most likely have rebuilt the city but if they lacked the resources or manpower to do so then parts of the city will be derelict, giving the impression of a deserted ghost town in those areas.

The idea that part of the city is in ruins can be used even if there is no history of fire in the city. This could be the result of a siege, an uprising, powerful black magic or simple neglect. Whether Games Masters decide to adopt the Forbidden City as a well maintained metropolis or a ruined outpost, the appearance of this dark city should bring feelings of foreboding to any travellers who venture too close.

City of Sorcerers

From Ourph's tale in *The Bleak Shore*, his mention of magical amulets suggests that magic is commonplace in the Forbidden

City; if all inhabitants are given such items they must be easy to make and there must be sufficient people with the skill and knowledge to do so. This conjures imagery of a city rife with sorcerers and black magic. Depending on how Games Masters view the Mingol people, the sorcerers that inhabit the city could come from the Mingol tribes, other cultures around Nehwon or perhaps even a race or group that are unique to the Forbidden City.

In this setting the sorcerers would most likely be the ruling class of the city, something akin to sorcerer-nobles of Quarmall with an underclass of Mingol craftsmen, labourers and perhaps serving as the city's militia. Games Masters may even wish to set the Forbidden City as a rival or twin to the underground kingdom of Quarmall, where Quarmallians have either been outcast or settled here by order of the Lords of Quarmall.

Alternatively, the sorcerers might be outcasts of the Mingol tribes or other cultures that are driven here or they seek out the Forbidden City as a place to study the dark arts. Perhaps they have a greater purpose or dark ambition. Whatever their aspirations might be, the gathering of so many sorcerers in one place is a possible reason why the city has earned its name.

Cult of the Black Idols

The few references to the Forbidden City also suggest that it is inhabited by a religious cult based on the mysterious Black Idols. The statues could represent deities much like the gods *in* Lankhmar but with darker and malevolent personas or they could be likenesses of other supernatural beings worshipped by the cult. The priests and worshippers of this faith might be Mingols or a people from a variety of backgrounds and cultures from across Nehwon.

Games Masters using this concept should detail the purpose and aims of the cult and their masters (if these beings actually exist). Are they driven by dark impulses to spread evil across the lands of Nehwon or do they simply desire to discover more about their masters who adorn the idols?

Rising Power

The one fact that can be confirmed from the scant references to the Forbidden City of Black Idols is that it is inhabited to some degree by Mingols. In *The Bleak Shore* Ourph reveals 'We were men of the Forbidden City', clearly referring to himself and his three Mingol companions. Since the Mingol are a nomadic people it begs the question, why are they here? They might simply come here to pay their respects to the idols that adorn the streets but the tales allude to a more permanent settlement.

If one of the Mingol tribes were to take up permanent residence in the Forbidden City, they would be in well defended settlement and perfectly placed to launch raids and attacks on both rival tribes and the Eight Cities. This location could easily allow such a tribe to grow in numbers and strength, safe from

their enemies. A tribe in this position would eventually pose a significant threat to any neighbouring tribes or cities.

Ruling Body

The ruling body of the Forbidden City can be as varied as the people who inhabit it. Games Masters should tailor this to suit the culture of the city and the needs of their campaign. The city might be ruled by a charismatic leader or evil dictator. Alternatively, Games Masters might want to have a more formal structure of government in place with a ruling council or the city might have no rulers at all.

Games Masters should also decide if there are any class divisions such as nobles and working class or is the city more anarchic with its inhabitants free to do whatever they want. A tribe or cult would have a sense of community but other social structures or lack thereof, are more susceptible to crime and decadence.

Slaves

Although one might assume that Ourph and his companions were free men before they swore servitude to Fafhrd and the Mouser, it is not explicitly stated that this is the case. The Mingols from the Forbidden City might have already been indentured slaves before the two adventurers rescued them. This would mean that slavery is practiced and accepted here, perhaps to the extent that the city has enslaved a great number of Mingols, whether by sorcerers, priests or other Mingols from other tribes.

Adventures in the Great Steppes

The Great Steppes provide several ideas for campaigns and scenarios based around the Mingol tribes.

The Forbidden City

Forbidden City of Black Idols provides Games Masters with a great location for encounters and plot hooks that can be tailored to needs of the campaign. Players might journey to the Forbidden City to find ancient treasures, seek out powerful sorcerers or rescue an unfortunate traveller who ventured to close.

The Forbidden City can also be combined with other adventure ideas. A Mingol campaign could be set inside the city as they rise in power or the players' tribe must eventually launch an offensive here against their rivals. Likewise, players in the army of the Eight Cities will eventually have to lay siege to the Mingols gathered within or perhaps they must sneak inside to gather intelligence or assassinate the tribal leader.

Tribes of the East

Setting a campaign amongst the Mingol tribes allows the players to see Nehwon from a different perspective. The nomadic way of life is much suited to the adventurer but being part of a tribe means they have less freedom than those who leave the Steppes for the civilised world. Although the Mingol are masters of their

realm the constant battles and warfare against other Mingol tribes and the Eight Cities makes life hard and dangerous.

Although this setting might focus on the infighting amongst the tribes or battles against the Eight Cities, running a Mingol campaign gives Games Masters a great opportunity to explore and expand upon life in the tribes. Outsiders might simply see them as savages but the Mingol have their own customs and traditions that remain unknown to the civilised world.

Games Masters can start their campaign in this setting but have it evolve into something else entirely. The players could be exiled from their tribe for their failure to defeat an enemy or they could be the only surviving members after an attack by a rival tribe and are now seeking vengeance. Without the safety of their tribe, the players must survive against a number of dangers including Mingol enemies, people of the Eight Cities or even Quar mallian slavers.

War in the Steppes

For games masters who wish to run a more world changing campaign centred on a great war, pitting the forces of The Eight Cities against the Mingol tribes can provide exciting, bloody and brutal adventures. With the many attacks against the Eight Cities, it is not a far stretch for the overlord to take the fight to the Mingol in an attempt to end the threat once and for all. Perhaps the Mingol have attacked settlements further to the west, bypassing places like Klelg Nar that have yet to be defeated by the Mingol.

Such a campaign might start out of Klelg Nar, its location as the closest of the Eight Cities to the Mingol territories makes it an ideal staging ground to launch an offensive. If war was declared on the tribes, the overlord and especially the duke of Klelg Nar would keep a sufficient number of troops stationed in the city to defend it against any retaliatory attacks. The overlord's attacking army would therefore be largely made of from soldiers of the western cities as well as mercenary bands. However, soldiers from Klelg Nar would also be chosen to join the fight for their experience with fighting this enemy.

The players could be one of the many mercenary bands hired by the overlord or they could be soldiers from one of the Eight Cities. Either way, this provides the players with many opportunities to prove themselves and get promoted through the ranks of the overlord's army. Once the war begins, the army will leave Klelg Nar and march out into the Steppes.

Rime Isle

'Yet,' Fafhrd said, recalling something, 'my grey friend judged Rime Isle to be a sort of rim-spot, where one might meet all manner of strange ships and men and gods from very far places.'

'That's true also,' she said hurriedly. 'And perhaps it's favoured the same hard-headedness: how, where there are so many ghosts about,

to take account of only what the hand can firmly grasp and can be weighed in scales. Money and fish. It's one way to go.'

– Rime Isle

In ages past, Rime Isle was a place of superstition and faith much like any other nation in Nehwon. Now the northernmost vestiges of civilisation in the known world are populated by hard-headed, stubborn atheists who are set in their ways and possess a down-to-earth outlook on life. Ironically, these abject realists inhabit a land believed to be a myth by most Lankhmarts and other people of the south and it is a place where the reality of Nehwon merges with the realities of other worlds.

On the rarest of occasions, Rime Isle – which seems to act as an occasional lodestone for strange beings from other worlds – has been the site of new gods arriving on Nehwon. The most recent example in the *Swords* tales (though it is mentioned that it happens at other times) is the arrival of two near-dead gods who lack any believers in their own realities and manifest on Rime Isle. These are Odin and Loki, the deities of Norse legend. They use their powers to incite the populace – led by Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser – into a massive war with the sorcery-dominated Sea Mingols. Fortunately for all concerned, the two heroes regain their wits from the two otherworldly gods and banish them from Nehwon completely. Rime Isle may not play host to such irregularities often but when it does, the results can be spectacular.

The atheistic souls of Rime Isle have no time for theology and their down-to-earth natures leave little inclination for philosophy. Instead, though the people of the island are no more or less educated than any other Nehwonians, the acquisition and conservation of precious resources are the primary concerns of most Rimelanders. The fishing in the Outer Sea which rings Rime Isle in all directions is plentiful and rewarding and the Beach of Bleached Bones provides the Islers with an irregular and grim supply of wood for their buildings, all taken from wrecked ships.

Rime Isle is not densely populated by any means. The only two settlements on the entire island are Salthaven and Cold Harbour and the latter of these is no more than a small harbour and a dozen or so huts. Hermits dwell in the tundra that makes up the island's skin but the bulk of the nation's several thousand citizens dwell in Salthaven on the south coast of the island, adjacent to Cold Harbour on the north.

Due to a curious current, this beach is the location for many items, bodies and chunks of ships that sink in the Outer Sea to eventually wash up. Rimelanders walk the beach from time to time, collecting the salvageable materials and objects from amongst the detritus.

The leaders of Rime Isle guard the ancient treasures of Simorgya, which apparently once belonged to the royal family or some other equally high-blooded rulers of that sunken land. It is believed

that the strange underwater-dwelling beings of Simorgya can sense when one of their ancient lost treasures – which are all made of solid gold – touch the salty water of the Outer Sea. In the *Swords* tales, this is demonstrated when the Grey Mouser quells the Great Maelstrom with the Gold Cube of Square Dealing and the sea-dwelling princesses of Simorgya plot the return of their artefacts once they know the exact location of them.

Salthaven

Salthaven on Rime Isle's southern coast is the island's main trading port. A sizeable harbour is able to support several large ships and has warehouses for storage a short way back from the docks. Though the island is considered legendary by many people in Nehwon, enough folk know the truth for there to be brisk trade between Rime Isle and the rest of Nehwon.

Due to the scarcity of trees on the island, the majority of the buildings here are constructed from wood gathered from wrecked or dismantled ships, which makes the settlement either something of an eyesore or possessed of a strange beauty, depending on one's perspective. What is immediately noticeable upon arriving is that there is usually a surprising number of ships in port – and not just the many fishing sloops of the townspeople. Rime Isle sees no shortage of trade with the outside world, even though many southerners see the place as little more than a myth.

The town has its fair share of taverns and a few inns, making it somewhat resemble the settlements of the south, though Rime Isle sees little in the way of crime since most everyone knows each other and the community is tightly-knit. Visitors can choose to stay in one of the taverns or inns and pay business prices on top of their docking costs or to remain in the port area, bunking their men in the shore quarters run by harbour master Groniger, which is free with the docking cost of a gold piece a day per head.

What few courtesans work here dress in red to identify themselves to potential clients, though there is no organised guild as in Lankhmar. It is likely that most whores make their coin from the townsfolk and the visiting foreigners who may or may not be from other lands but still share the same desires as all men. Private rooms can be rented in many taverns, such as the Flame Den in the Salt Herring. These kind of nighttime parties are a popular pastime in the town, though they tend to be private and quiet affairs rather than a city-wide decadence reminiscent of the sprawling southern cities.

The Council of Rime Isle

The blue front of the council hall appeared, its door framed by some gone galleon's massive stern and flanked by two glum louts with quarterstaves. The Mouser felt Hilsa and Rill hesitate but crying in a loud voice, 'All honour to the council!' he swept them inside with him, Ourph and Mikkidu ducking in after.

The room inside was larger and somewhat more lofty than the one at the Salt Herring but was grey-timbered like it, built of wrecks. And it had no fireplace but was inadequately warmed by two smoking braziers and lit by torches that burned blue and sad (perhaps there were bronze nails in them), not merrily golden-yellow like Rill's. The main article of furniture was a long heavy table at one end of which Cif and Alfreyt sat, looking their haughtiest. Drawn away from them toward the other end were seated ten large sober Isle-men of middle years, Groniger in their midst, with such doleful, gloomily indignant, outraged looks on their faces that the Mouser burst out laughing. Other Islers crowded the walls, some women among them. All turned on the newcomers faces of mingled puzzlement and disapproval.

– Rime Isle

Salthaven and by extension all of Rime Isle is ruled by the citizen council, which is comprised of inheriting nobles and townspeople in positions of authority, such as the harbour master. Their meetings are to discuss and decide important issues like matters of lumber-trade and the potential for war, as well as any oddities in the current visiting ships or in matters of treasury, such as merchant ventures to the south or the continued safeguarding of the gold icons of Simorgya.

The councilmen as portrayed in the *Swords* stories are hidebound and grouchy, barring Alfreyt and Cif, who are two shrewd and superstitious noblewomen that become the lovers of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser respectively when the ageing heroes retire. Any characters dealing with the Salthaven council can expect to face a board of traditionalists and stern judges, who will believe no words dealing with the supernatural. Observers are welcome to watch the council in session and ask questions of their own for their leaders to answer.

The Salt Herring

Moonlight striking almost horizontally left the narrow street in shadow but revealed the cross-set beams above the Salt Herring's door. Where did they get so much wood in an island so far north? That question was at least answered for him when he pressed on inside. The tavern was built of the grey beams and planks of wrecked or dismantled ships – one wall still had a whaleback curve and in another he noted the borings and embedded shells of sea creatures.

– Rime Isle

The Salt Herring (before it burns in the events detailed in the later *Swords* tales) is a classic example of the taverns in Salthaven. Here residents come to drink and make merry or to simply talk of the day's fish-hauls. The games played here are more often backgammon or chess with chunky stone pieces, rather than knife games or dice bets as one would find in the south. That is not to say such pastimes do not exist – they do. They are just less common here.

A private room, the Flame Den, is available for nightly rental by those wishing to hold their own parties with the comfort of an indoor open fire, which is a relatively rare occurrence in

Salthaven taverns given the scarcity of wood on the island. It was in this fire that the god Loki resided while he convalesced in Nehwon, before his banishment at the hands of the Grey Mouser. The stocky but ancient herbalist-cum-witch woman, Mother Grum, is often the doorwoman here. She is a hunched but lumpish and intimidating figure, which combined with her warty face gives her the appearance of the mother of all ogres.

Cold Harbour

Those farmhouses and byres had been of turf or sod mainly, with grass and flowers growing on their narrow roofs and smokeholes instead of chimneys. Mara, dry-eyed, pointed out the one she'd dwelt in. Cold Harbour was simply a dozen such dwellings atop a rather steep hill or large mound backed against the glacier and turf-walled – a sort of retreat for the country-dwellers in times of peril.

– Rime Isle

The northern settlement on Rime Isle is the hamlet of Cold Harbour in the north. Though ships can dock here in the settled waters of a large bay, Cold Harbour itself is little more than a fishing village populated by a few hundred people. Cold Harbour is accessible by sail or by a trek across the Deathlands, neither of which is overly appealing since the former involves sailing around the Great Maelstrom and the latter means a hike across harsh tundra.

Cold Harbour suffered in the siege by the Sea Mingols, though rebuilding such a tiny settlement is hardly any effort at all. Since northward of Rime Isle is the vast polar ice cap and little else, few vessels ever sail into Cold Harbour and a portion of those that try end up wrecked on the Beach of Bleached Bones off Rime Isle's eastern shore as they attempt to navigate around the island's edge. In fact, it is likely that this northernmost reach of Rime Isle sees more otherworldly traffic than Nehwonian vessels coming into its modest port.

The Deathlands

The majority of Rime Isle's landscape is taken up by the tundra known as the Deathlands, which is equally rocky shale, bare earth almost too icy to farm and glacial runoff that freezes the earth solid for months on end in some regions.

Traversing the Deathlands counts as Slight Adversity due to the rocky ground but the real hindrance is that no opportunities exist for hunting or foraging in the wild once a traveller leaves the comfort of Salthaven. No game runs across Rime Isle's tundra and nothing in the way of edible flora exists to offer succour to the weary traveller, either. Although the Cold Waste is the most ice-blasted realm of Nehwon, Rime Isle is the most truly inhospitable because it is so utterly barren. More than once in the *Swords* stories, a Rimelander comments on his island being hostile to human life, yet the residents struggle on with the life they are accustomed to, perhaps under the belief that the decadent south has little to offer them, with all the superstitions and 'false' faiths.

Hellglow & Darkfire

To the north rose the dark crater-summit of Mount Hellglow, so lofty and near that its eastern foothills still cast their shadows on the ice. A wisp of smoke rose from it, trailing off east. At the snowline a shadow on the dark rock seemed to mark the mouth of a cavern leading into the mountain's heart. Its lower slopes were thickly crusted with snow, leading back to the glacier which, narrow at this point, stretched ahead of them north into the glittering grey sea, surprisingly near.

– Rime Isle

The two glacial volcanoes of Rime Isle are known by the rather dramatic names of Mounts Hellglow and Darkfire. Both volcanoes are massive and active, still erupting on rare occasions but usually just content to belch smoke almost constantly. It is these twin mountains of the Deathlands that mark the back of Rime Isle gold pieces.

Gallows Hill

This aptly named hill is where the Rime Isle gallows were set up in order to execute Salthaven's rare criminals. It was a site sacred to the invader god Odin, who established a minor cult among the people of Rime Isle which he termed the Order of the Noose. Before the events in the *Swords* story *Rime Isle*, Gallows Hill is little more than what the name describes. Afterwards, it becomes a grim memory of a time when the peace of the island was almost irrevocably shattered.

The Great Maelstrom

'Oh, yes – the Great Maelstrom off the isle's rock-fanged east coast with its treacherous swift currents and tricky tides, the Great Maelstrom from whence the island gets what wood it owns, after it's cast up on the Beach of Bleached Bones. It forms regularly each day. Our sailors know it well and avoid it like no other peril.

This strange phenomenon seems equal parts natural and mystical in its appearance. According to the Rimelanders, due to the natural currents in the Outer Sea past Rime Isle's eastern coast, a colossal whirlpool forms every day in the late afternoon, lasting for several hours, snaring some of the many ships that come to Rime Isle and dragging them under the roiling, churning waves.

After the vessel and its crew have been pulled under, the ship is dashed against the rocks underneath the water and the stone 'fangs' on the eastern shore, to be scuttled by relentless battering. These vessels do achieve their goal of reaching Rime Isle, though not quite the way they intended. Instead they wash up, wrecked and ruined, on the Beach of Bleached Bones.

The Grey Mouser effectively sealed the Great Maelstrom by hurling one of the Simorgyan icons, the Gold Cube of Square Dealing, into its heart. Whatever other properties this icon may have possessed (which the Rimelanders themselves seemed not to have known) are lost after the later stories in the *Swords* tales.

Beach of Bleached Bones

The Beach of Bleached Bones is the main source of wood for fire and construction on Rime Isle, which says something about the number of vessels that must crash here. Even a small community like Salthaven requires a great deal of wood, after all.

The beach is a grisly scene of detritus. Pieces of wrecked ships obviously make up most of the scenery but personal possessions of killed sailors are common as well, as are the corpses of the sailors themselves which wash up with each sunken vessel.

Khahkht of the Black Ice

Inside a sphere half again as tall as a man, a skinny old being was busy. On the interior of the sphere was depicted a world map of Nehwon, the seas in blackest blues, the land in blackest greens and browns, yet all darkly agleam like blued, greened and browned iron, creating the illusion that the sphere was a giant bubble rising forever through infinite murky, oily waters – as some Lankhmar philosophers assert is the veriest truth about Nehwon-world itself. South of the Eastern Lands in the Great Equatorial Ocean there was even depicted a ring-shaped water wall a span across and three fingers high, such as those same philosophers say hides the sun from the half of Nehwon it is floating across, though no blinding solar disk now lay in the bottom of the liquid crater but only a pale glow sufficient to light the sphere's interior.

Where they were not hid by a loose, light robe, the old being's four long, ever-active limbs were covered by short, stiff black hairs either grizzled or filmed with ice, while Its narrow face was nasty as a spider's. Now It lifted Its leathery lips and nervously questing long-nailed fingers towards an area of the map where a tiny, gleaming black blotch south of the blue and amidst brown signified Lankhmar City on the southern coast of the Inner Sea. Was it Its breath that showed frosty or did Its will conjure up the white wisp that streaked across the black blotch? Whichever, the vapour vanished.

– The Frost Monstreme

In the later *Swords* tales, when Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser effectively retire from a life of adventuring, they fall prey to the schemes of a sorcerer known as Khahkht of the Black Ice, who was once a Mingol but is now spoken of by the people of the Great Steppes as something else entirely. He is an 'It' not a 'he,' as confirmed by the words of old Ourph, the two heroes' loyal sailing slave:

'Khahkht is Khahkht. It is no tribal sorcerer, 'tis sure. It dwells in farthest north within a dome – some say a floating globe – of blackest ice, from whence It watches the least deeds of men, devising evil every chance It gets, as when the stars are right – better say wrong – and all the Gods asleep. Mingols dread Khahkht and yet... when'er they reach a grand climacteric they turn to It, beseech It ride



ahead before their greatest, bloodiest centauring. Ice is Its favoured quarter, ice Its tool and ice breath Its surest sign save blink.'

Khahkht may once have been mortal but It somehow attained a power and an immortality almost equal to that of Sheelba of the Eyeless Face and Ningauble of the Seven Eyes, who both mention Khahkht in tones that, if not fearful, are at least weighted with tones of caution when they recall that the northern ice wizard is not their ally.

Khahkht threatens Rime Isle and the two heroes that land there purely because if Its desire to spread malice and suffering wherever It is able. Its sorceries, which primarily deal with ice and manipulation of the hearts of men, are definitely Black Magic – not the Ice Magic of the Snow Women – or something yet more powerful such as that possibly practised by Sheelba and Ningauble.

The Frost Monstreme

Out of the torn and darkening fog bank, driving with preternatural rapidity into the teeth of the gale on a course to smash them, both, there had silently come a craft monstrous in size and aspect. It might well have remained unseen until collision, save that the weird rays of the rising black sun striking its load side engendered there a

horrid, pale reflection, not a natural white light at all but a loathy, colourless luminescence – a white to make the flesh crawl, a cave-toad, fish-belly white. And if the substance making the reflection had any texture at all, it was that of ridged and crinkled grey horn – dead men's fingernails.

– The Frost Monstreme

One of Its first plots was the creation of a black mist or storm clouds that blocked the sun and allowed a giant ship of ice to sail on the Outer Sea in pursuit of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser under the un-light of a new and unholy 'black' sun. This vessel, which was oared and apparently crewed, though by unknown hands, attempted to ram the vessels of the two heroes and hurled great chunks of ice at their ships as if by catapults.

Ultimately, after what the heroes called the Night of Terror – pursued through the blackness by the vast ice ship – Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser captained their ships out of the black cloud and into the sunlight again, where the 'frost monstreme' dissolved under the sun's rays.

However, even though this plan failed against the heroes from Lankmar in the *Swords* stories, there is nothing to say that the Games Master could not have Khahkht try the same trick twice. In cases where the trick is as darkly threatening, interesting and as just plain cool as this one, Games Masters with an eye for the source material can repeat the events staged in the stories without too much fear of the characters getting bored by familiarity with the books.

After all, Khahkht is essentially unbeatable. It has transcended game mechanics much in the way character statistics would be inappropriate for Sheelba and Ning. That can make for a very fun and dangerous antagonist, as long as there is sufficient reward and satisfaction in defeating Its plans despite ultimate victory over the monster Itself being next to impossible.

The War for Rime Isle

In Its desire to crush Rime Isle completely (and snuff out the lives of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser in the bargain), Khahkht manipulates an army of Sea Mingols into laying siege to the island. Meanwhile, Fafhrd, the Grey Mouser and the people of Rime Isle are troubled by the antics of the invader gods Odin and Loki, who desire the residents of the island to die a mass death in a great war with the Mingols. Fafhrd and the Mouser come to their senses in time to shake off the gods' enchantments and avert much of the war but the event does reveal an interesting connection between Khahkht of the Black Ice and the Invisibles of Stardock.

Prince Faroomfar of Stardock is Khahkht's ally in the later *Swords* tales and apparently the ice wizard had a hand in the invisible race's creation. Conversely, the princesses of the Invisibles aid their former lovers Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser. It is in these last battles that Fafhrd manages to mutilate Faroomfar and in return loses a hand to Odin's noose magic.

Adventures on Rime Isle

Rime Isle provides Games Masters with a more unusual setting that are more suited to scenarios that part of a larger story, rather than basing an entire campaign here.

Malice

Games Masters who are considering using Khahkht of the Black Ice as an antagonist capable of creating huge wars should note that Its malice – and Its strange map within his floating sphere above the north pole – covers all of Nehwon, not just Rime Isle. The manipulation of people and frost-based sorcery are arguable more powerful in regions where snow and cold are the norm, though that can cover much of northern Nehwon and the south in the winter season. Games Masters can therefore use Khahkht without fear of Its evils being confined to a limited region.

Other Worlds

The otherworldly beings and new gods that have been known to arrive at Rime Isle provide Games Masters with an opportunity to add some mystical and magical encounters to their games, as well as introduce mythical beings from other dimensions and even other settings.

This is not an aspect of Rime Isle that has any game mechanics attached to it; indeed, such mechanics are impossible given the vague nature of the island's mysteries. Instead it is simply a fact of the island – strange ships and foreigners from no known land in Nehwon arrive in Satlhaven and Cold Harbour, Rime Isle's only ports, to be explained or expanded upon by Games Masters with a flair for introducing the people of other realities into their campaigns. This is certainly not a flavour that will appeal to all groups or fit in with all styles of campaign.

Some examples of the possibilities here include the arrival of a god that gives birth to a new religion or cult, a strange entity that seeks to dominate the people of Rime Isle and beyond or perhaps a creature appears that simply wants to devour what little life it finds here.

Another possibility lies within the strange, secret underground passages that riddle Rime Isle, many of which terminate (or begin?) in the bowels and craters of these volcanoes. Given the connection Rime Isle has with other worlds and realities, there is a chance these caverns could be a cousin of Ningauble's own strange caverns, with passages leading to other realms or spheres of existence. Mapping such a possibility, perhaps even at Ningauble's request, would be an epic undertaking for any group of adventurers.

Scavengers

Games Masters have a unique opportunity where the Beach of Bleached Bones is concerned, in that one can find the most unexpected treasures here. It could make an interesting and eerie climax to a world-spanning adventure, where the

characters travel the length of Nehwon in search of something lost and forgotten amid the beach's saltwater-washed debris or the beginning of another if the characters discover something magical and cursed among the wreckage of a ship.

Simorgya

On the massive threshold Fafhrd involuntarily halted, dumbstruck by the realisation of the source of the faint yellow light he had noticed in the high windows. For the source was everywhere: ceiling, walls and slimy floor all glowed with a wavering phosphorescence. Even the carvings glimmered. Mixed awe and repugnance gripped him. But the men pressed around and against him and carried him forward. Wine and leadership had dulled their sensibilities and as they strode down the long corridor they seemed little aware of the abysmal scene.

– The Sunken Land

Ancient Simorgya, the submerged kingdom, is the Atlantis-tale of Nehwon. Once it was a realm sitting above the ocean's waves; now it is lost to the black depths of the Outer Sea.

Some explorers, whether lifelong mariners or sailors flung far out to sea by hostile weather, have reported sighting portions of Simorgya risen out of the cold waters and remaining on the surface of the sea for short periods of time. It is not known why this happens, though some unknown and unknowable magic is the likeliest explanation.

Fafhrd and a crew of northerners once set foot on a risen portion of Simorgya with horrifying results. For more details of the adventure and the slaughter of gold-hungry barbarians, see page 161. For details on the ray-like creatures that killed everyone setting foot on Simorgya except Fafhrd, please refer to page 131.

Games Masters have the chance to use Simorgya as a way of breathing the legendary aspects of Nehwon into an otherwise low magic campaign. The unearthly eeriness of the sunken city makes it a perfect place to hunt for ancient, alien items of power, as well as a location where it is likely characters will confront frightening and inhuman monsters. In the *Swords* saga, Simorgya was used to add a dash of horror and tragedy into the story. Games Masters might find it satisfying to do the very same in their games – the powerful sense of unease, even disgust that characters will feel here, can create a potent atmosphere.

Godsland

In the Land of the Gods, in short in Godland and near Nehwon's Life Pole there, which lies in the southern hemisphere at the antipodes from the Shadowland (abode of Death), three gods sitting together cross-legged in a circle picked out Fafhrd's and the Mouser's voices from the general mutter of their worshippers, both loyal and lapsed, which resounds eternally in any god's ear, as if he held a seashell to it.

– Under the Thumbs of Gods

Godsland is the realm where all the deities with at least one believer live and interact, kept alive by the faith of mortals. Here

Treasures of Lost Simorgya

The Rimic icons belonging to the Rimelanders and guarded by the Treasurer of the Rime Isle Council are considered the 'atheist-holy' relics of the island and its inhabitants. These are the most precious and valuable relics on the island and are easily among the most valuable items in all of known Nehwon. The Rimelanders generally cite that these icons have been in their possession for centuries and end all conversation there. The truth of the matter is a little more convoluted.

These treasures, which go by grandiloquent names such as the Golden Arrow of Truth, the Gold Circles of Unity, the Gold Cube of Square-Dealing, the Golden Ruler of Prudence and the Little Gold Cup of Measured Hospitality (to name but a few) are not actually Rimic in origin. They are Simorgyan relics from that sunken and lost land, come into the possession of the Rimelanders by one of two ways.

The first possibility is that like many objects in the Outer Sea, the treasures washed up on the Beach of Bleached Bones. This is the tale put forth by most Rimelanders when questioned on the topic.

The second possibility, one which is legendarily believed to have somehow hastened or been responsible for Simorgya's sinking, is that Rimic raiders stole the icons and fled back to their Isle laden with the holy relics of ancient Simorgya.

Whichever story is true (and that in itself is the province of the Games Master to decide) the Rimic icons are worth dizzying amounts of money to many collectors and magicians across the length and breadth of Nehwon, not least of all the Rimelanders themselves who would pay dearly to either have the icons found if they were stolen or handed over for a large reward in the case of new Simorgyan relics being discovered.

While the belief that these golden relics each possess some kind of magical power remains unconfirmed, it does seem likely given the vast reverence paid to them by the Rimic folk.

they listen to their worshippers, occasionally congratulating themselves on their renown and sometimes plaguing their less-than-faithful followers with minor curses. No mortal has ever sailed or walked to Godsland and although it is believed to be close to Nehwon's southern pole, it is widely thought that walking on the soil of Godsland is an impossible task for mortal beings.

Games Masters are advised that Godsland is detailed here for completion purposes rather than as a potential place to set adventures. Unlike its polar opposite realm, the Shadowland, adventuring in Godsland has little to offer. Face to face meetings with the gods of Nehwon are something that should be used delicately, if at all. It is certainly something rarely dealt with in the *Swords* saga.

GUILDS AND CULTS

Guilds

This chapter presents many of Lankhmar's guilds, with details provided for Player Characters to join them if their goals lay in that direction. However, readers will note that by traditional *RuneQuest* standards, these guilds appear very light on special bonuses. They teach no spells, the rules of Runelords and other ranks are largely absent, they offer fewer tangible benefits than the cults in generic *RuneQuest*, their requirements for rising in rank are different to the standard template and they seem to come with more responsibility than most cults do – almost like a job. The entrance requirements are also a matter of roleplaying and character development rather than simple percentage limits on skills.

In truth, a job is exactly what each of these guilds represents. A character in the Beggars' Guild or the Thieves' Guild takes on a certain amount of responsibility in the name of earning more money than he would independently.

The bonuses offered are slight from a game mechanics perspective but this is never going to be the main reason for joining a guild, nor is it to be the main focus of a guild character's development. Games Masters are spoilt for choice when it comes to characters who take on additional guild duties as well as their adventuring pastimes. The primary reward for joining a guild should always be represented in the twists and turns of the story arc rather than in dice bonuses. A member of the Thieves' Guild will have access to information and of heists no Lankhmart outside the Guild would ever know about. A member of the House of Red Lanterns will have intimate dealings with merchants and ranking military officers among her clientele. A Beggars' Guild member will overhear secrets most gossipmongers may miss.

The storyline opportunities presented by guild work should always be a motivating factor when Games Masters plan their campaigns. If players are going to spend their time nailing down a career and restricting their wanderings, it behoves Games Masters to make something good come of the sacrifice.

Unless otherwise stated, these guilds only operate in the city of Lankhmar.

The Assassins' Order

The elite faction of murderers

The inner circle and most-skilled of the Slayers' Brotherhood (see page 116) are not picked for the mundane throat-cuttings, beatings and protection jobs that filter through the ranks of the rest of the

Brotherhood. The Assassins' Order is a guild within a guild, with a membership open only to the best-trained and talented killers. These men (women are banned from the Order in typical Lankhmarese misogyny) are charged with hunting down single targets and ending a victim's life without witnesses – often even without leaving a trace. In this latter case, poison is the preferred tool. In most other instances, a knife in the back, a dagger through the eye or a crossbow bolt through the neck from a shadowy rooftop will suffice.

As the Brotherhood's elite, assassins are highly paid and receive dedicated training. The Order itself has many contacts within the Grain Merchants' Cartel, the Thieves' Guild and the overlord's court. The Grain Merchants are notorious for offing each other in the name of economic espionage; the Thieves' Guild sometimes hire elite killers to slay notable aristocrats and constables who threaten Guild affairs and the murders that occur in the decadent bloodlines of the overlord's court are legendary among the public, to the point where plays at the street theatres occasionally perform satires of who has been killed by whom among the nobility.

Requirements: Candidates must have the blood of two-dozen victims on their hands, recorded in the books of the Slayers' Brotherhood. These 24 victims need not have been all killed, though most likely were.

Skills: Bow, Crossbow, Dagger, Disguise, Lore (Poison), Perception, Stealth, Streetwise.

Duties: Once per month, the character must kill a specially selected target. The details of the job will vary greatly, with some requiring a blatant murder and others preferring no trace of the deed left for others to find.

Special Benefits: The Assassins' Order has an elaborate web of contacts within the highest echelons of Lankhmar citizenry. All members gain +10% on Influence rolls with noblemen and noblewomen aware of the character's guild affiliation, as well as a +20% on all Influence tests to resist arrest or offer a bribe.

Members also gain a Second Chance roll, usable once per week, on any roll involving a Guild-related skill.

The Beggars' Guild

Brotherhood of charlatans and information-gatherers

The actions of the Guild are overseen by two co-leaders, the Day Beggarmaster and the Night Beggarmaster, who take command of the Guild during their respective times of day. The building

itself is three storeys tall and features a second storey connecting walkway to an adjoining building, which is also used to house the charlatans and flimflammers of the Beggars' Guild.

The responsibilities of the Beggars' Guild are simple enough. Members are expected to walk the streets either from dawn until noon, noon until dusk or nightfall until midnight and beg for money by putting on any number of acted ailments and feigned injuries. A few walk the cobblestone streets from midnight until dawn but this is a rare assignment and dangerous even for those allied with the Thieves' Guild. Most but not all, beggars in the Guild are actors, plain and simple, specialising in one particular form of panhandling, be it blindness, walking with a limp and telling a 'maimed veteran' story or something equally deceptive. Though most Lankhmarts are aware that the Guild is populated by liars and fakers, many are good enough actors to convey an air of being 'true' beggars and exceptions to the dishonest majority. It is surprising how many marks fall for the act in the space of a single afternoon or evening.

The secondary (some would say primary) pastime for Beggars' Guild members is to gather information. Most of this is gossip and rumours picked up from taverns, overhearing pedestrians and tailing marks through the streets without being seen, as well as hanging out outside certain merchant buildings and various guild houses. Most of this information falls into the categories of gossip, rumour or worthless talk. Other information falls neatly into the realm of interest that pricks up the ears of the Thieves' Guild and is sold to the thieves for a pittance. Anyone can bribe a beggar but the thieves get to do it for cheap because of the alliance between the two guilds. The beggars act as additional eyes for the thieves; the thieves split the profits from ventures completed with the beggars' aid.

Games Masters focusing on the underworld elements of Lankhmar, which are so deeply entrenched in the setting it can be hard *not* to figure them into the campaign, need to pay consideration to the extensive network of criminal activity that sits with the Thieves' Guild. The Beggars' Guild are the eyes and lips of the thieves, tracking people down, overhearing everything spoken above a whisper in Lankhmar and faithfully relaying all to the Master Thief. Characters wishing for any degree of privacy are going to have to play things very carefully in public, for fear that any one of the beggars on the streets or downtrodden souls sipping cheap soup in a slum tavern is a beggar out looking for information to take back to his masters. To operate with impunity in Lankhmar, bribing the Beggars' Guild is the first step. Doing so will effectively close the eyes of the Thieves' Guild to the characters' actions, at least until the thieves' other contacts bring information to them.

The downside to this is that bribing the Beggars' Guild is no easy feat. Bribing individual beggars to remain silent is one thing. Silencing a guild is quite another. This is where the Day Beggarmaster and Night Beggarmaster of the beggars' brotherhood come into play.

Both of these leaders oversee and coordinate the Guilds' efforts and much of each Guild's style is based on its respective personalities and work ethics. In *Ill Met in Lankhmar*, it is established that Flim is the Night Beggarmaster during the rule of Krovas as the head of the Thieves' Guild. He is a portly man who carries a gilded staff and has a noted limp in his stride. Flim is clearly dedicated to the Guild, for he worked the day and night shifts while the Day Beggarmaster, Bannat, was ill abed for over a week. It is also well known that Flim frequently arranges his own shifts to take place on Whore Street so that he can indulge his appetite for pleasures of the flesh.

Games Masters who design their own Day and Night Beggarmasters have an excellent opportunity to provide hooks for the characters to deal with the Lankhmar underworld. These figures are generally approachable, though a Games Master might decide that one or both of them require certain hoops to be jumped through before they grant an audience. On the whole, it makes sense that getting to see them is no real trouble unless their personalities dictate that they prefer to be secretive for some compelling reason, such as a genuine mutilation they prefer to keep hidden.

Dealing with the Beggarmasters is the fun part. Mostly, the alliance with the Thieves' Guild runs deep enough that any insurrection against the other guild is unlikely at best and inconceivable at worst. Bribing a Beggarmaster to remain silent on some topic or perhaps even to spread disinformation to the Thieves' Guild, is a different flip of the coin. With a weighty bribe, some Beggarmasters who are less than loyal might consider stunting the flow of information or altering certain aspects of it. Of course, we are talking a Rilk-based bribe and a great deal of Gold Rilks at that. The price will vary depending on the favour required and the Beggarmaster's attitude, with some perhaps even asking for a task to be performed or some item located before they will put their necks on the line for the sake of the characters.

If an offered bribe is refused, the chances are that the Thieves' Guild will hear about it straight from the Beggarmaster's mouth. This is likely to draw the attention (and the ire) of the Thieves' Guild, who will suddenly want to know why a character wanted to blind the criminal gang to certain actions.

Beggarmasters that take an inordinate amount of interest in a character are also in a position to make life very hard for the Player Characters. Beggars following the characters around day and night will make it hard for the group to keep any of their activities secret, for prying eyes will open in every dark alleyway. Though the Beggars' Guild is rarely a combative antagonist in any *Lankhmar* campaign, it can still feature as a cunning and frustrating enemy. Games Masters should be careful about spotting or foiling every single action undertaken by the Player Characters, however. The Beggars' Guild are not perfect in their trade and the characters deserve the chance to escape notice if they keep their wits about them. Lankhmar is a huge city and hiding places exist around every street corner.

Requirements: Pass an entrance interview with either Beggarmaster.

Skills: Disguise, Influence, Language, Perception, Stealth, Streetwise.

Duties: Eavesdropping and begging.

Special Benefits: All Guild members gain a +10% bonus to all Influence rolls with constables to resist arrest or make a successful bribe. Beggars also gain a +10% bonus to all Perception and Streetwise rolls while in Lankhmar, by virtue of always knowing what to look for.

Guild members donate 50% of their take each day and night to the respective Beggarmaster. This donation is the same regardless of rank in the Guild.

The City Watch

Lankhmar's first and only line of law

Made up of constables that report to barracks commanders within the military, the city watch is the main bastion of law and order on the streets of Lankhmar. To say that it is corrupt is an understatement and might imply that the foundations of the watch have honest, decent roots. The opposite is true. The watch is not a good, hard-working organisation mired in corruption but rather a thoroughly inefficient, nasty little ragtag army that occasionally does a good job out of necessity to hold its position and keep up appearances.

Not every single watchman is a walking, laughing, bribe-taking dereliction of duty but most are. A constable need not even be a bad person to fall into corruption – the overwhelming lawlessness and dangers of Lankhmar ensure even the most virtuous man will have all manner of trouble clinging to his morals (and Lankhmar is short of virtuous men at the very best of times).

The dark alleyways and dangerous streets of Lankhmar after dark make for uninviting patrols. Realistically, there is simply no way for the city watch to do their job efficiently. To

catch a thief, a constable has to go into the slums and hunt the criminal down and the odds of walking out of that duty with an un-slit throat are not good. Then there's the matter of actual arrests stirring up the local thieves and their influential leaders. Causing trouble for the Thieves' Guild is asking for a world of trouble, as few guilds have the power and reach available to Lankhmar's thieves.

Citizens are never surprised to find a constable on the take. It is simply a part of life in Lankhmar. Bribing constables to look the other way or release a prisoner is nothing new to many Lankhmarts. Part of the reason so many watchmen are so susceptible to bribes is that the city recognises the inherent impossibility of their job and pays them next to nothing. At first glance this might seem unfair but city officials are well aware that most constables earn significant portions of their money on the side from bribes and kickbacks. It is a vicious circle and no-one knows how it started; did the constables go corrupt because of the rise of the thieves or did the thieves only rise because the constables let it happen? Whatever the answer, the unscrupulous city watch walk the streets during the day and half of them are as



guilty as those they half-heartedly try to arrest. Come nightfall, constables patrol the city and man the gates but stay well away from the slums unless they have bribes of their own to pay to the Thieves' Guild.

In regards to equipment, the guardsmen of the watch wear browned iron cuirasses and helms and they carry pikes and clubs as weapons. Few bear shields, though they are not forbidden to do so.

Requirements: The right attitude and a clean arrest record *or* a penchant for giving beatings and a guiltless, bribe-taking outlook

Skills: 1H Club, 1H Sword, Dodge, Influence, Streetwise.

Duties: Eight-hour shifts patrolling or on gate guard duty, four days out of every seven.

Special Benefits: A handful of Smerduks a week in pay and a clean conscience *or* a sore neck from looking the other way and whatever kickbacks are taken from criminals.

The Guild of Grain Merchants

The largest merchant guild in Lankhmar

The Guild of Grain Merchants is one of the largest guilds in Lankhmar and oversees the trade of all grain within the city. A quarter of all members' profits are set aside for the Harvest Tax and contributes a large portion to the overlord's coffers. Mandatory membership and high fees has made the Guild of Grain Merchants wealthy and powerful, almost enough to rival the Thieves' Guild. The guild is run by an inner circle of the richest and most powerful members of the guild.

Merchant Member

Requirements: Membership is mandatory for anyone harvesting grain from Lankhmar's grain fields.

Skills: Commerce (*RuneQuest II* only), Evaluate, Influence (*RuneQuest I* only), Perception.

Duties: All members must pay one third of their profits to the guild. This is used to pay the Harvest Tax and running costs of the guild.

Councillor

Requirements: Each year, the seven most profitable members are appointed as councillors of the inner circle.

Duties: Councillors are responsible for running the guild. This involves employing administrators to do most of the day-to-day work whilst the councillors set guild policy and make the big decisions.

Special Benefits: All members are given stamped leather chits that grant access to the city's Grain Gate. Councillors receive a share of the guild profits, which combined with their personal profits usually ensures they remain part of the inner circle.

The House of Red Lanterns

The courtesans' guild

The House of Red Lanterns is run by a small 'council' of madams that oversee the accounts and actions of the whores' guild. The order is named on account of courtesans walking the streets with candle-lamps of red paper or lanterns with red glass, identifying their trade.

The House of Red Lanterns has strong ties to the Slayers' Brotherhood. The murder of courtesans is punished in kind and almost all Red Lantern girls are protected by nearby Slayers or guild-employed pimps chosen by the madams. Unlike the Thieves' Guild, the Red Lantern members do not frown on freelance competition, since the guild's courtesans are generally a cut above the average streetwalker and receive the lion's share of the attention and business on the cobblestone streets of sinful, decadent Lankhmar.

Requirements: Characters must be female with a CHA of 10 or above.

Skills: Athletics, Dagger, Influence, Persistence, Streetwise.

Duties: Courtesans must work a minimum of four nights a week.

Special Benefits: Guild members tithes 50% of their earnings to the guild, keeping the rest. They are appointed a member of the Slayers' Brotherhood stationed nearby while they work.

The Lankhmarines

Lankhmar's elite naval soldiers

While Lankhmar's vast navy is manned by sailors that see some degree of battle training, the largest ships in the overlord's fleet carry small regiments of the finest fighting troops in the world. Only a few thousand Lankhmarines exist at any one time, since they are highly-paid and the standards of excellence they adhere to means that many recruits simply do not make it to professional service. These men are granted additional training compared to common soldiers and are often charged with the most dangerous boarding actions and beachhead landings in times of war.

Requirements: All guild skills at 30% or more.

Skills: Boating, 1H Sword, Athletics, Bow, Dagger, Shiphandling, Stealth.

Duties: Service in the Lankhmarese Navy for 10 months out of every 12.

Special Benefits: Lankhmarines gain +10% to all Influence rolls in Lankhmar's taverns because of their reputation. All Lankhmarines have a Second Chance roll usable once per week on any roll involving the guild's skills. Lankhmarines are paid a few Rilks each month for their services, in addition to danger money that usually takes the form of a little extra silver.

The Lumber Guild

The wealthiest guild in the Eight Cities

As one would expect, the most prominent guild in the Eight Cities is the Lumber Guild. The harvesting and trading of lumber is the very lifeblood of the Forest Land. All lumber traded through the guild guarantees a certain quality of timber. Most builders and craftsmen will only buy wood from members of the Lumber Guild, knowing that it will not be too damp, warped or knotted.

Requirements: All lumber traded by the member must meet the standards of the guild.

Skills: Commerce (*RuneQuest II* only), Craft (any wood related), Evaluate, Influence (*RuneQuest I* only).

Duties: Must pay annual fee of 100 Silver Smerduks and submit to random quality checks.

Special Benefits: Certificate of membership that can be shown to any prospective clients as proof that the member's goods meet with the guild's standards.

The Slayers' Brotherhood

Guild of mercenary cutthroats and killers

For the right price, often no more than a few Smerduks or a couple of Rilks at best, a man can buy the services of thugs who have no qualms about killing. The Slayers' Brotherhood is another of Lankhmar's largest guilds, its chief rival and occasional employer being the Thieves' Guild itself. From top to bottom, the Slayers' Brotherhood is filled with the kind of men and women that kill for money and shed no tears about the fact. After all, everyone has to earn a living.

Membership in the Slayers' Brotherhood does not always mean a member will be well trained. Rather, this is the guild for anyone with a weapon and the desire to earn a wage by murdering people. Some mercenaries join the Brotherhood, assigned to guard caravans, warehouses or couriers. The better trained members frequently hire out as bodyguards to important underworld society figures and receive the plum jobs of merc work. Other members are no more than street thugs, hired to beat money out of deadbeat gamblers, work as bullies in taverns or repossess homes from tenants in debt.

Anyone in Lankhmar that needs a couple of thugs is free to recruit the services of those in the Slayers' Brotherhood. Individuals are paid according to what rates their skills command. A handful of Tiks and Agols buys a thug with a knife and the guiltless attitude necessary to use it. Several Rilks will buy a skilled mercenary, armed and armoured, with a long record of good service. Bonuses from clients for efficient work are gently encouraged by the Brotherhood, while members found to be lacking in their duties are fired without fuss.

If a Brotherhood member shows exceptional talent as well as a gift for stealth and subtlety, he will be considered for entrance into the inner order of the Slayers' Brotherhood, known as the Assassins' Order. Assassins are considered to have left the Slayers' Brotherhood and use the game mechanics for the Assassins' Order.

Requirements: Perform well (not necessarily win) in a test combat with an established member.

Skills: 1H Club, 1H Sword, Dagger, Dodge, Perception, Streetwise, Unarmed.

Duties: Inflicting pain when paid to do so, working four days or nights out of every seven.

Special Benefits: Members of the Brotherhood have a +10% bonus to all Influence tests related to bribing the city guard or avoiding arrest. They also gain a Second Chance roll usable once per month on any guild-related skill roll.

The Thieves' Guild

Lankhmar's most powerful guild

The Thieves' Guild is the undisputed power among Lankhmar's guilds. During the reign of some overlords, the Master Thief has even been the power behind the throne, whispering his whims into the ear of the weak overlord and seeing them carried out across the city. Even at its weakest, the Guild is still unrivalled in power among the others, with even the Guild of Grain Merchants investing heavy bribes to keep its warehouses free of burglary and its members' families free of muggings. Overall the sentiment among Lankhmart is that the Thieves' Guild must be tolerated and appeased, though it is often simply feared.

At all times, the Thieves' Guild recognises the presence of promising members and considers them potential Guild leaders one day. When a Master Thief dies, his advisors and the gathered 'stars' of the Guild decide between them who will next take on the role of leadership. Few Master Thieves die of old age or natural causes. Most meet their ends on a job, death at the hands of those they have crossed in the past or through a network of inter-guild treachery which is never as rare as members' claim.

Details on the personalities in the guild and Thieves' House can be found on page 40.

Second-Class Thief

Requirements: The candidate must be recommended by an existing member, before proving himself in a test heist set by the Master Thief or one of his lieutenants.

Guild Skills: Athletics, Dagger, Disguise, Dodge, Evaluate, Influence, Mechanisms, Perception, Stealth, Streetwise.

Duties: Obeying the Master Thief and his lieutenants. Working to keep the Guild in its place of ascendancy.

First-Class Thief

Requirements: Second-Class thieves that have shown loyalty to the guild and mastery in several skills are chosen by the Master Thief or one of his lieutenants. In game terms, this means attaining a skill of 80% or more in at least two of the guild skills.

Duties: Obeying the Master Thief and his lieutenants. Working to keep the Guild in its place of ascendancy, often accompanying Second-Class thieves on important jobs.

Lieutenant

Requirements: The finest first-class thieves are selected by the Master Thief for wisdom, skill in training apprentices and talents in Guild business. This is an informal requirement, achieved through character development and roleplaying rather than any specific game mechanic requirements.

Duties: Training apprentices for two days out of every seven. Planning jobs for lesser members. Advising the Master Thief in the council of Thieves' House.

Master Thief

Requirements: Election by the current Lieutenants.

Duties: Overall control over the Thieves' Guild.

Special Benefits: All members gain a +20% bonus on all Streetwise tests while in Lankhmar, as well as a +10% bonus in other cities.

Master Thieves gain access to the massed wealth of the Guild – a store of money that puts most other guilds and noble houses to shame. Lieutenants can petition the Master Thief for personal loans paid back in either additional service or special operations.

First-Class thieves and Lieutenants gain one Second Chance roll usable once per session when performing any Guild-associated skill. Master Thieves gain two Second Chance rolls that may be used in the same manner. Second Chance rolls gained through membership may not be 'saved' for later sessions.

Second-Class members are expected to donate 50% of their earnings to the Guild, returning their entire takings to Thieves' House and being issued half of it back in various coins. First-

Class members are expected to donate 60% because of their high-earning heists and increased takings and likewise Lieutenants must donate 75%.

Second-Class Thieves' Guild members gain a +20% bonus on all Influence rolls made to bribe the city guard or escape arrest. This is raised to +40% for First-Class members, +60% for Lieutenants and +80% for the Master Thief.

The Thieves' Guild of Ilthmar

It does exist, of course. It just lacks anywhere near the power, political influence and social status of Lankhmar's Thieves' Guild. Games Masters have an open book where the Thieves' Guild of Ilthmar is concerned and are able to customise and shape it to meet the needs of their campaigns. The key factor in portraying the Ilthmar guild is to remember that its members do not get to act with the swagger or confidence of the thieves in the City of the Black Toga. The default assumption is that the guild of Ilthmar is almost swallowed in the press of freelance operators – thieves do not operate freely because the guild is weak; the guild is weak because there are so many thieves operating freely. For an organisation that depends upon most robberies taking place according to its designs, the sheer number of thieves in Ilthmar makes it next to impossible to ever bring the guild into dominance. There are simply too many men, women and children within Ilthmar that turn to thievery to make a living. No one guild could ever mandate all their behaviour.

This leaves several possibilities for Games Masters to use as story hooks for their preferred interpretation of the Thieves' Guild. The requirements and benefits of the guild will largely depend on the approach taken but Games Masters can use the guidelines for Other Guilds detailed on page 120.

The Rising Guild

Players with criminal ambition and enterprising souls might take it upon themselves to form a new Thieves' Guild, which they would lead, direct and control. This is an epic undertaking to say the least and one which will take many sessions and story arcs to reach fruition. The advantages inherent in the idea are that getting to the point of fruition involves many adventures and challenges and where Games Masters are concerned the plots practically write themselves.

Rival street gangs also seeking to become Thieves' Guilds, already-active guilds resenting the new faces on the scene, a harsh sheriff and a city watch with keen eyes for spotting lawbreakers – these will be the day-to-day and night-to-night antagonists of the characters, requiring bribes, threats or even killing in order to assure their silence. Added to these troubles is the need to attend to standard guild business; heists needing planning, robberies need undertaking and guild members require protection from other thieves and the Ilthmar guard.

An interesting option would be for experienced characters – longstanding members of Lankhmar's Thieves' Guild – to come

Freelancing at the Crossroads of Gods and Silver

And which created a large bare stretch of dark, thick, unpierced wall at the intersection of Silver Street with the Street of the Gods, a crossing-point where there habitually foregathered the junior executives and star operatives of the Thieves' Guild; also meeting there were the few freelance thieves bold and resourceful enough to defy the Guild and the few thieves of aristocratic birth, sometimes most brilliant amateurs, whom the Guild tolerated and even toadied to, on account of their noble ancestry, which dignified a very old but most disreputable profession.

– The Two Best Thieves in Lankhmar

There are few trades more dangerous in Lankhmar than that of a freelance thief. The Guild takes sincere umbrage at the level of audacity it takes to operate in their city without working under their rules and most characters involved in this kind of activity have little to look forward to beyond a stab in the back and being left to rot in Bones Alley.

Freelance thieves either need to remain one step ahead of the Thieves' Guild or persuade the Master Thief that they should be allowed to work independently. Neither of these approaches is easy, though the latter is leaps and bounds easier than the former. Certain people will be exempt from the restrictions on freelance thieves – noble-blooded characters immediately earn the tolerance and respect of the Thieves' Guild both because they are stooping to thievery despite their high birth and because staying on good terms with a thief blood-linked to the aristocracy can pay in kind at a later date, whether in the form of information or assistance in plundering the possessions of someone a touch richer than the Guild's usual fare. There is also the minor matter of noble-blood coming with a certain 'resistance' to murder. The Thieves' Guild might be able to murder freelance burglars and muggers with impunity but when the body of a duke's son or a relative of the overlord is discovered, even cowed overlords are likely to take vengeance upon the Guild.

Freelancers do exist, however and it is a profitable game if a character can manage to play it. Indeed, it is the only way for women to ply the trade, since they are barred from ever entering Thieves' House.

The first step in getting away clean with freelancing is to be a noble. If that is not in the cards, then a character should preferably be male. Freelance female thieves are notoriously subject to the Guild's animosity, though it is unclear whether this is a traditional bias or one founded in something more reasonable than base sexism. A final way to earn exempt status from the Guild's membership and avoid their ire is to be insane. The Thieves' Guild, for all its flaws, is a reputable and organised bunch of criminals. Unpredictable and unstable souls such as those tainted by madness are not welcome across the threshold of Thieves' House.

With the exception of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser, three freelance thieves are mentioned in the *Swords* novels: *Snarve Kistomercus*, the nephew of Overlord Glipkerio, who fulfils two of the three initial criteria (noble-blooded and male), *Countess Kronia of the Seventy-Seven Pockets*, who also fulfils two (highborn and insane) and lastly, *Alyx the Picklock*, who breaks all the rules and walks the much harder path reserved for the lowborn, the female or the sane. Simply put, she is just too good for the Thieves' Guild to put her out of business. So goes the rumour, anyway. In truth, she keeps her kickbacks and profit sharing with the Thieves' Guild a closely guarded secret.

Games Masters catering for characters who are seeking to stay ahead of the long reach of the Thieves' Guild have a wealth of opportunities in their games. Freelance thievery not only involves the risk of committing the crimes and all their inherent dangers and difficulties but also the dual risks of attracting the city watch (who will need to be bribed individually) and the Thieves' Guild, who may well have agents working on the same job as the freelance characters. There is no honour amongst thieves when it comes to issues of Guild loyalty – the guild members fight first and put down any resistance to their criminal union without batting an eyelash. If the characters manage to evade or even kill the guild thieves, their lives will get harder, not easier, as the Master Thief will be even more likely to set his minions on the Player Characters for their upstart behaviour.

If all else fails, there is another way. Fafhrd and the Mouser, though they are adventurers first and foremost only infrequently resorting to thievery, resort to kickbacks and profit sharing with the Guild. On the freelance scene, this is termed as 'paying dues' or 'paying the fees'.

Paying the Fees

Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser know all about trouble with the Thieves' Guild and they know how to get out of it, too. Many characters will likely prefer to walk the same path. This method is essentially a means to purchase the freedom to rob, plunder and steal while not working for the Thieves' Guild. Though all thieves tithe a large amount of their ill-gotten gains to the Guild leaders, freelancers pay extortionate fees for the right to be left alone.

Most freelancers sell out sooner or later because the Guild threatens them with lethal punishment if they do not and because always looking over one's shoulder for a dagger coming out of the dark is a nasty way to live for any length of time. When push comes to shove and a character decides to remain freelance but start offering kickbacks to the Thieves' Guild, the fees he pays to the Master Thief are somewhere in the region of a quarter of the character's robbery earnings.

to Ilthmar in the hopes of whipping the aimless curs and scum of the city into a more 'respectable' guild. The flow of information, profit and even guild members back and forth from Ilthmar can make for some intriguing adventures as the characters work hard to create an organisation that resembles the one they are so used to in Lankhmar.

Guild Wars

A reason for the scattered and disorganised nature of Ilthmar's underworld could be because there are actually two (or more) Thieves' Guilds in operation, each with their own customs and operating style, specialist agents, apprentices and claim to being the first guild in Ilthmar, the best or both.

The street-war between the guilds can take unusual avenues that lead to new battlefields. Not everything will necessarily come down to which guild steals the most and manages to butcher the greatest number of opposing thieves. Contacts among mercenaries, the clergy, aristocrats, ship captains and rich merchants will all come into play, with cunning guild leaders exploiting their network of contacts in any way imaginable. Ship captains and merchants can be relied on to bring cheap slaves to use as expendable knife-wielders in back-alley fights where numbers count more than skill. Mercenaries and ship officers alike will be able to loan the use of trained fighters for confrontations with the opposing guild. Nobles, priests and ranking merchants might all be able to speak to judges in a character's defence, saving him from death in the jaws of sharks. Of course, any such assistance will depend on just what deals the characters cut with their contacts. If what they offer is dwarfed by what their rivals promise, all will be for naught.

The Weaker Cousin

The default assumption is that Ilthmar's Thieves' Guild exists and clings to some influence over the poorer parts of the city but does not approach Lankhmar's organisation in terms of clout, membership or profit. In short, it is considered the 'weaker cousin'. It is likely that the guild was established close to the city's founding date, though it is not unreasonable to assume that an exiled Master Thief from Lankhmar set up this cousin guild in ancient times or an admirer of the organisation in the City of the Black Toga decided to try his hand at the same trade.

Joining the Thieves' Guild and working within its boundaries works exactly as it does in Lankhmar, though with the thematic loss of the Dead Master Thieves. Given the lack of mummified patron-gods in Ilthmar, this is a tradition the Ilthmarish guild will probably not share.

The customs of the Ilthmarish guild will obviously vary beyond the lack of the Dead Master Thieves. Perhaps the guild in Ilthmar has no prejudice against women and females are legitimate members alongside males. Perhaps the Thieves' Guild maintains close ties with the rat-god's priesthood, receiving the dubious blessing of Ilthmar's prime deity and occasionally working for

the priests in stealing 'penance' property from impious nobles or merchants.

For details on the running and operation of the Lankhmar Thieves' Guild, please refer to page 116. Most of the core details will remain the same between the two, though it is unlikely that Ilthmarish thieves receive any bonuses to bribery given the harsh fate of criminals in the city.

The Curse

An intriguing possibility is that the Thieves' Guild of Ilthmar has never risen to the heights of its Lankhmarian counterpart because it is, in fact, cursed. A god's curse is unlikely to hinder the efforts of an entire organisation – and what would the rat-god care if humans steal the possessions of other humans anyway? No, if the guild is cursed then it is almost certainly the actions of a sorcerer, perhaps through spellwork inflicted on the guild centuries ago or even thousands of years ago at its founding.

The obvious reason *why* the guild would be cursed in this manner is because the thieves of times past targeted the wrong mark and made the foolish mistake of preying upon a sorcerer's belongings – perhaps some magical artefact that even now resides in the cellar of the guild headquarters. There may well be other reasons but this is by far the likeliest.

If the Games Master wishes to go with the notion of the guild labouring under a curse, some minor penalty for all members is in order, to represent the dark magic still holding sway after all these years. Having characters suffer a –20% penalty on all Stealth, Perception and Sleight tests would be a fair representation or perhaps guild members may not use Hero Points for Second Chance rolls when on guild business. Either way, the penalty should not be life threatening; merely inconvenient and generally troublesome. It needs to hinder the growth and success of the guild, not crush it completely.

There should also be the possibility, however slight, of the characters somehow lifting the curse, be it by returning the artefact to a crypt in Lankhmar, the burial site of a Mingol shaman in the Great Steppes, a family sepulchre in the City of the Ghouls or something equally adventurous and mystical. These would be the kind of deeds that cap off a campaign in royal style. If players lack the wherewithal to work out the solution themselves, perhaps a consultation with Ningauble of the Seven Eyes will enlighten them further. He is sure to help them out, provided they agree to fall further into his debt.

The Monopoly

A final variant on the Thieves' Guild is that it is not weak, disorganised or minor in membership at all. In fact, it outdoes the Lankhmar guild in every important way, controlling the streets and the underworld of Ilthmar with near-perfection. In this instance, the guild is not the largest player in the underworld

as it is in the great city across the Sinking Land – in Ilthmar, the guild *is* the underworld.

Given the number of criminals that feed the harbour sharks, it can be a stretch to believe any guild could reach such prominence and not have its members regularly fall victim to the sheriff's men. It is likely that the Ilthmar guild has the expendable souls necessary to keep the shark-god's children happy and still maintain effective leadership – sacrificing the nobodies and remaining dry-eyed when the lowest apprentices yet again feed the sharks. Maybe they even arrange for the failing students to fall foul of the law, throwing their own weakest members into the jaws of the harbour beasts.

A prime target for the Thieves' Guild will be quality wine, which they can smuggle to other cities and sell at low rates to savagely undercut the legitimate Ilthmarish merchants. Such a scenario might weaken the sway of the Wine Merchant's Guild, depending on how ruthless and successful the Thieves' Guild is. The two factions may even engage in a clandestine war, where bashers and assassins seek out members of the opposing organisation in the hopes of ending the feud by killing prominent leaders and lieutenants. Characters with a talent for stealth and violence could make a fortune working for one group or the other, perhaps even playing them against each other to generate more employment.

The Wine Merchant's Guild

The finest wineries of Ilthmar

Ilthmar is well known throughout most of Nehwon for its large selection of high quality wines. Membership in the guild requires that wineries meet certain standards to ensure the quality of its wines and maintain Ilthmar's reputation for fine wines. Bottles stamped with the guild's seal will usually sell for up to three times as much money.

Requirements: Each stage of the wine making process must meet the standards of the guild, from the vineyards to the fermentation barrels.

Skills: Commerce (*RuneQuest II* only), Evaluate, Influence (*RuneQuest I* only), Lore (Plant).

Duties: Must pay annual fee of 25Gold Rilks and submit to frequent quality checks.

Special Benefits: All bottles of wine are stamped and approved by the guild as a genuine Ilthmar wine.

Other Guilds

There are numerous other guilds in Lankhmar and other cities for a variety of trades and services. Such guilds include the Blacksmiths' Guild, the Carpenters' Guild, the Jewellers' Guild, Moneylenders' Guild, the Scribes' Guild, Physicians' Guild, Apothecaries' Guild, the Couriers and Messengers' Guild, the

Labourers' Guild, the Architects' Guild, the Shipwrights' Guild and the Starsmen and Navigators' Guild. In the Northlands, there are a number of lumber and small metal-trader guilds operating through the Eight Cities

These guilds all have requirements and benefits based on the group they cater to. Games Masters can create these guilds as required using the following guidelines:

Requirements: Most guilds will usually require a certain standard of goods or service to be provided by its members. In some cities or regions, membership to a trading guild might be mandatory.

Skills: The skills will vary from guild to guild but will always be related to the activities of the guild.

Duties: The guild will either have a regular membership fee or take a cut of its members' profits. Other duties may be required.

Special Benefits: The benefits will be directly related to the guild activities, which for most trading guilds means that members have access to a wider network of clients through guild contacts or simply because being a member guarantees a certain level standards.

Cults

Joining a priesthood, cult or faith is mechanically no different than joining any *RuneQuest* cult; requirements must be met before any benefits can be received. Games Masters should note that the faith-cults of Lankhmar are not the high magic cults of other settings, however. Lankhmarts worship the gods because they know the deities are real and may offer fortune to loyal worshippers. Little in the way of magical aid is bestowed, though Divine Intervention (see page 140 of the *Magic* chapter) may still be called for in times of direst need.

The following section details a list of some of the Gods in Lankhmar to be found on the Street of the Gods, along with the rules for characters who wish to join their cults. Almost all Lankhmarts, either native to the city or merely visiting, will adopt one or more of the gods currently in vogue as their own. Many of the religions found on the Street of the Gods exist outside Lankhmar in other towns and cities but most are established here through humble beginnings.

There is no limit to the number of gods a character can profess to worship, though some cults might be angered at such indiscriminate veneration – especially the most successful ones. Seeing as the list of gods *in* Lankhmar changes by the day and the names of these would-be gods has no doubt numbered in the tens of thousands since the founding of the Imperishable City, an exhaustive list would be next to impossible to create. Presented here are the main gods described in the *Swords* novels and their associated cult rules.

Games Masters should feel free to create their own gods, whether believable, nonsensical, sinister or benevolent. If there is one thing that guarantees a faith a spot on the Street of the Gods, it is an imaginative background told by a noteworthy preacher. Gods based on vices, mutilations, debaucheries, virtues, good deeds, morals and everything else imaginable all have a place on the ever-changing street.

Since the religious cults of Nehwon barely resemble the magical orders of other *RuneQuest* settings, it is recommended that Games Masters who design their own cults allow each order to teach a single skill and no more. This represents the god's teachings affecting the character's life, rather than any formal training.

Aarth

Neutral God

Aarth was once a mortal magician, ascending to godhood among the Lankmarts after his death. His faith is a traditional one, based on tales of a foreigner in history inspiring Lankmarts into exalting him and embellishing more with each passing year. The only difference between Aarth and most of the other religions making their way along the Street of the Gods is that Aarth's faith actually stuck and stuck hard. He has been the principle god *in* Lankmar for generations now and his faith shows no sign of releasing its position to the westernmost temple on the street. The only building farther west is the Black Temple of the Gods *of* Lankmar at the end of the road and Aarth's religion has never shown the signs of blasphemy towards their ultimate position that, say, the priests of Issek of the Jug once showed.

Aarth's faith preaches tolerance and the notion of remaining non-judgemental of others despite all temptation. Many overlords have spent their weekly worship in Aarth's temple over the centuries, only reinforcing the cult's domination over all other faiths on the Street of the Gods.

Lay Member Requirements:

Belief in Aarth.

Skills: Lore (History).

Duties: Spreading the faith of Aarth.

Special Benefits: The ability to call for Divine Intervention from Aarth.

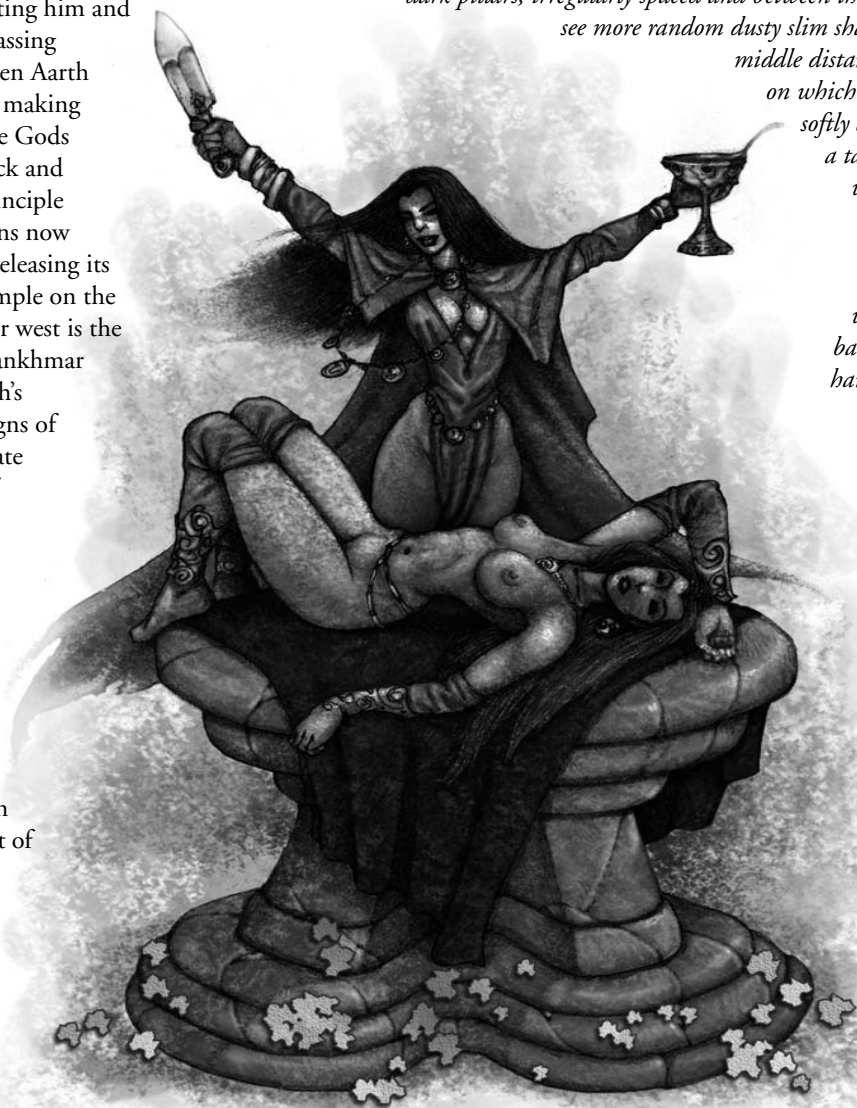
Ilala

The great goddess of all shes

The great goddess has both a motherly aspect and a more ferocious side to her nature that can empower her followers and protect them. The cult of Ilala has a good following and the temple is situated toward the western end of the Street of the Gods.

The high priestess always takes the name Ilala in reverence to the great goddess. In addition to preaching the virtues of Ilala to other women, the high priestess is also responsible for performing a number of rituals. Fafhrd and Mouser stumbled upon one such ritual:

For some yards the right-hand wall became a row of slender dark pillars, irregularly spaced and between them they could see more random dusty slim shafts and at middle distance a long altar on which light showered softly down, revealing a tall, naked woman stretched on it and by her a priestess in purple robes with dagger bared in one hand and large silver chalice in the other, who was intoning a litany.
– Under the Thumbs of the Gods



The sacrifices in these rituals are always devout followers of Ilala who submit willingly, for it is a great honour to be part of this most holy of rituals. The spirit of the recently departed travels to Godsland, becoming a messenger to the great goddess herself.

Lay Member Requirements: Belief in Ilala and must be female.

Skills: Persistence.

Duties: Spreading the faith of Ilala.

Special Benefits: The ability to call for Divine Intervention from Ilala.

Mog

Spider God of Lies

This god of lies and deception is generally worshipped in the southern reaches of the land of Lankhmar, though he has a relatively sizeable following in the intrigue-laden City of Thieves as well. Mog is depicted as spider-bodied with a young man's head. His primary concern is receiving worship in a world that is so decadent, so reliant on secrets and fuelled by deceptions, that humanity needs no god to mandate over these things. They are simply second nature to most people and warrant little thought.

Lay Member Requirements: Belief in Mog.

Skills: Sleight.



Duties: Spreading the faith of Mog.

Special Benefits: The ability to call for Divine Intervention from Mog.

Issek of the Jug

God of Peace and Brotherhood

Issek was a martyred god of peace in the world and brotherhood between all Men. His church teaches a doctrine of turning the other cheek, endurance through all hardship, kindness to those above and below in society and a desire to help others whenever possible. His symbol is a jug full of Waters of Peace from the grandly named 'Cistern of Cillivat' of an undisclosed location. The popular vision of Issek is that he endured superhuman agony with grace and good cheer, amused himself by non-violently sporting with sea monsters and died only after allowing himself to be tortured in order to teach a lesson about martyrdom and the worth of human life.

The cult enjoyed a colossal surge in popularity when Fafhrd joined as an acolyte and 'spiced up' the god's tales, though the ascension ended only three years after it began. The Gods of Lankmar, displeased at Issek's Grand Vizier blaspheming against them, walked from their black temple and destroyed the cult's priests, scattered its worshippers and consigned the faith to memory.

Lay Member Requirements: Belief in Issek and attending at least one nighttime sermon to prove faith.

Grand Vizier Requirements: Simply claiming the position without the claim being disputed by other worshippers is enough. The Grand Vizier must attend every sermon each night.

Skills: Resilience.

Duties: Spreading the faith of Issek.

Special Benefits: The ability to call for Divine Intervention from Issek.

Kos

God of Dooms

Kos is a barbarian god from the Cold Wastes who sees only minor worship among the people of Lankmar. To the northerners he is the All-Father of the gods and the lord of all doom. To the civilised Lankmarts, he is just another barbaric foreign god with little to offer.

Lay Member Requirements: Belief in Kos.

Skills: Lore (Cold Wastes).

Duties: Spreading the faith of Kos.

Special Benefits: The ability to call for Divine Intervention from Kos.

The Rat God

Rodent Lord of Ilthmar

The vermin god receives some worship in Lankmar, though it is nothing compared to the creepy reverence the deity receives in Ilthmar where his faith is based. The Rat God is a god to be appeased, not worshipped, with many of its followers abstaining from washing in order to please the lice-infested god of filth and uncivilised life.

Lay Member Requirements: Belief in the Rat God.

Skills: Resilience.

Duties: Spreading the faith of the Rat God and never harming rodent vermin.

Special Benefits: The ability to call for Divine Intervention from the Rat God.

The Shark God

Ilthmar's god of the Revenge and the Sea

The shark god may not be as popular in Ilthmar as the rat god but its presence is never forgotten. This brutal god serves two roles in Ilthmar. First and foremost the shark god represents murder and justice at the end of a blade but sailors, pirates and traders also venerate this god to bless their travels over the seas.

Lay Member Requirements: Belief in the Shark God.

Skills: Weapon skill (any bladed).

Duties: Spreading the faith of the Shark God and feeding the sharks in the Ilthmar docks.

Special Benefits: The ability to call for Divine Intervention from the Shark God.

CREATURES OF NEHWON

This chapter deals with the various creatures and beasts of Nehwon, as encountered by Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser or described in the *Swords* stories.

Enemies in Campaigns

Games Masters with a passion for the source material will be aware that the majority of antagonists in Leiber's writing are human enemies, be they thieves, murderers or magicians. This is not to say that monsters and classic fantasy creatures should be completely avoided when planning campaigns.

Some aspects of Nehwon suggest evidence that there are inhuman creatures that the stories do not reveal to the reader. Ogres are mentioned at one point and it is easy to believe the Trollstep Mountains earned their name from the monster of the same name, albeit in a more mythological form than the classic high fantasy trope.

The *Swords* tales were largely penned in a time before the traditional high fantasy monsters were popular. Mythology and folklore were distinct ingredients and elements of what made the monsters of the tales so evocative. Nehwon is populated by creatures like sea monsters, monstrous spiders and ghosts; every inhuman antagonist coming up against the players should have a touch of the mythological about it – insofar as the Games Master is concerned about theme. For some groups inhuman antagonists will play a vital part of the setting's dynamic. Others will be less bothered by them.

CREATURES OF THE GREAT SALT MARSH

The silty black waters and low-hanging trees of Lankmar's eastern swamp conceal some of the most vicious fauna in Nehwon. Any expedition through the marshland is bound to have adventurers crossing paths with dozens of examples of these creatures. These animals are among the many reasons so few travellers make it to the other end of the swamp once they enter.

Marsh Leopard

These blue-eyed, dark-furred big cats stalk the low branches and dry patches of the Great Salt Marsh. Unlike many cats, marsh leopards do not fear water and can swim if they must. They

prefer to leap down on unsuspecting prey rather than betray their presence with a roar before striking and attack by biting at throats and wrists or seeking to disembowel with their hind legs and front claws.

Characteristics

STR	3D6	(10)
CON	3D6+3	(13)
DEX	3D6+3	(13)
SIZ	2D6+2	(9)
INT	6	(6)
POW	3D6	(10)
CHA	5	(5)

Marsh Leopard Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1–2	Right Hind Leg	1/5
3–4	Left Hind Leg	1/5
5–7	Hindquarters	1/6
8–10	Forequarters	1/6
11–13	Right Front Leg	1/5
14–16	Left Front Leg	1/5
17–20	Head	1/5

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Bite	60%	1D8–1D2
Claw	40%	1D6–1D2

Special Rules

<i>Combat Actions:</i>	3
<i>Strike Rank:</i>	+8
<i>Movement:</i>	5m
<i>Traits:</i>	Night Sight
<i>Skills:</i>	Athletics 80%, Dodge/Evade 55%, Resilience 40%, Perception 60%, Stealth 75%, Survival 40%, Tracking 40%
<i>Typical Armour:</i>	Hide (AP 1, no Skill Penalty)

Salt Spiders

A salt spider big as a platter sailed close by his ear in the grip of the gale, kicking its thick, corpse-white legs and veered off past the hut...

– The Circle Curse

These leaping spiders vary in size from hand-sized to the size of pumpkins with long legs that make the arachnid look even larger. They are generally pinkish-white or bone-white and make eerie clicking sounds as they stalk their prey. Unlike most spiders, salt spiders are able to walk on water (with weight-spreading pads at the ends of their legs) though they spend most of their time crawling from rock to rock and tree to tree, looking for a victim to strike. Marsh leopards, adventurers, low-flying birds... all are fair game to salt spiders.

When salt spiders attack, they do so by springing up at an opponent's face, seeking to cling on to the head or chest and inject its venom as close to the brain or heart as possible. As beasts of the Great Salt Marsh go, salt spiders are among the most aggressive as well as the most common.

Characteristics

STR	1D4	(3)
CON	1D6	(4)
DEX	3D6+4	(14)
SIZ	1D4+1	(3)
INT	4	(4)
POW	1D6	(3)
CHA	1	(1)

Salt Spider Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-4	Right Legs	0/1
5-9	Left Legs	0/1
10-20	Body	0/2

Weapons

<i>Type</i>	<i>Weapon Skill</i>	<i>Damage</i>
Bite	40%	1D2 + Poison

Special Rules

<i>Combat Actions:</i>	3
<i>Strike Rank:</i>	+9
<i>Movement:</i>	3m
<i>Traits:</i>	Poison (see below)
<i>Skills:</i>	Athletics 30%, Dodge/Evade 40%, Resilience 30%, Perception 20%, Stealth 90%, Survival 50%
<i>Typical Armour:</i>	None

Salt Spider Venom

Type:	Smeared
Delay:	Immediate
Potency:	70.
Full Effect:	One hit point damage to location struck, applies -6 penalty to victim's DEX
Duration:	1D10 minutes

Swamp Cobra

These snakes average around six feet in length, are as wide as a man's forearm and are coloured the same black-brown as the muddy swampland in which they live.

Characteristics

STR	1D6	(3)
CON	1D6	(4)
DEX	3D6+2	(13)
SIZ	1D3	(2)
INT	5	(5)
POW	1D6	(3)
CHA	2	(2)

Swamp Cobra Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-15	Body	1/1
16-20	Head	1/1

Weapons

<i>Type</i>	<i>Weapon Skill</i>	<i>Damage</i>
Bite	25%	1D2 + Poison

Special Rules

<i>Combat Actions:</i>	3
<i>Strike Rank:</i>	+9
<i>Movement:</i>	3m
<i>Traits:</i>	Poison (see below)
<i>Skills:</i>	Athletics 40%, Dodge/Evade 20%, Resilience 10%, Perception 20%, Stealth 70%, Survival 50%
<i>Typical Armour:</i>	Scales (AP 1; no skill penalty)

Swamp Cobra Venom

Type:	Smeared
Delay:	1D6 combat rounds
Potency:	75
Full Effect:	Two HP of damage to Hit Location; applies -8 penalty to victim's DEX
Duration:	1D10 minutes

CREATURES OF KLESH

Emperor Snake

The Emperor Snake of Klesh is a black-scaled cobra with a wide hood and has the entirely deserved reputation as the most poisonous creature in Nehwon. These snakes slither through the undergrowth in the tropical jungles of the south, striking in the blink of an eye and delivering their wind-swift poison through their fangs.



Characteristics

STR	1D8	(5)
CON	1D6	(4)
DEX	3D6+6	(16)
SIZ	1D3	(2)
INT	5	(5)
POW	1D6	(3)
CHA	2	(2)

Emperor Snake Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-15	Body	1/1
16-20	Head	1/1

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Bite	30%	1D2 + Poison

Special Rules

<i>Combat Actions:</i>	3
<i>Strike Rank:</i>	+9
<i>Movement:</i>	3m
<i>Traits:</i>	Poison (see Emperor Snake Venom)
<i>Skills:</i>	Athletics 60%, Dodge/Evade 50%, Resilience 20%, Perception 40%, Stealth 70%, Survival 60%
<i>Typical Armour:</i>	Scales (AP 1; no skill penalty)

Emperor Snake Venom

Type: Smear

Delay: Immediate

Potency: 95

Full Effect: Five HP of damage to Hit Location; applies -8 penalty to victim's DEX

Duration: 1D4 hours

Jungle Spiders

This arachnid is noted for its ability to fly as well as its luminous chitin exoskeleton which glows with soft light after sunset. In truth its 'flight' is a form of gliding, used to catch birds when the spider leaps from high branches. Kleshite jungle spiders are hunting spiders – they weave no webs and kill by their physical prowess.

Characteristics

STR	1D4	(3)
CON	1D6	(4)
DEX	3D6+4	(14)
SIZ	1D2	(2)
INT	4	(4)
POW	1D6	(3)
CHA	1	(1)

Kleshite Jungle Spider Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-4	Right Legs	0/1
5-9	Left Legs	0/1
10-20	Body	0/2

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Bite	40%	1D2 + Poison

Special Rules

<i>Combat Actions:</i>	3
<i>Strike Rank:</i>	+9
<i>Movement:</i>	3m
<i>Traits:</i>	Poison (see below)
<i>Skills:</i>	Athletics 30%, Dodge/Evade 40%, Resilience 30%, Perception 20%, Stealth 90%, Survival 50%
<i>Typical Armour:</i>	None

Kleshite Jungle Spider Venom

Type: Smeard

Delay: Immediate

Potency: 85

Full Effect: Applies -12 penalty to victim's DEX

Duration: 1D20 minutes

CREATURES OF THE COLD WASTES

Ice Cat

These cheetah-like cats from the frozen north are half the size of polar tigers and hunt much smaller prey. They can be trained as loyal pets. Hrissa, in the story *Stardock*, is an example of a trained ice cat, loyal to Fafhrd.

Characteristics

STR	3D6-1	(9)
CON	3D6+3	(13)
DEX	4D6+6	(22)
SIZ	2D6+3	(10)
INT	6	(6)
POW	3D6	(10)
CHA	5	(5)

Ice Cat Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-2	Right Hind Leg	1/5
3-4	Left Hind Leg	1/5
5-7	Hindquarters	1/6
8-10	Forequarters	1/6
11-13	Right Front Leg	1/5
14-16	Left Front Leg	1/5
17-20	Head	1/5

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Bite	45%	1D4
Claw	25%	1D2

Special Rules

<i>Combat Actions:</i>	4
<i>Strike Rank:</i>	+14
<i>Movement:</i>	6m
<i>Traits:</i>	Night Sight
<i>Skills:</i>	Athletics 80%, Dodge/Evade 65%, Resilience 45%, Perception 50%, Stealth 70%, Survival 40%, Tracking 30%
<i>Typical Armour:</i>	Hide (AP 1, no Skill Penalty)

Ice Gnome

A red glow sprang from the window and somewhat illuminated four faces with piggy black eyes and with low hairless domes above.

The Mouser considered them. They were all four of extreme ugliness, he decided dispassionately. Only their white teeth, showing between their grinning lips which almost joined ear to swinish ear, had any claim to beauty.

— Stardock.

Ice Gnomes are violent, uncouth diminutive beings that dwell atop mountains and in the tundra of the Cold Wastes. Each measure no more than three to four feet in height at best and all possess thick-nailed, chunky hands, faces of surpassing ugliness and dark, almost-black eyes.

Hordes of the little creatures, formed from clans or tribes according to some scholars, have been known to sweep out of their lairs and do battle with the Cold Tribes of the north. Some Ice Gnomes serve the Invisibles of Stardock as slaves or servants.

Characteristics

STR	4D6	(14)
CON	2D6+12	(19)
DEX	2D6	(7)
SIZ	1D6+6	(9)
INT	2D6+6	(13)
POW	3D6	(10)
CHA	1D6+2	(5)

Ice Gnome Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/6
4-6	Left Leg	0/6
7-9	Abdomen	1/7
10-12	Chest	1/8
13-15	Right Arm	1/5
16-18	Left Arm	1/5
19-20	Head	0/6

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Shortsword	40% (36%)	1D6
Sling	30% (26%)	1D6

Special Rules

<i>Combat Actions:</i>	2
<i>Strike Rank:</i>	+10
<i>Movement:</i>	3m
<i>Traits:</i>	Earth Sense, Dark Sight
<i>Skills:</i>	Athletics 30% (26%), Evaluate 20%, Lore (Cold Wastes) 80%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 65%, Survival 60%
<i>Typical Armour:</i>	Hair shirts (AP 1; skill penalty -4%)

Polar Tiger

These shaggy, white-furred big cats are among the most ferocious predators in Nehwon. They sport vicious sabre-tusks and outweigh the smaller, more lithe ice cats by several times.

Characteristics

STR	3D6+12	(24)
CON	3D6	(10)
DEX	3D6+6	(16)
SIZ	2D6+14	(22)
INT	6	(6)
POW	3D6	(10)
CHA	5	(5)

Polar Tiger Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-2	Right Hind Leg	3/7
3-4	Left Hind Leg	3/7
5-7	Hindquarters	3/8
8-10	Forequarters	3/8
11-13	Right Front Leg	3/7
14-16	Left Front Leg	3/7
17-20	Head	3/8

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Bite	70%	1D8+1D10
Claw	65%	1D6+1D10

Special Rules

<i>Combat Actions:</i>	3
<i>Strike Rank:</i>	+11
<i>Movement:</i>	6m
<i>Traits:</i>	Night Sight
<i>Skills:</i>	Athletics 50%, Dodge/Evade 35%, Resilience 60%, Perception 65%, Stealth 40%, Survival 70%
<i>Typical Armour:</i>	Thick, shaggy hide (AP 3, no Skill Penalty)

Invisibles

The Invisibles are ostensibly human, though the magical elements of their birth mean they are exceptionally strong and resistant to harm. When creating Invisible characters, always roll 3D6+6 for STR and CON. Everything else remains as it would for normal *RuneQuest* characters.

Snow Serpent

Without more warning than that, a long snowbank between that step and the next reared up its nearest white end a dozen feet and hissed fearsomely, showing it to be a huge serpent with head as big as an elk's, all covered with shaggy snow-white fur. Its great violet eyes glared like those of a mad horse and its jaws gaped to show slashing-teeth like a shark's and two great fangs jutting a mist of pale ichor. – Stardock

Snow serpents are actually hot-blooded mammals, not reptiles. They are protected by thick white fur that allows them to blend in with their surroundings and they possess the ability to breathe clouds of venom at their prey. Poison 'spat' in this manner dissipates into the air after one combat turn.

These creatures are usually found in the western regions of the Cold Wastes and the northern mountain ranges. Snow Serpents are hunted for their tough hide and nutritious meat, although the latter is something of an acquired taste. The giant worm is a solitary and territorial creature that can be deadly when provoked; there are many tales of hunters being poisoned to death or having their heads bitten clean off by the vicious beasts.

Characteristics

STR	4D6+12	(26)
CON	4D6+6	(20)
DEX	3D6	(10)
SIZ	4D6+12	(26)
INT	7	(7)
POW	3D6	(10)
CHA	7	(7)

Snow Serpent Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-2	Tail	3/10
3-7	Body (Rear)	3/11
8-15	Body (Front)	3/11
16-20	Head	3/10

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Bite	70%	1D6+1D12+Poison
Poison-spit	50%	Poison

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2
Strike Rank: +8
Movement: 5m
Traits: Poison
Skills: Athletics 40%, Dodge/Evade 25%, Resilience 40%, Perception 35%, Persistence 50%, Stealth 80%, Survival 50%, Tracking 30%
Typical Armour: Thick hide (AP 3, no Skill Penalty)

Snow Serpent Ichor

Type: Smeard
Delay: Immediate
Potency: 60
Full Effect: *Bite:* 2 HP damage to Hit Location / *Spat:* 2 HP damage to 1D4 random Hit Locations
Duration: 2D20 minutes

CREATURES OF LANKHMAR

Iron Statue of the Devourers

The only conceivably salable object outside the shop – but it was a most notable exception – was the tall black iron statue, somewhat larger than life-size, of a lean swordsman of dire yet melancholy visage. Standing on a square pedestal beside the door, the statue leaned forward just a little on its long two-handed sword and regarded the Plaza dolefully.

– Bazaar of the Bizarre

This statue of black iron comes to life (or at least comes to motion) whenever the Bazaar of the Bizarre is threatened. It is remarkably tough to damage from the front, with only unseen attacks from the rear commonly lucky enough to break through its remarkably skilled defence.

Characteristics

STR 25
CON 13
DEX 11
SIZ 21
INT 13
POW 10
CHA 10

Iron Statue Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1–2	Right Leg	7/7
3–4	Left Leg	7/7
5–7	Abdomen	7/8
8–10	Chest	7/9
11–13	Right Arm	7/6
14–16	Left Arm	7/6
17–20	Head	7/7



Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Great sword	70%	2D8+1D10

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2
Strike Rank: +12
Movement: 4m
Skills: Athletics 60%, Perception 50%, Resilience 45%, Stealth 15%, Survival 60%, Tracking 25%
Typical Armour: Black iron skin (AP 7, no Skill Penalty)

The Gods of Lankhmar

The undead black-togaed founders of Lankhmar rest in their foreboding black temple, waiting for the times when their city needs their aid or the residents need to be punished. These mechanics can be used to represent the Dead Master Thieves – or indeed any mummified ancient Lankhmart honoured and preserved into undeath with the same long-forgotten ritual.

If a God of Lankhmar is reduced to zero Hit Points in any Hit Location it will seek to return to the Black Temple at the westward end of the Street of the Gods. Games masters should be aware that destroying one of these ancient elders probably comes with a monumental curse on the killer, such as when Slevyas smashed the skull of Omphal.

Characteristics

STR	4D6+6	(20)
CON	6D6+6	(30)
DEX	3D6	(10)
SIZ	3D6	(10)
INT	3D6	(11)
POW	9D6+12	(45)
CHA	0	(0)

God of Lankmar Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1–3	Right Leg	8/8
4–6	Left Leg	8/8
7–9	Abdomen	8/9
10–12	Chest	8/10
13–15	Right Arm	8/7
16–18	Left Arm	8/7
19–20	Head	8/8

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Staff	60%	Instant death on a failed Resilience test.
Unarmed	60%	1D3+1D2+Asphyxiation

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Strike Rank: +11

Movement: 4m

Traits: Dark Sight,
Night Sight, Life Sense

Skills: Athletics 10%, Dodge/
Evade 10%, Perception
70%, Persistence 150%,
Resilience 150%

Typical Armour: Supernatural
resilience (AP 8, no
Skill Penalty)

Note: The Gods of Lankmar
take double damage
from fire weapons.

CREATURES OF Nehuon

Beasts of the Bleak Shore

Under the darkening leaden sky he watched twin deaths hatching out for him and his companion.

The first hint of the creature came in the form of a long, swordlike claw

which struck out through a crack, widening it farther. Fragments of shell fell more swiftly.

The two creatures which emerged in the gathering dusk held enormity even for the Mouser's drugged mind. Shambling things, erect like men but taller, with reptilian heads boned and crested like helmets, feet clawed like a lizard's, shoulders topped with bony spikes, forelimbs each terminating in a single yard-long claw. In the semidarkness they seemed like hideous caricatures of fighting men, armoured and bearing swords. Dusk did not hide the yellow of their blinking eyes. – The Bleak Shore

These egg-birthed monsters are the magical progeny of the eerie, pale man with the bulging forehead from the Bleak Shore. Their preferred method of attack is to overwhelm their prey with greater numbers, wearing their food out before they eat.



Characteristics

STR	3D6+6	(17)
CON	3D6	(10)
DEX	3D6	(10)
SIZ	3D6+8	(20)
INT	3D4+1	(9)
POW	3D6	(10)
CHA	1D4	(2)

Bleak Shore Beast Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	3/6
4-6	Left Leg	3/6
7-9	Abdomen	3/7
10-12	Chest	3/8
13-15	Right Arm	3/5
16-18	Left Arm	3/5
19-20	Head	3/6

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Claw	70%	1D8+1D6

Special Rules

<i>Combat Actions:</i>	3
<i>Strike Rank:</i>	+9
<i>Movement:</i>	4m
<i>Traits:</i>	None
<i>Skills:</i>	Athletics 40%, Perception 30%, Resilience 60%, Stealth 10%, Survival 40%
<i>Typical Armour:</i>	Scaly skin (AP 3, no skill penalty)

Ghost Hounds

Then, at a small distance, he noted a pale form which he instinctively knew to be Fafhrd. And around the pale form seethed a pack of black, shadowy animal shapes, leaping and retreating, worrying at the pale form, their eyes glowing like the moonlight but brighter, their long muzzles soundlessly snarling.

– The Howling Tower

These spirits are the ghosts of hounds that died through drawn-out agonising circumstances. They can only be harmed by an out-of-body soul that confronts them in their ‘other world.’

They attack a mortal by drawing his soul out when he sleeps, though they can only do this to the targets responsible for their painful deaths. The victim makes a Persistence test each time he falls asleep in order to resist the drawing out of his soul. If he fails the test, he finds himself in the featureless expanses of the other world with the ghost hounds and must survive for 2D4 hours before awakening. His Characteristics, Skills, armour and weapons are as they were in the waking world but death here spells instant death for the body.

Characteristics

STR	3D6	(10)
CON	3D6+3	(13)
DEX	3D6+3	(13)
SIZ	2D6+1	(8)
INT	6	(6)
POW	3D6	(10)
CHA	4	(4)

Ghost Hound Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-2	Right Hind Leg	0/5
3-4	Left Hind Leg	0/5
5-7	Hindquarters	0/6
8-10	Forequarters	0/6
11-13	Right Front Leg	0/5
14-16	Left Front Leg	0/5
17-20	Head	0/5

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Bite	50%	1D8-1D2

Special Rules

<i>Combat Actions:</i>	3
<i>Strike Rank:</i>	+8
<i>Movement:</i>	5m
<i>Traits:</i>	Life Sense
<i>Skills:</i>	Athletics 80%, Dodge/Evade 55%, Resilience 40%, Perception 60%, Stealth 55%, Survival 40%, Tracking 60%
<i>Typical Armour:</i>	None

Simorgyan Cloak Beasts

‘Well, what I saw was this: a crowd of men wearing big black cloaks – they looked like Northerners – came rushing out of an opening of some sort. There was something odd about them: the light by which I saw them didn’t seem to have any source. Then they waved the big black cloaks around as if they were fighting with them or doing some sort of foolish dance... I told you it was very foolish... and then they got down on their hands and knees and covered themselves up with the cloaks and crawled back into the place from which they had come. Now tell me I’m a liar.’

Fafhrd shook his head. ‘Only those weren’t cloaks,’ he said.

– The Sunken Land

These cloak-like creatures are found in the risen tombs and buildings of Simorgya, when that near-mythical place surfaces for a time. They strike by enveloping their prey from a flying strike, suffocating and constricting their victims before slowly crawling back to their lair to feast. In the centre of the cloak beasts’ body is a fanged maw that often starts eating before the prey is dead.

Characteristics

STR	6D6	(20)
CON	3D6+12	(22)
DEX	3D6	(11)
SIZ	2D6	(7)
INT	4	(4)
POW	2D6+6	(13)
CHA	2	(2)

Cloak Beast Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-2	Body (Left)	1/6
3-4	Body (Right)	1/6
5-7	Body (Central)	1/8

Weapons

<i>Type</i>	<i>Weapon Skill</i>	<i>Damage</i>
Unarmed (Envelop)	60%	1D3+1D2
Bite	30%	1D8+1D2

Special Rules

<i>Combat Actions:</i>	2
<i>Strike Rank:</i>	+7
<i>Movement:</i>	1m, 6m when flying
<i>Traits:</i>	None
<i>Skills:</i>	Athletics 20%, Dodge/Evade 30%, Persistence 30%, Resilience 40%, Survival 60%
<i>Typical Armour:</i>	Thick hide (AP 1, no skill penalty)



OF SHEEL & NING

Ten arm lengths behind him, in the mouth of an alleyway darker than the Dark Plaza would have been without its new commercial moon, Fafhrd dimly made out two robed and deeply cowl'd figures poised side by side.

One cowl held darkness absolute. Even the face of a Negro from Klesh might have been expected to shoot ghostly bronze gleams. But here there were none.

In the other cowl there nested seven very faint pale greenish glows. They moved restlessly, sometimes circling each other, swinging mazily. Sometimes one of the seven horizontally oval gleams would glow a little brighter, seemingly as it moved forward toward the mouth of the cowl – or a little darker, as it drew back.

– Bazaar of the Bizarre

Many of Nehwon's inhuman denizens defy conventional explanation. Principal among this confusing list of creatures and beasts are the two sentient and intelligent, inordinately powerful, apparently alien sorcerers that go by the eerie titles Sheelba of the Eyeless Face and Ningauble of the Seven Eyes.

These wizards serve as the occasional patrons of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser, summoning them to perform specific and strange tasks. In return, they serve as sometime advisors, though neither wizard is known for a forthcoming and forthright nature.

Dealing with the Magicians

Games Masters will probably wish to use Ningauble and Sheelba in similar roles to the ones they performed in the *Swords* stories. After an initial period of mysterious warnings and riddles, the magicians could become patrons, even mentors, upon which many adventures can be founded. Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser have agreed to serve their respective wizardly mentors for three months of every year, in return for guidance, wisdom and the occasional magical assistance.

A similar arrangement could work wonders for any campaign, especially if the players are fans of the source material and enjoy the chance to interact with the enigmatic and strange magician duo. The relationship between Sheel, Ning and an adventuring group is likely to begin one of two ways. Firstly, the characters could stumble on one of the wizards by chance – though they were probably 'allowed' to stumble on the wizard in question, since both Sheelba and Ningauble have the power to remain

Games Master Note: Sheelba's Pronoun

Sheelba of the Eyeless Face is described alternately as male and female, with his or her actual gender being up for some debate among Leiber's fans and readers. Proof of either assumption is understandably impossible to come by without seeing underneath the wizard's robe, though it is known that Sheelba possesses a deep and gruff voice which is the only outward suggestion of gender.

This book goes with the assumption that both Ningauble and Sheelba are male. In the majority of the *Swords* tales where the two wizards turn up, Sheelba is referred to as 'he' and on several occasions described thusly by Ningauble himself, who is likelier than anyone on Nehwon to know the answer to such a question. Although Sheelba is described as a sorceress at a couple of points in the saga, in *The Price of Pain-Ease*, *Bazaar of the Bizarre* and *The Swords of Lankhmar* (which feature the overwhelming majority of the two patrons' involvement in the saga) Sheelba is always referred to as male.

Ultimately it is down to Games Masters to decide which sex they prefer the great wizard to be and perhaps down to players to decide which gender they perceive when they deal with Sheelba. In truth, it hardly matters which gender this marsh-dwelling warlock is. It never makes the cowl'd being any less abruptly spoken or more tolerant of foolishness.

hidden easily enough. In this case, the characters have not been summoned but the magicians have allowed themselves to be seen in order to speak with the adventurers.

The second possibility is that which Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser faced. Both Sheelba and Ningauble appear to the characters separately, clearly marking their interest in the adventurers and predicting future meetings.

Whichever way the Games Master chooses, the opportunity is there to deliver confusing riddles or eerie prophecies that will come true in the future, perhaps in some unpredictable form.

The Deal

To truly become the wards (of sorts) of these magicians, the characters will first need to agree to a deal. This deal will almost certainly involve service in return for help in something notable and unusual that plagues the characters. Enemies that cannot be defeated, problems of the soul, the sorrow over a dead lover – characters going to Sheelba and Ningauble with problems of this magnitude are ripe for recruitment into service. The price to be paid is several months of service each year.

Fafhrd and the Mouser were given directions to the Shadowland in order to speak with their slain loves, Ivrian and Vlana, in return for their service. They were tasked with bringing back Death's favourite mask while in the Shadowland, which they achieved – from a certain point of view.

A truly memorable and binding deal will seal the characters to Sheelba and Ningauble once and forever, allowing Games Masters to bring in these powerful characters as occasional givers of advice, loaners of magical artefacts and immensely useful Non-Player Characters that are capable of forwarding the plot like no others.

Ningauble of the Seven Eyes

The movement ceased under the cloak. Then out of the top of it sinuously writhed something that seemed to be a serpent, only in place of a head it bore an opalescent jewel with a dark central speck. Nevertheless, one might finally have judged it a serpent, were it not that it also resembled a thick-stalked exotic bloom. It restlessly turned this way and that until it pointed at the two strangers. Then it went rigid and the bulbous extremity seemed to glow more brightly. There came a low purring and five similar stalks twisted rapidly from under the hood and aligned themselves with their companion. Then the six black pupils dilated.

– Adept's Gambit

A towering figure in a black robe and raised cowl, the Seven-Eyed One is an unnerving sight. Ningauble is tall, unnaturally so, reaching nine feet in height. He is massively broad-shouldered, with what appears to be a large (swollen?) paunch blooming out against the inside of his robe. Everything about this enigmatic being's appearance suggests an alien vastness concealed by mundane black cloth. He seems to prefer sitting to standing, when he receives visitors within his extensive network of caves, he is almost always found sitting either cross-legged, cross-tentacled or in some other way hidden by the folds of his cloak.

Ningauble is either no longer fully human or never was in the first place. Though nothing of his body is ever revealed beyond his seven glowing eyes on their stalk-tentacles, those are evidence enough, coupled with the wizard's size and body shape, to make it obvious that something inhuman is under Ningauble's robe. The only outward aspect of humanity in Ningauble's demeanour is his voice, which is smooth, dripping with sincerity and sympathy and something the great magician is clearly fond of hearing, given the amount he talks.

A Gift for Eloquence

'Oh My Gentle Son,' Ningauble responded, the piety in his voice now tinged with a certain clement disappointment, 'you force me once again to resort to hypothecating. Let us return to the supposition of this brave man whose whole universe is directly menaced and who counts his life a trifle and to the related supposition of this brave man's wise uncle, whose advice the brave man invariably follows—'

'The Devourers have set up shop in the Plaza of Dark Delights!' Sheelba interjected so abruptly and in such iron-harsh syllables that this time Fafhrd actually did start.

– Bazaar of the Bizarre

Ningauble rarely says anything in a hurry unless he is annoyed or pressed for time and even these events are not usually enough for the Seven-Eyed One to limit his vocabulary by any noticeable measures. Usually, his discussions and recitations will go on for some time, hindered only by the interruptions of impatient listeners.

Much of the time, Ningauble speaks very kindly and with a fatherly tone. He refers to those he advises and employs as 'my children' and 'my sons.' Fafhrd, clearly a favourite of Ningauble, was often referred to as his 'Gentle Son.' Whether out of genuine respect or ironic admiration, Fafhrd and the Mouser occasionally referred to wise, ragged-robed Ningauble as 'Father' which seemed to please the strange wizard. The short form of his name, Ning, is often used by Fafhrd when talking of his wizardly mentor.

The magician endures good-natured (and less pleasant) jests made about his long-windedness with friendly sarcasm, often feigning an air of offence for his own humorous purposes. On more than one occasion when interrupted by Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser, Ningauble has referred to them as 'Tramplers of Beautiful Phrases' and 'Mutilators of Rhetoric.' Admittedly, in instances such as these when Ningauble finds himself repeatedly interrupted, it can be difficult to determine whether he is truly and subtly vexed or merely being gently mocking.

His garrulousness is unsurprising in one nicknamed the 'Gossiper of the Gods.' Ningauble makes a point of seeking information from across Nehwon, whether it seems important to others or not. More than this, the wizard keeps abreast of the goings-on in many other planes of existence as well. While Ning is very fond of Nehwon, perhaps even considering it is favourite world, it is clear to any that know him that Ningauble knows the lore of other realities the way mere mortals know of cities and nations that are foreign to them. It is this eerie ability to delve into the truths of other worlds with such a casual attitude that adds to Ningauble's mystery and frightening air of power. Even if the being himself is charming, his power is intimidating to any who stop to consider it.

Ningauble's Caves

The coolth of the hidden-mouthed rocky tunnel leading to Ningauble's deep abode was most welcome to men weary, dry and powdered with fine sand. Fafhrd, being the more knowledgeable

of Ningauble and his mazy lair, led the way, hands groping above and before him for stalactites and sharp rock edges which might inflict grievous head-bashings and other wounds. Ningauble did not approve the use by others of torch or candle in his realm.

– The Wrong Branch

The Seven-Eyed One dwells within a convoluted and complex cave system over a hundred miles east of Ilthmar and the Sinking Land, to the south of the Poisoned Desert.

The cave system claimed as a home by Ningauble houses many secrets. The magician sits in a comfortably appointed cavern at the centre of this maze-like subterranean stronghold, occasionally discoursing with visitors from various realms and regions. The illumination is dim at best, for Ningauble seems to have an aversion or dislike for any heated light source. Travellers can walk for hours, even days, in the pitch darkness and still never find anything or anyone more noteworthy than empty tunnels and silent rock formations. If Ningauble wishes to be found, those entering his caves will eventually find him. If he wishes to remain unseen, intruders will either find themselves back outside after a long walk underground or will simply never leave at all.

The great wizard has collected many ancient magical treasures in his unnaturally long life, all of which he stores close by in his caves. However, even mythic artefacts like the Cloak of Invisibility are lesser wonders within Ning's caves. The real noteworthy power of the wizard's lair resides in the myriad tunnels that lead off into the stony bowels of Nehwon... and beyond.

Dozens or hundreds, perhaps thousands or tens of thousands of the passageways in Ningauble's dark caves wind deeper into the earth and end in magical gateways. These portals are subtle things, not marked by flashing sorcery or obvious magical energies. A traveller may follow a tunnel to its conclusion, finally emerging back into the outside world to find he is no longer in Nehwon. The caves lead to an unknown number of other worlds. In the *Swords* story *Adept's Gambit*, Fafhrd and the Mouser take the wrong branch of a tunnel and walked out of the caves in our own world, only a century after Alexander the Great's conquest of most of the known world.

More than simple travel routes, it seems the journey alters the minds of travellers (at least, those unguarded by powerful sorcerous means) and reshapes their knowledge, memories, even their comprehension of language, to match the local norms. All recollection of Nehwon becomes a hazy dream-memory, while memories of living in the new world become utterly real.

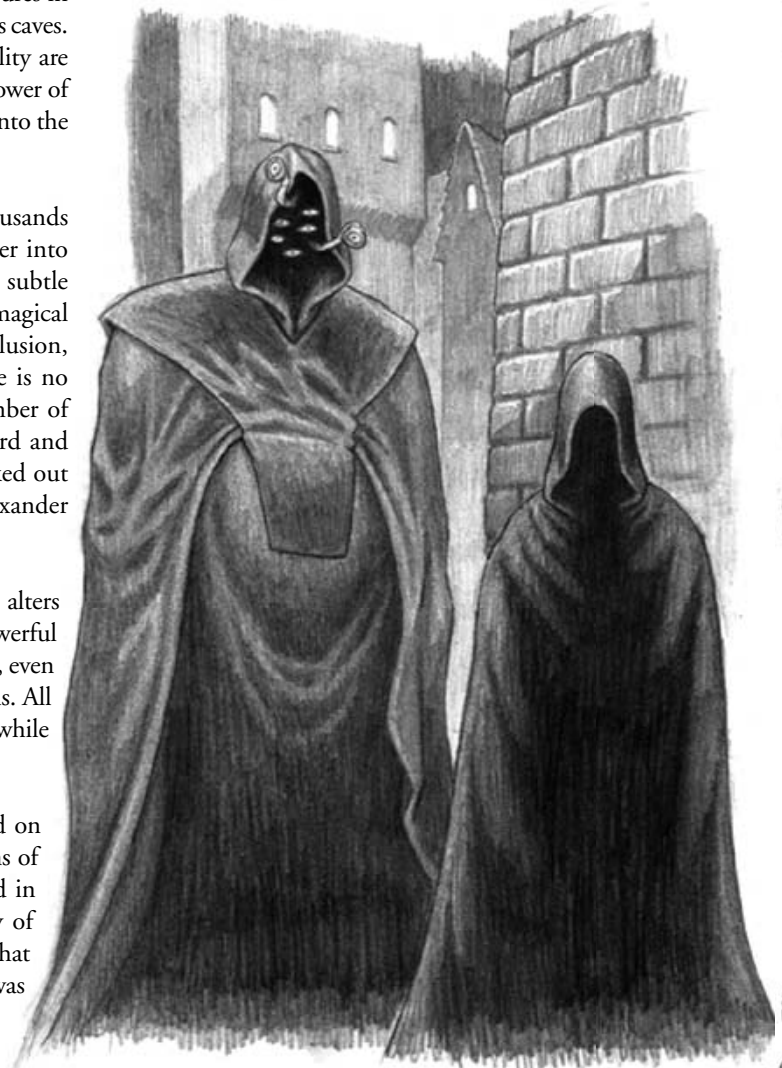
It is believed that Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser embarked on many of these cross-realm journeys, adventuring in dozens of realms over the course of their lives. Only one is detailed in the *Swords* saga: their travels in Tyre deep in the history of our own world, in the story *The Adept's Gambit*. It is said that although Nehwon faded from their waking memories, it was always still their homeland and always drew them back.

A Word of Caution

Games Masters are presented with an incredible opportunity here, though it will not be to every player's taste or to every campaign's theme. Ningauble's caves have the potential to open up endless other worlds in which to explore and find adventure, with tunnels terminating in any fantasy or historical setting the Games Master desires. Obviously, this can be an excellent way to have *Lankhmar* characters interact with characters, plots, places and monsters of other *RuneQuest* settings.

This can be tricky to plan out and get right. To have a character journey to other realms is a noted (if rare) aspect of the source material and provides a great deal of variety and new challenges. Ultimately, however, the *Swords* tales are not a guide to *Sword & Sorcery* inter-planar explorers. Games Masters wishing to focus on the thematic aspects of the setting should take a word of caution regarding keeping reality-hopping through Ningauble's caves a rare occurrence. If something as magnificent and mind-straining as *this* becomes mundane, little else in Nehwon is likely to impress the players.

Still, all that said, maybe a few years of adventures in Ancient Egypt, Medieval Europe or even *Glorantha* will be a great deal



of fun for some groups. As always, the trick is to find a balance between what the different players want before altering the campaign in hugely significant ways. If the players have turned up to enjoy a gritty low-magic romp through Leiber's world, fighting their way through hordes of beastmen in *Glorantha* might clash with their expectations.

Another potential use for Ningauble's caves is the appearance of people or beings from other realities, which need either helping back to their own realm or destroying before they can do any more damage to the characters in Nehwon. Extraplanar creatures are absolutely part of the *Swords* tales and both Ningauble and Sheelba enlist mortal aids to help drive the intruders from Nehwon. The story arc potential for characters returning a lost person to his own realm or banishing an unknown monster back to its home plane can be extremely rewarding. Ningauble might even require the characters to venture to the other world themselves, seeking artefacts or components required for demon-exorcism or monster-banishing.

Sheelba of the Eyeless Face

Blue lightning glared, revealing with great clarity a hooded figure crouched inside the low doorway. Each fold and twist of the figure's draperies stood out as precisely as an iron engraving closely viewed.

But the lightning showed nothing whatsoever inside the hood, only inky blackness.

– The Circle Curse

Sheelba stands at a more normal height, cloaked in a dark cowl that covers his face with impenetrable darkness and with long sleeves masking all hint of what manner of limbs exist under the robe. On several occasions, the Grey Mouser has observed that Sheelba sometimes sits or squats in his hut's doorway in a posture that would be terribly uncomfortable (at least for anyone with human legs), yet the wizard holds the position for a great deal of time without moving or seeming strained.

Like Ningauble, Sheelba is either inhuman due to magical warpings or some strange curse or was simply never human in the first place. The latter possibility seems the likeliest. Though Sheelba's face is forever a black, blank absence of detail under his hood, his voice is a distinct characteristic of his, sounding something between a low growl and heavy waves breaking across rocks. His harsh, raspy and sometimes growling tones are well-suited to his snide and abrupt manner of speaking.

A Gift for Directness

'Go instantly where?' Fafhrd demanded, somewhat humbly.

'How should I know and why should I tell you if I did? I'm not your wizard. I'm just taking you to Lankhmar by secret ways as a favour to that paunchy, seven-eyed, billion-worded dilettante in sorcery who thinks himself my colleague and has gulled you into taking him as a mentor,' the harsh voice responded from the hood. Then,

relenting somewhat, though growing gruffer, 'Overlord's palace, most likely. Now shut up.'

– The Swords of Lankhmar

Sheelba is an impatient being. He has little time for small talk and next to no patience for endless streams of questions that are easily answered by just doing as he says rather than worrying about the implications. If he is questioned on one topic for too long (which is a very short span of time by his way of seeing things), he will often reply with only motionless silence, simply waiting for the conversation to turn in another direction or end completely.

The secretive magician is fond of barking orders when angry and interrupting others when they get long-winded. A conversation in which both Sheel and Ning is involved can be a darkly amusing back-and-forth of speeches and angry hisses. Despite his abruptness, Sheelba is simply intolerant – he is not *hostile*. At least, not to those he wishes to speak with.

Whereas Ningauble has been known to receive several visitors at a time and prides himself on the gossip and lore of countless realms, Sheelba dwells in the Great Salt Marsh by choice, apparently hoping to remain out of the paths of any unwelcome travellers. The only way to find Sheelba is to be invited in advance or beckoned while within the swamp. He can remain unfound whenever he desires, in keeping with his distinctly antisocial and mysterious bent.

Sheelba's Hut

Sheelba's hut was a black dome about as big as the closet-tree bower in which the Mouser had last evening endured ecstasy and attempted assignation. It stood above the Marsh on five crooked poles or legs, four spaced evenly around its rim, the fifth central. Each leg was footed with a round plate as big as a cutlassman's shield, concave upward and apparently envenomed, for ringing each was a small collection of corpses of the Marsh's deadly fauna.

– The Swords of Lankhmar

The Eyeless One lives in the Great Salt Marsh, inside a magically created hut. The possibility of getting lost in the surroundings of Sheelba's home is even likelier than it is stumbling around in Ningauble's caves. The Great Salt Marsh presents an incredible ward around the swamp-wizard's hut, while the house itself is not without defences.

Sheelba's hut stands on five wooden pole-legs, which have the unnerving ability to walk (at a wobbling, bone-jarringly speedy rate of knots) on the wizard's command. Each of these pole-legs, which feature knee-bends halfway down, is coated in some kind of invisible – and probably magical – poison. Games Masters can draw up stats for this enchanted venom to see if it can be resisted by characters but the pile of dead animals at the bottom and common sense dictates that if Sheelba wants something or someone dead, it will probably end up dead. The poison is lethal on contact and woe betide any character foolish

enough to examine the hut's legs and dead animals up close. If Sheelba is fond of a character or finds him useful as a servant, the magician is likely to warn the adventurer to be careful. If the character holds no particular place in Sheelba's regard, a warning is unlikely. The arch-wizard will probably emit a throaty, harsh chuckle as the character dies, too.

In most aspects, the two magicians seem equal in power. In regards to their homes, an apparent imbalance is evident. Ningauble's caves offer transportation to other worlds, while Sheelba's marsh hut has only the ability to walk through the swamp and eliminate any being that touches its pole-legs. However, Sheelba does possess his own magic artefacts, gathered over countless decades, with a collection that almost certainly rivals his counterpart's. The Blindfold of True Seeing is the most famous example of this.

If an adventuring group is in a position to deal with both magicians, Games Masters might find that characters prefer to go to Ningauble over Sheelba because Ningauble is friendlier and his domain seems to hold wonders of more impressive power – at least when compared to a hut on stilts in a swamp. There are three ways to combat this, if Games Masters prefer to have characters pay both wizards equal respect.

The first is to remember that Sheelba and Ningauble both offer similar advice of similar insight and accuracy and rewards for tasks performed. Sheelba might take only a few minutes to explain in a cracked voice what latest event has befallen the characters and Ningauble might use a hundred metaphors and take several hours but at the end of the meeting, the information gleaned should be roughly the same or at least of the same value. Despite his humbler home, Sheelba is not stupider than Ningauble.

The second way is to engineer a situation where both wizards reveal half of what the players need to know. It is likely that neither archimage does this purely for his own amusement, though that can never be ruled out with either of these two, especially if they are trying to teach the characters a lesson. However, such a situation is probably a matter of each magician only knowing half of the answer to a problem. Ningauble is likely to sling flowery prose and many 'Gentle Sons' at the characters when making his point. Sheelba will just tell them what they need to know, perhaps mildly berating them for not realising it themselves. Either way, the characters have to visit both wizards for the full story and will have probably encountered some excitement on the way.

The third and final solution is the easiest and probably the most obvious. Sheelba, dwelling in the Great Salt Marsh, lives right next to Lankhmar. Ningauble lives about a week's ride away, through or around the Marsh, over the unpredictable Sinking Land and several days to the east. If the characters need an answer fast, they are likely to head for the closest of their two mentors, even if he is a crotchety and waspish being at times.

Questing for Sheelba and Ningauble

But the tasks Sheelba would set the Mouser at times like these were apt to be peculiarly onerous and even noisome – such as procuring nine white cats with never a black hair among them or stealing five copies of the same book of magic runes from five widely-separated sorcerous libraries or obtaining specimens of the dung of four kings living or dead...

Ningauble stood to Fafhrd very much as Sheelba stood to the Mouser except that the Seven-Eyed One was a somewhat more pretentious archimage, whose taste in the thaumaturgical tasks he set Fafhrd ran in larger directions, such as the slaying of dragons, the sinking of four-masted magic ships and the kidnapping of ogre-guarded enchanted queens.

– Bazaar of the Bizaare

When Sheel and Ning wish to contact their 'allies' the characters, they will rarely appear in the flesh. Ningauble especially is reluctant to leave his caves for anything less than world-dire reasons, though Sheelba is hardly a keen traveller either. This means that their primary method of initial communication takes the form of notes which appear to the characters through magical means: delivered by bat or bird or simply appearing on the table of inn-rooms while a character sleeps. Sheelba's notes are usually short and to the point, naming a meeting place and a time to be there. These are signed by a blank oval – Sheelba's sigil. Ningauble's often feature a riddle that a character must solve just to work out where or when he is supposed to meet his loquacious patron. These are signed by a seven-armed swastika – one of Ningauble's personal runes.

On the rare occasions that either magician ventures away from his home to meet the characters, it is because a great threat looms over the characters themselves or over all of Nehwon. Neither wizard seems to care overmuch about any particular nation or city but the fate of the world concerns them a great deal, as do the lives of their servants.

Whether the characters are summoned or met in person, the results are likely to be the same: the magicians want something done and as per the initial agreement, the characters are oath-bound to do it.

Demands

The demands made by both Sheelba and Ningauble are key ingredients in a campaign that features the wizards as mentors. The above quotation gives a good indication of the kinds of tasks the magicians set for their adventurous companions, while the *Swords* stories themselves deal with Fafhrd and the Mouser returning Death's mask to the magicians and destroying the market shops of illusionist merchants that threaten all Nehwon with their magical wares.

Games Masters will be aware from these descriptions that few quests given out by Ningauble or Sheelba are straightforward. None are easy. Even the simple-sounding adventures will have hidden dangers that the magicians may or may not warn the characters about, depending on each sorcerer's mood at the time the quest is given.

When setting tasks, Ning and Sheel will often require items that the characters will simply have no idea why a world-shakingly powerful magician could ever want. Most of the time, both magicians will not answer questions as to their reasoning or will deflect them with questions of their own. If either wizard ever feels inclined to explain exactly why he wants (for example) 'three pearls collected from three separate seas, all under the light of the moon,' then it will likely be a simple and glib answer related to magic. Even with all his 'Gentle Sonning,' Ningauble can be a patronising character at the best of times. Sheelba rarely even hides it, which can be refreshing or plain sinister.

Mythology and folklore are excellent places to find inspiration for a Ning- or Sheelba-set adventure. These are relatively obvious, however and may not appeal to some players. However, slaying dragons and rescuing princesses can seem like heavy-handed clichés for some groups. In this case, it can be a cunning idea to shake things up and make the expected outcome into something more...darkly humoured.

The 'dragon' could end up being The Dragon – a gladiator in Illik-Ving. If the princess part of the story bears truth, it could be that the gladiator won a Mingol slave as reward for his recent bouts and the slave-girl is the captured daughter of a Mingol tribal chieftain. Turning things on their heads and surprising characters is part and parcel of surviving adventures in Nehwon. Players will need to get used to expecting the unexpected, especially where Ningauble and Sheelba are concerned.

A memorable adventure with few preconceived notions and endless variations is the quest for apparent 'spell components' required by either magician. Here the Mouser's examples in the quotation make for potential inspiration. Esoteric, odd and downright disgusting ingredients are all possibilities, with the hardest to obtain and most unusual being the components the longest adventures are framed around.

Loans

In the most dangerous quests the characters undertake on behalf of Sheel or Ning, either or both of the wizards might offer a magical artefact as a temporary gift to aid in the completion of the task. These are almost always incredibly powerful and useful magic items that would unbalance the game significantly if the characters held onto them after their current adventure.

For this reason, as well as reasons of the magicians' own, Games Masters should probably always make sure that the items return to Ningauble and Sheelba one way or the other. They stole the Blindfold of True Seeing and the Cloak of Invisibility right off

Fafhrd as he stood planning the life he would lead with his new powers. It can be bitterly amusing to let characters believe they get to keep the artefacts, though ultimately they most likely will not. Games Masters should try not to be overly mean, at least.

Here are the two magic artefacts offered by the magicians in the *Swords* stories. Games Masters are obviously free to create their own. It is recommended that these items always 'beat' any other magical powers in terms of potency. They are the tokens of the most powerful magicians in the world, after all.

The Cloak of Invisibility

This magic item is little more than a long shred of rag, apparently worn and threadbare from many uses. The character drapes it around his neck or shoulders to activate its power.

System: Characters wearing the Cloak fall under its power without need of any roll. Any clothing and items in the character's hands are also invisible until the character drops or removes them. Picking anything back up once again renders it invisible. The character is perfectly visible to himself at all times.

Two circumstances mitigate the Cloak's effects. A sorcerer casting any detection spell capable of piercing invisibility will be able to see the character normally, as long as the spell reaches Magnitude 10 or higher. Secondly, any blood from an injury incurred while wearing the Cloak of Invisibility is visible. Allow any nearby people to take a Perception test at -30% in order to notice the strange appearance of blood drops.

The Blindfold of True Seeing

This artefact appears as a gossamer cobweb. It must be laid over the eyes like a true blindfold in order to activate it.

System: Characters wearing the Blindfold automatically pierce any magical illusion, no matter the Magnitude of the spell or the type of magic. The item even overrides the concealing power of the Cloak of Invisibility and other wondrous artefacts.

On the Outs

Lastly, it is well known to those acquainted with Sheelba, Ningauble or both that the two wizards are often 'on the outs' with one another, to use their exact words. At the best of times, Sheel and Ning maintain a friendly rivalry where they trade insults through their servants but stay in contact with each other. On the whole it seems each of the wizards respects his distant counterpart.

Frequently it is not the best of times for Sheel and Ning. On these occasions, they ignore each other apart from relaying waspish criticisms to their PC agents – at least on the surface. Games Masters could weave a compelling campaign based on an adventuring group split by the sorcerous civil war, with all members unsure which side to take. Perhaps Sheelba and Ningauble actively work against one another during such times when the hate flows bitterest between them.

MAGIC

A character's Magic Points represent the potential magical power that he could muster if he had the ability to channel sorcery. Most characters will simply not use their Magic Point rating at all. This is perfectly acceptable in the setting: true magic is rarer in Nehwon than in many other fantasy settings, with the *Swords* novels especially focusing on the protagonist characters encountering, opposing and foiling magic-wielding enemies. Almost all magic in Leiber's stories has an unearthly, sinister or malicious flavour to it. While scryers and hedge magicians exist in droves, those with the capability to command serious magical power are almost uniformly twisted and evil.

In the *Lankhmar* campaign setting, magic is something the characters encounter rather than wield. Sorcery is more often an evil influence they must escape or overcome, rather than manipulate themselves. As such, the Magic Point score on most character sheets will simply go unused. Those rare characters that do walk the dark path in sorcery themselves are the exception to this rule but they have their own problems to worry about.

In Nehwon, White Magic and Black Magic are at opposite ends of sorcery's spectrum. Beneficial, kindly magic is never dealt with in the *Swords* novels, though it is mentioned, barely, in passing. Minor witches, diviners and soothsayers are common enough, though their magic is so weak as to barely compare to magic in traditional fantasy. This is considered Hedge Magic in game terms. The magic of priests, such as miracles granted by the Gods in *Lankhmar*, is considered Faith Magic. These two magical disciplines are considered to be 'White Magic' when used for good. They can rarely be used for evil because they are so unreliable and weak.

It is believed a more potent form of White Magic exists (or once existed) but the discovery of one who could teach such an innocent and pure form of magical manipulation would be the result of many adventures and characters becoming apprentices still remains unlikely in the extreme. Perhaps White Magic was more common in ages past. Perhaps the people of Nehwon have always been too inwardly tainted – too human – for such a selfless magic.

Black Magic, also called sorcery, is this third path that the overwhelming majority of Nehwon's admittedly few powerful magicians learn to master – or to at least control for a short time. The last type of magic is Ice Magic, which is used by the Snow Women of the north and although it technically sits somewhere between White Magic and Black Magic, it is rarely used in a beneficial way and is therefore considered a form of Black Magic.

Hedge Magic

Hedge Magic covers the art used by witches, witch doctors, astrologers, wizards, necromancers, fortune tellers and so-called holy men to see the future. For each form of divination, the actual ritual used is a different one. Necromancers might speak to skulls or divine from the intestines of a slain animal (or human), while a witch might stare deeply into her cauldron of boiling water and divine the future from the pattern of herbs on the surface and an astrologer create complex star charts based on how the heavens influence what is to come. Ultimately, the result is all that matters.

Unfortunately, most people who say they practice divination are charlatans out to score easy coin from gullible and desperate fools. What is arguably worse is that even those with a real talent for Hedge Magic lack any significant power to see the future with any degree of reliable accuracy.

To be able to practice Hedge Magic, a character needs the new Advanced Skill: Divining.

Divining (POW)

This skill allows a character to use his trained ritual method to see dimly into the future. Skulls do not truly talk to necromancers, the stars cannot be proved to relay exactly what will come true and the herbalistic drug-induced visions of witch-doctors will not always show the real future. Instead, use of Divining through whatever ritual means is part-theatrics, part-interpretive guesswork and part magic – albeit in the most minor and unreliable sense. After the ritual is complete, the character sees hazy images in his mind of what *might* be.

Use of Hedge Magic takes 1D4 hours to complete, during which the diviner can do nothing beside his ritual work. Games Masters (and players performing this for Non-Player Characters) are encouraged to create outlandish rites based on their 'mystical' tradition, playing up the self-important spectacle of the act as much as possible.

After the roll, the diviner reveals 1D6 'facts' about the character's future. If the roll is successful, at least *one* of these facts is true, though they will rarely *all* be true. If the roll fails, none of the facts revealed are true and the Games Master is entitled to make up nonsense that may never happen to the character.

The facts revealed are usually vague, based on images rather than in-depth knowledge. 'You will kill a man with black hair while

holding a sword in a dark room' is a good example of something that may or may not come true but for most adventurers it is a relatively likely prospect anyway. As such, use of the Divining skill can be an interesting way to foreshadow some events that the Games Master has planned out. It is safest if the events hinted at are those which are integral to the plot and are less likely to be missed by players acting outside the Games Master's prepared plot.

Some Hedge Magicians take vagueness to the limit, turning it into a twisted art. These are the diviners who insist that a character should 'never make camp with a one-eyed man while the star Astorian is in the sky,' because they saw an image of the character fighting a man with an eye-patch in a forest at night. Such confusing information can make for some great roleplaying and it is up to the Games Master to play it through to the end, with the night-fight (if it was even true) eventually revealed as a life or death battle against a mutilated Mingol slaver or a practice bout against the character's brother who was recently wounded in the eye.

Divination is never an exact art. While it is not recommended that all Hedge Magicians become examples of how best to frustrate the players by misdirection, the fact remains that relying on this weak and unreliable magic is a fool's game at best.

Faith Magic

The magic of divinity is not strong in Nehwon. There is even debate, especially around tables in the taverns of Lankhmar's Atheist's Avenue, as to whether the gods even exist or ever influence mortal life.

While the gods (arguably) exist in the world they are entities to be acknowledged, appeased and occasionally asked for luck, rather than beings that are prayed to in exchange for divine power. People pay lip service or homage to a deity in their own way, whether attending occasional nightly sermons on the Street of the Gods or mumbling a prayer to the Shark God as another prisoner is executed by being fed to the sharks of Ilthmar harbour.

Joining a religion is not the formal matter of some other *RuneQuest* settings. All one needs to be a Lay Member in a god's cult is to say he believes in the deity. He need not even be telling the truth. The Mouser was considered a lapsed worshipper of Mog the Spider God purely because he indulged Ivrian for a few months and told her he believed in Mog. The fact of the matter is that the gods hear every time a mortal speaks their name, maybe even *thinks* their name and they turn their attentions accordingly.

There are two ways for mortals to interact with the gods. The first is to be an established member of the god's cult, receiving the minor bonuses that entails. The second is to offend the god and draw his ire. The former is desirable for the pious. The latter is desirable for no one but the insane.

Cults

The cults of *Lankhmar* work slightly differently to those of generic *RuneQuest*. Joining a cult as a Lay Member is as simple as believing (or pretending to believe) in the god the cult is based around. As long as the character openly acknowledges out loud that he believes in the god, he is thereafter considered a Lay Member in game terms even if he never gives the deity another thought. However, no matter how many gods the character professes belief in, he may only be considered a Lay Member in three or four cults maximum, depending on the Games Master's discretion. Individual deities or small groups of patron gods are the established traditions in Nehwon. Any more belief is vague, dispersed and does not draw the gods' attention.

Lay Members have no responsibility to their cult unless they choose to make it so. They tithe as much or as little as their conscience and attention spans decree – the average Street of the Gods sermon will earn a cult between a few Tiks and several hundred Smerduks depending on how far to the east or west the religion has come.

The one advantage to the often vague and half-hearted belief in a god is the ability to call on the deity for aid. This does not take the form of priestly magic manifesting after daily prayer or miraculous healing whenever the adventurer needs to seal his wounds. Instead, this rare call for a god's distant aid is reflected in the rules for Divine Intervention.

A successful call for Divine Intervention (which is no easy feat at the best of times) has two key differences in the *Lankhmar* setting. Firstly, it can only be called upon once per year, not once per month. Secondly, the only result possible is a divine effect related to the god's area of influence, rather than the casting of spells or resurrection of companions. The aid offered by a Divinely Intervening deity will always be something that is *probably* the god helping his worshipper but *might not be*. To wit, it is an ambiguous event that would have a priest nodding sagely and thanking his god, while a faithless man could sneer and jeer at the pious fool for assuming it was the work of the divine rather than purest luck.

The most common cults and gods of Nehwon are listed in the *Guilds and Cults* chapter on page 120.

True Priests

Rising above Lay Member status is dealt with on a cult by cult basis. For some religions, particularly the easternmost faiths on the Street of the Gods, becoming a priest is no more than simply declaring that one is priest. In larger and more organised religions such as the faith of Aarth, structured hierarchies are in place and the cult more resembles a traditional religion with high priests, ministers and lay brothers. The roles and responsibilities of these members are dealt with in the Street of the Gods section of the *Lankhmar: City of Thieves* chapter.

Black Magic

None can use black magic without straining the soul to the uttermost – and staining it into the bargain. None can inflict suffering without enduring the same. None can send death by spells and sorcery without walking on the brink of death's own abyss, eye and dipping his own blood into it. The forces black magic evokes are like two-edged poisoned swords with grips studded with scorpion stings. Only a strong man, leather-handed, in whom hate and evil are very powerful, can wield them and he only for a space.

– The Unholy Grail

In Nehwon, only those with the blackest hearts and those with potential for evil to take root would ever deal with the unwholesome and unholy discipline of sorcery. The name 'Black Magic' may seem simple and trite but it is eerily apt in describing the dark forces at work behind this art. In the Swords novels, Black Magic was used most famously by Hristomilio, the Thieves' Guild magician, Fafhrd's mother Mor and Khahkht, the Wizard of Black Ice.

It is unlikely that characters will ever learn to master Black Magic. Even dabblers in this twisted art put themselves at great risk when they wield these untrustworthy powers, while true Black Magicians have stripped their soul of all redeeming aspects in their hunger for power.

Ultimately, for many people, the drawbacks of dedicating one's time and efforts to such unwholesome practices offset the possibilities for power. In an uncomplicated world, if one wants someone dead, one kills him. There is no need to corrupt one's soul by looking into Black Magic spells to do the deed. Yet the addictive rush of sorcery draws in many souls. The majority abandon their pursuit as soon as the costs become clear or their consciences restore them to a more normal existence. Many also die – sorcery is not a forgiving discipline. More than one would-be wizard has found himself torn apart by the foul entities he sought to entreat with.

Those rare few that master Black Magic, commanding their own hatred into a sorcerous form, are among the most dangerous and powerful beings in Nehwon. They are still mortal, still possessing of human weaknesses but they have unearthly powers at their disposal, making them devoutly feared by all those around them.

Learning Black Magic

The principles of Black Magic take time and effort to master. It is a discipline that requires a great deal of research and experimentation, with few sorcerers coming to any real power in their youth no matter how young they start down the dark path. Black Magic is a commitment of decades, not weeks, months or even years.

To learn sorcery without guidance is dangerous and foolhardy but quite common because masters are so rare. Characters locate Black Magic writings in books or scrolls and learn through

experimentation. A few sorcerers are 'lucky' enough to stand as apprentices to a more powerful master magician, learning through careful instruction but these are the minority.

A Brief Summary

The game mechanics for Black Magic are based on the *RuneQuest* Sorcery rules, with several differences and additions. Here are the guidelines in creating characters (most likely Non-Player Characters) with a flair for the black arts:

- Sorcerer characters are advised to use the Sorcerer profession but this is not mandatory.
- Sorcerers may not know more spells than their INT score.
- Spells are treated as Advanced skills. In order to learn any Black Magic spell, a character must somehow acquire the details of the spell in written form or be taught it by a mentor. Each spell is governed by a separate Magical skill (such as Cause Disease, Cloud of Hate and so on), which is derived from the sorcerer's POW + INT total.
- Spells can be increased like any other skill through practice or research.
- When casting any Black Magic spell, the character must pass the appropriate Magical skill. If the test succeeds, the spell's effects take place and the caster deducts the requisite number of Magic Points based on how much Manipulation is involved. If the roll fails, the spell fails. In this case, the caster subtracts only one Magic Point.
- The manipulation of Black Magic spells is the most frighteningly versatile aspect to this unpredictable art. Sorcerers can use the four Manipulate skills: Manipulate (Magnitude), Manipulate (Range), Manipulate (Duration) and Manipulate (Target).
- Three factors further affect Black Magic castings: the concept of magical Sympathy between wizard and victim, the Agony that the caster suffers as he casts the spell and the magician's own Hatred. These are dealt with according to the Situational Modifier table overleaf.
- Magic is a slow and tiring process. The only way to cast spells quickly (such as in battle) is to have a *focus*, such as a wand already charged with a spell or a scroll with the words of a spell written down.
- There can be no power without cost: Characters who use Black Magic are subject to spiritual and physical deterioration as the unholy energies flow through them. This is represented by the Corruption train.

Important Note: As noted in the summary, a sorcerer may only know a number of Sorcery spells equal to his INT score. *For*

example, *Hristomilio* has INT 17 and can know 17 spells before he needs to think about increasing his Intelligence score.

All Black Magic spells share the same traits before the caster manipulates them in casting:

- Magnitude 1
- Duration equal to the sorcerer's POW in minutes
- Range equal to the sorcerer's POW in metres
- Spells will only affect a single Target

Casting Black Magic

Unless he is using a focus (see page 149), a character must be able to gesture with his hands and be able to chant in order to cast a spell. This represents the sorcerer tracing arcane symbols in the air and forming his lips into the curses necessary to bring forth the hatred-driven magic.

Any Black Magic spellcasting produces sights and sounds detectable by people nearby. The exact effects of the sorcery depend on the spell being cast, though the effects will be seen or heard (or both) up to 10 metres times the Magnitude of the spell.

If the sorcerer is unhindered and able to cast his spell, the player makes the appropriate spell skill roll. A successful test means the spell is cast. A failed test means the magic fails to manifest.

Any of the following spellcasting modifiers apply to individual spell skills as well as Manipulation skills being used.

Magic Points

Black Magic spells cast without caster manipulation do not cost any Magic Points. However, each Manipulation effect applied to a spell costs one Magic Point to apply. Characters will automatically regain Magic Points equal to their POW every day.

Critical Success & Fumbles

A critical success on the spell skill test means that the caster has managed to channel and control his sorcerous sending particularly effectively. Any attempts to resist or counter the spell suffer a -10% penalty.

A critical success on any Manipulation test also reflects unusually precise mastery over the dark energies being summoned. The Magic Point cost for applying that particular Manipulation effect is ignored and not deducted from the caster's total.

If a Black Magic spellcasting test is fumbled, the spell fails and the sorcerer deducts an additional 1D6 Magic Points on top of the Magic Point loss for any Manipulation effects. He also suffers from the rules for Corruption.

Casting Time

The rules for Casting Time mirror those of Rune Magic, though they are almost always significantly longer for Black Magic. Sorcery is not a fast art – even wizards using foci must spend a long time preparing them in advance.

Black Magic Situational Modifiers

Situation	Skill Modifier ¹
Spellcaster is gagged or silenced	-40%
Spellcaster is restrained	-30%
Spellcaster is prone	-20%
Spellcaster is on unstable ground	-20%
Partially obscured target	-20% ²
Heavily obscured target	-40% ²
Totally obscured target	-60% ²
Agony, Hatred and Sympathy	Special ³

¹ These modifiers are cumulative – a prone spellcaster casting at a partially obscured target decreases his Runecasting skill by -40%.

² These modifiers only apply if the spell has a target other than the spellcaster, his immediate location, his carried possessions or a touched object/individual.

³ See *Thematic Manipulations* on page 44.

Dismissing Black Magic Spells

The rules for dismissing magic are the same as those for Rune Magic. As a single Combat Action, a caster can dismiss any Permanent spell(s) he has cast. Ceasing to cast a Concentration spell is immediate and not a Combat Action.

Overcharging Black Magic Sorcery Spells

Overcharging Black Magic works differently than other *RuneQuest* magic. It is a matter of Sympathy, Hatred and Agony rather than standard magical manipulation. See Thematic Manipulations on page 144.

The Four Manipulation (Magical) Skills

These are the four Magical skills a sorcerer must have to perform more than the most rudimentary spellwork. *RuneQuest* veterans will note the absence of the fifth skill, Manipulate (Combine). Such feats of sorcery are unrelated to the laborious rituals and dark handiwork of Nehwon's magicians.

- **Manipulation (Magnitude) (INT+POW)**

All casting modifiers that apply to the spell's casting test are applied to this skill too. The casting test's D100 result is also compared to this modified Manipulation (Magnitude) score. As long as this also results in a success, the spell's Magnitude is increased. The maximum Magnitude to which the spell can be increased to is noted in the Manipulating Black Magic Spells table.

It costs one Magic Point to apply this effect to a Black Magic spell, whether or not the final spell is successful and regardless of the final Magnitude of the spell.

- **Manipulation (Duration) (INT+POW)**

This skill allows the sorcerer to increase the Duration of a Black Magic spell. Apply all casting modifiers that are applied to the spell's casting test to this skill too. The casting test's D100 result is also compared to this modified Manipulation (Duration) score. As long as this also results in a success, the spell's Duration is increased. The maximum Duration to which the spell can be increased to is noted in the Manipulating Black Magic Spells table.

It costs one Magic Point to apply this effect to a Black Magic spell, whether or not the final spell is successful and regardless of the final Duration of the spell.

- **Manipulation (Range) (INT+POW)**

This skill allows the sorcerer to increase the Range of a Black Magic spell. Apply all casting modifiers that are applied to the spell's casting test to this skill too. The casting test's D100 result is also compared to this modified Manipulation (Range) score. As long as this also results in a success, the spell's Range is increased. The maximum Range to which the spell can be increased is noted in the Manipulating Black Magic Spells table.

Manipulating Black Magic Spells

Manipulation Score	Magnitude	Duration (in minutes)	Range (in metres)	Targets
1% to 10%	1	POW	POW	1
11% to 20%	2	POW x 2	POW x 2	2
21% to 30%	3	POW x 3	POW x 3	3
31% to 40%	4	POW x 4	POW x 4	4
41% to 50%	5	POW x 5	POW x 5	5 or 5m radius
51% to 60%	6	POW x 6	POW x 6	6
61% to 70%	7	POW x 7	POW x 7	7
71% to 80%	8	POW x 8	POW x 8	8
81% to 90%	9	POW x 9	POW x 9	9
91% to 100%	10	POW x 10	POW x 10	10 or 10m radius
101% to 110%	11	POW x 11	POW x 11	11
111% to 120%	12	POW x 12	POW x 12	12
121% to 130%	13	POW x 13	POW x 13	13
131% to 140%	14	POW x 14	POW x 14	14
141% to 150%	15	POW x 15	POW x 15	15 or 15m radius
151% to 160%	16	POW x 16	POW x 16	16
161% to 170%	17	POW x 17	POW x 17	17
171% to 180%	18	POW x 18	POW x 18	18
181% to 190%	19	POW x 19	POW x 19	19
191% to 200%	20	POW x 20	POW x 20	20 or 20m radius

It costs one Magic Point to apply this effect to a Black Magic spell, whether or not the final spell is successful and regardless of the final Range of the spell.

- **Manipulation (Targets) (INT+POW)**

This skill allows the sorcerer to increase the number of subjects targeted by a spell. The casting test's D100 result is also compared to this modified Manipulation score. As long as this also results in a success, the spell has targeted the additional subjects. The number of targets that can be affected is noted in the Manipulating Black Magic Spells table.

If the character is able to affect 5, 10, 15 or 20 targets, the caster may choose instead to affect a 5m, 10m, 15m or 20m radius, respectively, instead of selecting specific targets.

It costs one Magic Point to apply this effect to a Black Magic spell, whether or not the final spell is successful and regardless of the final Targets of the spell.

Thematic Manipulations

Three additional factors manipulate the Black Magic of Nehwon; three aspects of spellcasting stand apart from conventional sorcery rules and can amplify a spell's potency tenfold or reduce a wizard to a withered husk of a man. These three principles are Agony, Hatred and Sympathy. Each potentially applies a modifier to both the final spell roll and the preceding skill rolls.

Important Note: Games Masters who wish to stick with the generic *RuneQuest* rules for Sorcery and ignore these alterations are welcome to do so. The Thematic Manipulations are presented as an additional way of flavouring the dark magic of *Lankmar* campaigns.

For Games masters who are worried it will complicate things, it is worth considering that these additional modifiers are simple and easy to apply and that Black Magic is rare enough in-game that the modifiers are unlikely to be used more than a few times in any given story arc.

Those who do ignore the following manipulations should alter the Corruption rule to make sure every Black Magic spell regardless of target or effect causes Corruption.

Agony

Black Magic steals from those who wield it carelessly, leeching their life force to fuel its own dark power. Sorcerers have the option of sacrificing Hit Points from a chosen location (healed in the natural manner) and adding +5% to their Black Magic spellcasting roll and Manipulation skill rolls.

This represents a spell eating away at the caster's body and soul, fuelling itself on his life before breaking free with greater potency than conventional sendings. For each Hit Point sacrificed in this

manner, the spellcasting roll gains +5%. Hit Locations cannot be reduced below one Hit Point in this manner. Once a caster reaches one Hit Point in all his locations (and he still wishes to sacrifice more to gain power) he can choose to sacrifice one STR, DEX, CON or INT *permanently* and gain +30% to the casting roll for each point sacrificed.

Using Agony to manipulate a spell is hideously painful in ways normal pain cannot approach. It is the spiritual rotting and atrophy of muscle and mind in the span of a heartbeat and as such is rarely used unless deemed absolutely necessary. Sorcerers bound or gagged yet still desperate to fling their foul magic at foes are the likeliest users of Agony, though wizards with little care for their bodies will allow the sorcery to eat at their flesh from time to time.

Alternately, magicians can amplify their spells with the pain they are currently suffering because of an injury or disease. For every Hit Point lost in the *previous* turn, the sorcerer may use Agony as if he had expended the Hit Point himself. Few wizards survive such a spellcasting, with a magician likely using it only as a last resort to slay a foe before the moment of his own death.

Use of Agony in either form always adds to Corruption – see page 145.

Hatred

The foundations of Black Magic are bound in the caster's hatred of others. No one without the potential for malice and evil can ever wield sorcery and Black Magic always best serves those whose minds and hearts are saturated by their loathing for other beings. Black Magicians use their own loathing for other life forms to enhance and shape their spells, creating foul sendings and summonings based around the strength of their hatred.

The principle of Hatred allows sorcerers to increase the potency of their spells, in addition to other factors. It is easier to magically harm one's hated enemies than it is one's friends and family, because the overriding loathing for the former enhances the effects of the spell.

Spells which cause direct harm to victims potentially receive a damage bonus which is added to the final total. All spells potentially receive a bonus to the spellcasting roll. The following bonuses and penalties apply to any Black Magician casting a spell.

Sympathy

The final principle in Thematic Manipulation is that of Sympathy. Sympathy relates to how well a caster knows the target of the spell, how tightly bound the magician, the spell and the victim are in this evil chain of power. It is not based on emotion for the target – that is the function of Hatred. Instead it is based on how familiar the magician is with the person he seeks to harm and what, if any, items of the victim he has to increase the potency of the spell.

Hatred Modifiers

Target	Example	Damage Modifier ¹	Spellcasting roll ²
Target is a loved one ³	Family member; lover; life-long companion	-5	-20%
Target is a friend ³	Adventuring companion; close ally	-3	-10%
No emotional attachment to target	Stranger; fellow bar patron; shopkeeper	0	0%
Target is disliked ³	Target is inconvenient, annoying and occasionally troublesome	+3	+15%
Target is loathed ³	Long-time or serious enemy; target repeatedly attempts to hinder or kill caster or presents an immediate lethal threat	+6	+30%
Target is hated ³	Murderer of caster's friends and family	+12	+60%

¹ Apply this modifier to all damage inflicted by the spell.

² Apply this modifier to all spellcasting rolls, including the preceding Magical skill tests.

³ Any spells directed at these targets always add to Corruption.

Sympathy is rated from one to five, depending on familiarity. For each point of Sympathy between magician and victim, the spell gains a bonus to all Manipulation skill tests.

- The caster has no relation to the victim whatsoever. This confers a -20% penalty to all Manipulate tests.

- The caster knows the victim's name, knows many details of the victim's life, recognises his face and/or possesses an item once touched by the victim (coins, a stool and so on). This adds a +5 bonus to all Manipulation rolls.

- The caster has met the victim on several occasions and/or possesses one of the target's personal items (a weapon, a lock of hair, a favourite shirt). This adds a +10 bonus to all Manipulate tests.

- The caster is intimately familiar with the victim and knows him well. Alternatively, he possesses some of the victim's saliva or tears or the blood or body parts of a relative of the victim. This adds +20% bonus to any Manipulate tests and one to the spell's final Magnitude (if applicable).

- The caster knows the victim almost as well as he knows himself. Alternatively, he possesses some of the victim's blood or a body part (such as an eyeball or a finger). This kind of cursing can be savagely effective, adding a +30% bonus to all Manipulate rolls and two to the spell's Magnitude (if applicable).

Corruption

Characters dealing with Black Magic, whether dabbling or immersing themselves in it, are putting their bodies and souls at risk. Channelling evil forces in order to harm others takes its toll on a magician day by day and night by night. The following actions provoke a Corruption test.

- Any time the magician learns a new Black Magic spell
- Any time the character casts a Black Magic spell

- Any time he kills someone with Black Magic. In the case of this last action, *two* Corruption tests are necessary – one for the casting, one for the killing.

When determining Corruption after each of these actions, the character makes a single D100 roll. If the number is above 50%, the caster has passed and remains unCorrupted. If the number is 50% or below, the roll has failed. The wizard suffers the withering effects of dealing with this sinister branch of the occult and must roll on the Corruption list below.

The following modifiers impose penalties on Corruption rolls:

1. For each 5% gained by use of Agony in spellcasting, the Corruption roll has a 5% penalty subtracted from the total rolled.
2. Any time Hatred is used in a spellcasting (which is practically always) the Black Magician suffers a further 5% penalty for each level of Magnitude that was the spell was cast.

Effects of Corruption

Corruption can be subtle or overt but it is always horrific. A D100 roll reveals what changes take place within the character's mind and body in the event of a failed Corruption test. This list is not exhaustive – Games Masters should feel free to create their own interesting magical warpings, especially when creating characters as memorable and important as Black Magicians. The examples provided here are for reference and guideline use, rather than a specific list a Games Master should feel bound to.

An important note to remember is that none of these mutations should be beneficial in any way. They need not all be significantly crippling – some are merely inconvenient or distressing for the magician.

No Black Magician may ever heal Corruption traits. Characters cannot develop the same Corruption twice. A re-roll is required in instances of number repetition. It is also worth noting that

Quarmallian Necromancers tend to gain mental instabilities rather than physical corruptions, so they should roll on the Mental Instabilities list.

01–02: **Club Hands** – The character's hands become compact and stunted, a mess of knuckles and tiny finger bones with limited capacity for motion. All actions involving manual dexterity (including holding weapons in combat) suffer a –20% penalty. Spellcasting suffers a –10% penalty.

03–04: **Partial Blindness** – The character's eyes milk over with a whitish or yellowish film that hampers his vision. From this point on, the character is treated as if acting in Partial Darkness, with a –20% penalty to all vision-based Perception tests.

05–06: **Hideous Veins** – The character's veins darken and swell under his skin, becoming visible – blackened and bunched – on his cheeks, neck and elsewhere on his body. The character suffers a –25% penalty to all Influence tests.

07–08: **Hair Loss** – The wizard's hair, eyebrows and facial hair fall out in clumps over the course of a few days, leaving scraggly tufts in random spots.

09–10: **Partial Deafness** – The character's sense of hearing fades and he hears everything as if it were muffled or in the distance. The magician suffers a –20% penalty to all hearing-based Perception tests.

11–12: **Black Tongue** – The sorcerer's tongue turns black and loses all sensation. The character suffers a –10% penalty on all Influence tests due to the strange appearance of his tongue and the minor difficulties he has when speaking.

13–14: **Teeth Rot** – The sorcerer's teeth turn rotten in his gums and most fall out in the course of a week. He suffers a –10% penalty to all Influence tests due to his appearance and a –20% penalty to all spellcasting rolls.

15–16: **Hunchback** – The character's spine arches unnaturally, creating a permanent hunch and an awkward gait and reducing his SIZ by one.

17–18: **Repel Animals** – The magician causes nearby animals to hiss, spit, bark or flee from his presence. He suffers a –30% penalty on all rolls involving taming, controlling or riding animals.

19–20: **Bleeding Gums** – The character's gums bleed a great deal at the slightest pressure: when he grits his teeth, yawns or shouts, for example. It looks grotesque but inflicts no penalties.

21–22: **Bleeding Lips** – The character's lips crack and bleed at the slightest pressure, such as when he smiles, speaks or shouts. It looks unnerving and is clearly painful but inflicts no penalties.

23–24: **Palsy** – The character's muscles betray him much of the time, inflicting palsy-like tremors whenever he moves. The magician permanently suffers –1 to STR and –1 to DEX. Anything in his hands shakes noticeably in his tremulous grip.

25–26: **Bleeding Eyes** – The aqueous and vitreous fluids in the magician's eye sockets become bloody and pinkish. His eyeballs have a pinkish hue to them and during any Moderate or Heavy Activity, tears of bloody fluid run down his cheeks uncontrollably. The overall appearance of his eyes imposes a –5% penalty to all Influence tests and is doubled when he weeps.

27–28: **Club Foot** – One of the magician's feet becomes warped and stunted, resembling a lump of malformed flesh and bone. The character subtracts –2 from his DEX, –20% penalty to Athletics rolls and suddenly finds it difficult to acquire shoes.

29–30: **Twisted Leg** – The character's legs twist and bend, giving the sorcerer a noticeable hitch in his stride. He loses –2 to DEX and –30% penalty to Athletics rolls.

31–32: **Locked Spine** – The vertebrae in the magician's spine become stiff and resistant to movement, causing –3 to DEX and –20% penalty to all Athletics tests.

33–34: **Eternal Flu** – The magician falls victim to a continuous flu, forever coughing and sneezing and suffering frequent headaches and continual nose drips.

35–36: **Bruises** – The character develops painful purple, yellow and bluish bruises across his body. They ache but inflict no further penalty.

37–38: **Cysts** – The magician develops swollen, small sacs of bloody fluid under his skin at various points on his body. These can be burst and drained to relieve the pain, though they tend to become infected sores.

39–40: **Crooked Teeth** – The character's teeth become twisted and crooked in his gums, looking ugly and reducing his CHA by one.

41–42: **Infertility** – The magician can no longer father or carry children. A male sorcerer's seed is too weak and female magicians are unable to carry a child to term, always losing the child in miscarriage D4+1 months into the pregnancy.

43–44: **Bleeding Ears** – In the presence of any loud noises or when performing Moderate and Heavy Activity, the sorcerer's ears trickle blood down his jaw and neck.

45–46: **Facial Tic** – The character suffers a repetitive facial spasm several times every minute, involving a sudden contracting of some of the facial muscles. Sudden gritting of the teeth or clenching the eyes closed are common examples. Depending

on what the character is doing, the Games Master may wish to apply minor penalties to the magician's rolls, such as when he is firing a bow or making a speech. The severity of the tics varies constantly and not all are face-wrenching spasms.

47–48: **Allergic to Water** – The character suffers a painful, itchy rash which breaks out on his flesh every time he touches water. Depending on how much water he touches, the penalties can be from –5% to all rolls (in the event of a wet arm) to –30% (if he is fully submerged.) The rash lasts 1D4+2 hours each time it manifests.

49–50: **Sensitive to Sunlight** – The brightness of the sun causes great pain to the character's eyes, forcing him to work in darker conditions or become nocturnal. The magician suffers a –30% penalty to all vision-based Perception rolls and Combat Actions when in the sunlight.

51–52: **Dehydrated** – The magician's body no longer metabolises water effectively. The character suffers the effects of chronic thirst (see *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*) after only CON hours. His mouth and eyes are constantly dry and aching.

53–54: **Impotence** – The character can no longer function sexually. Both males and females can suffer this Corruption, with the bodies of characters of either gender rendered unable to become sexually stimulated in any way. The character also loses his or her sex drive.

55–56: **Burbling Breath** – The character speaks with a burbling, rasping tone as his throat and sinuses are often filled with thick mucus. The magician suffers –10% penalty to all Influence tests.

57–58: **Rotting Fingernails** – The magician's fingernails blacken and fall off, leaving bruised and swollen fingertips that are intensely sensitive. Any pressure at all causes pain, though the character suffers no penalties.

59–60: **Stench** – The character exudes a cloying scent of decay, as if he were several days dead and starting to rot. No amount of perfume or clothing can mask this nauseating stench, which imposes a –20% penalty to all Influence tests and any attempts to remain hidden or move unseen.

61–62: **Vilely Corpulent** – The character's flesh fattens and expands over the course of a week until he is morbidly obese, with rolls of fat hanging off his torso, arms and legs. Even his ankles become swollen and fat. Strangely, the weight does not affect his movement as much as natural fat would, imposing only a –4 penalty to DEX. It is clear that characters with this Corruption are more than naturally fat, they are frighteningly obese.

63–64: **Walking Skeleton** – The magician loses almost all his body fat and comes to resemble a painfully-thin, emaciated

creature of bones and sallow flesh. He suffers a –4 to STR but remains relatively healthy despite his unnatural appearance. It is clear that characters with this Corruption are more than chronically underweight – the fact they are still alive is no less than amazing.

65–66: **Curdling Touch** – the character's touch spoils wine, curdles milk and turns beer foul. Only water remains drinkable in the character's hands and even this tastes tainted, salty and foul.

67–68: **Weakness** – The magician's muscles are supernaturally atrophied. Although he looks normal, even the simplest actions he undertakes are considered Moderate Activity.

69–70: **Rasping Voice** – The magician's voice becomes hoarse, whispery and generally unpleasant to hear. The magician suffers a –5% penalty to all Influence tests.

71–72: **Bloody Cough** – The character coughs at even the slightest exertion and the saliva from his hacking coughs is often flecked with blood. He loses –1 to CON because of his suffering lungs.

73–74: **Drooling** – The magician drools every few minutes because his overactive saliva ducts are continually at work. It is an embarrassing problem but imposes no social penalties unless the Games Master deems the character is disgusting other characters in his presence.

75–76: **Vermin Lord** – The character attracts vermin; most notably bugs, rats and stray urban animals. Though this condition imposes no penalty, it can obviously make the character's life difficult in certain situations.

77–78: **Ugliness** – The magician's features warp and twist, becoming uglier as he loses 1D6 CHA points. Sloping brows, overbites, piggy eyes and long, hooked noses are common.

79–80: **Creaking Joints** – The magician's joints creak audibly and cause him pain when he moves. All rolls to remain silent while hidden suffer a –10% penalty.

81–82: **Bloodshot Eyes** – The magician's eyes are always bloodshot and sensitive to bright light. In the presence of any light source greater than Partial Darkness, the character suffers –10% penalty to all rolls.

83–84: **Yellow Ague** – The magician permanently develops an incurable disease which turns his flesh slightly yellowish and weakens his spirit. Use the rules for Yellow Ague (see *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*) to represent the illness.

85–100: **Mental Instability** – The magician develops a mental corruption. Roll 1D100 on the Mental Instabilities list.

Mental Instabilities

01–04: **Twisted Humour** – The sorcerer develops an abnormal sense of humour and will laugh at situations that would shock most people including unusual deaths and ill news.

05–08: **Curious** – The character develops an unnatural curiosity. He will always investigate and research anything he sees that is new and interesting, often delaying more important matters.

09–12: **Stubborn** – The magician becomes set in his ways. Once he has made a decision, anyone attempting to change the character's mind suffers a –40% penalty to their Influence roll or –20% if the situation endangers the character's life.

13–16: **Obsession** – The sorcerer becomes obsessed with a particular person or item. He will do everything in his power to own or control the object of his desires. Once under his control, the character will protect the object as if his life depends upon it, often making irrational decisions.

17–20: **Cautious** – The sorcerer becomes extremely cautious with everything they do, especially when in unfamiliar surroundings or meeting new people.

21–24: **Eating Disorder** – The magician develops an eating disorder and either eats too much or too little, resulting in the character feeling bloated or slightly malnourished. He suffers a –10% penalty to all fatigue tests.

25–28: **Superstitious** – The character becomes very superstitious, seeing signs and omens in everyday items and mundane events. The magician will then act on this sign or change their plans accordingly.

29–32: **Paranoia** – The magician suffers from extreme paranoia and suspects everyone is either out to get him or has some hidden agenda. Trust no longer comes easily to the character and can be broken with a simple wrong word or action.

33–36: **Fanatic** – The sorcerer becomes fanatical about their cause and beliefs and will do anything in his power to further his agenda.

37–40: **Third Person** – The character refers to himself in the third person.

41–44: **Forgetful** – The magician's memory is not as reliable as it used to be and he will forget minor details and unimportant matters.

45–48: **Perfectionist** – The character develops an eye for perfection and will usually spend much longer to complete a task until it meets with his high standards.

49–52: **Superiority** – The sorcerer develops a superiority complex and becomes extremely arrogant. People do not

respond well to this attitude and the character suffers a –10% penalty to all CHA based skills.

53–56: **Sexual Deviant** – The magician develops sexual behaviours that are not considered normal and are most likely unaccepted by society. The character will have strong compulsions to quell their urges but will make every effort to keep their desires a secret.

57–60: **Addiction** – The sorcerer becomes addicted to a particular drug, food, drink or even activity. The character must fulfil this addiction at least once a day or they suffer –20% to all rolls until they can feed the addiction.

61–64: **Voices in the Head** – The character hears various voices (often of long-dead companions of relatives) in his mind. Though they can be ignored, most magicians are unsure whether the voices are a true haunting or a sign of insanity. Proof can be understandably hard to come by.

65–68: **Hallucinations** – The sorcerer starts seeing things that do not exist such as movement in the shadows or ghostly apparitions. The character believes what he sees is real and will either develop the phobia trait or believe that they are trying to communicate with him.

69–72: **Phobia** – The character suffers a powerful fear of one specific animal or situation, doing all he can to avoid ever confronting his fear. In the presence of his phobia, he takes a –20% penalty to all rolls except fleeing.

73–76: **Stutter** – The character develops a very serious stutter, suffering –20% penalty on all rolls involving speech and counting as gagged when casting spells.

77–80: **Sadistic Pleasure** – The character finds the pain and suffering of others to be hilarious and stimulating. He might not go out of his way any more than usual to cause harm to other people but he cannot help but laugh and feel sexual arousal at others suffering extreme pain such as torture or rape.

81–84: **Braying Laugh** – The character's laughter becomes a raucous and goatish bray. No penalty is incurred but it is unnerving and eerie to hear.

85–88: **Pyromania** – The sorcerer develops a powerful love for naked flame, seeking to create it (by means both mundane and magical) whenever he gets the opportunity. This becomes an obsession that affects much of the character's life but does not override his survival instincts.

89–92: **Heavy Sleeper** – The character must sleep for at least eight hours every night. If he is woken prematurely he is Tired (see *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*) suffering –20% penalty on all skill tests.

93–96: **Insomnia** – The character sleeps only an hour or so each night and is always exhausted as a result. He is considered permanently Winded (see *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*) suffering –10% penalty on all skill tests.

97–100: **Rage** – The character is constantly angry, literally fuelled by his wrath. It becomes his overriding emotion at all times but reduces all Hatred damage bonuses by two because the character's fury is supernatural in origin, rather than true loathing for life.

Foci

The *Swords* tales make infrequent mention of wands and scrolls used as aids for spellcasting. These tools allow a magician to cast a spell almost instantaneously, without the long chants and time-consuming ritual work necessary to manipulate sorcery. In game mechanical terms, scrolls and wands are known as 'Foci'. These tools have been infused with the Black Magic spell of the creator's choice, ready to be unleashed with a moment's thought.

Creating Foci

To create a Focus takes even more effort and time than simply casting the spell would normally, though the magician no doubt expects his diligence and foresight to pay off when he needs to cast a spell in a hurry. In terms of game mechanics, creating a Focus is achieved by doubling the Casting Time and the Magic Point expenditure of the spell that is to be bound into the item, then casting the spell with the waiting Focus as the target. Once this is complete, the Focus is good for 1D3 uses before it expires. Sorcery is a shifting, warping science based on principles of negative emotion. Wands run out of energy if overused and the magic feels stunted and sluggish. The words on scrolls no longer convey the caster's hateful intent as perfectly as they initially did, since the ebb and flow of his emotion changes.

The Magic Point expenditure and increased Casting Time are simple enough but the in-game effects are not as straightforward as the magician simply casting the spell at the potential focus. While the sorcerer is spending the Magic Points and 'casting the spell,' he is actually feverishly writing a litany of hate onto scroll using blood as ink, imprinting the sensations of his hate as they feel at that very moment. Once the Casting Time is complete and the Magic Points are spent, the blood-ink on the scroll dries and the magician has a spell ready to read and cast the moment his lips start to mouth the first sentence. Likewise, the ritual for charging a staff or wand involves bathing the tool in sacred, unholy fluids and coating the wood in rare powders and spell components. Any Manipulate skills must be used at the time of imprinting the focus – they may not be applied later when the spell is cast from the scroll or wand.

Creating a Focus counts as casting the appropriate spell – all the usual rules for Corruption apply.

Using Foci

Using a Focus is the easy part. The magician is able to use the spell within the scroll or wand up to three times, each at the Magnitude he initially cast the spell at and with a Casting Time of one. He may apply the laws of Hatred, Agony and Sympathy as normal in order to manipulate the spell further. No other manipulation is possible.

The magician is not aware of a Focus being drained until he attempts to use it again. Once the 1D3 charges are used, he must either recharge or remake the wand or write a new scroll from scratch.

Foci can be used by others beside the magicians that created them. In these cases the wielder may not be aware of what the item does but can choose to cast the stored spell by reading the scroll or 'willing' the wand to discharge its energy.

Corruption is never gained when activating a Focus *unless* the caster also uses Hatred, Agony or Sympathy.

Black Magic Spells

The face seemed inhuman – more a green mask of torment than anything alive. The cheeks were drawn in; the eyes were unnaturally wild; it was very pale and dripping with cold sweat induced by intense inward effort. There was much suffering in it but also much power – power to control the thick twisting shadows that seemed to

Silver

Pure silver makes for weak blades that are ill-suited for extended combat. Where the metal excels beyond all other elements is as the bane of Black Magic. For reasons unknown to all but the most enlightened alchemists and mystically educated metalworkers, silver penetrates and nullifies some of the sorcery spells it touches. In the *Swords* novels, a thrown silver dagger slices through a Web of Night-Smog spell and never once meets the misty resistance encountered by all mundane weapons.

The presence of silver is a matter of Games Master discretion. Adventurers carrying around silver weapons on the off chance they run afoul of a sorcerer are bordering on metagame thinking. Counter the stereotype by making some spells (perhaps over a certain Magnitude or investment of Agony and Hatred) proof against the presence of silver. In other instances, a silver amulet or bracelet worn as jewellery might act as a sudden and unforeseen protection against a lethal spell. Do not punish players for thinking ahead and being prepared but at the same time remember that Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser encounter many magicians in their adventures and only once does the presence of silver make any obvious and intentional difference.

crowd around the green flame, power to master the forces of hate that were being marshalled. At regular intervals the cracked lips moved and the arms and hands made set gestures.

– The Unholy Grail

The following section lists several spells used by sorcerers in their selfish quests to achieve their own ends through dark powers. These are the enchantments sent forth by Nehwon's black-hearted wizards, the same powers that adventurers must face and foil if they wish to survive the encounter. Allowing Player Characters access to these foul magics is not recommended.

Games Masters wishing to concert spells from other *RuneQuest* sourcebooks should feel free to do so within the framework of the Nehwon setting and their own campaigns. Casting Times are always increased in Black Magic spells, with the minimum time to cast a spell (without a pre-prepared Focus) of between five and 20, depending on the spell in question. High ritual works such as the Cloud of Hate are significantly more time-consuming than others.

Every Black Magic spell is defined by a series of traits that tells one what kind of spell it is and how it is used in the game. A description then follows describing the spell's precise effects. The traits used by spells are detailed below.

Casting Time: The spell takes the indicated number of Combat Actions to cast. Black Magic is intensely dangerous in combat but rarely a fast-casting process.

Concentration: The spell's effects will remain in place so long as the character concentrates on the spell. Concentrating on a spell is functionally identical to casting the spell, requiring the spellcaster to continue to gesture or chant and ignore distractions. This trait overrides the normal Sorcery spell default Duration.

Instant: The spell's effects take place instantly. The spell itself then disappears. This trait overrides the normal Sorcery spell default Duration.

Permanent: The spell's effects remain in place until they are dispelled or dismissed. This trait overrides the normal Sorcery spell default Duration.

Resist (Dodge/Persistence/Resilience/Special): The spell's effects do not take effect automatically. The target may make a Dodge, Persistence or Resilience test (as specified by the spell) in order to avoid the effect of the spell entirely. Note that Resist (Dodge) spells require the target to be able to use Reactions in order to dodge. In the case of Area spells, the Resist (Dodge) trait requires the target to dive (see *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*) in order to avoid the spell's effect. Some spells feature a unique way of defending against them; these are described in the spell listing where appropriate.

Touch: Touch spells require a character to actually touch his target for the spell to take effect. The spellcaster must remain in physical contact with the target for the entire casting. This trait overrides the normal Sorcery spell default Range.

Trigger: The spell will lie dormant until an event stated in the description takes place. The spell then takes effect and is expended.

Cause Disease

Casting Time 8, Concentration

Then he saw that its neck was collared by grey fungus, its right cheek crimson, its left black, its eye dripping green ichor and its nose spattering clear drops. As the loathy creature took a last great stride into the chamber, its left leg went boneless like a pillar of jelly and its right leg, striking down stiffly with a heel splash, broke in midshin and the jagged bones thrust through the flesh. Its yellow-crusted, red-cracked scurfy hands snatched futilely at the air for support and its right arm brushing its head carried away half the hair on that side.

– The Lords of Quarmall

This spell varies by Magnitude, with any sickness or plague imaginable falling within its bounds. This spell does not infect a victim with a disease; instead it applies the suffering and the symptoms of the illness to the target as long as the spell is kept active. Once cast, the effects of the disease affect the target for every turn that the caster maintains his Concentration. After the spell ends, if the character is still alive, he takes no further damage but will only heal at the natural rate. The previous effects of the diseases (such as Hit Point loss) do not magically heal when the spell ceases, though the character is no longer considered infected.

In instances where several sorcerers are casting different Cause Disease spells, the effects on the victim can be horrifying to behold. Games Masters should feel free to convert mundane or magical diseases from other *RuneQuest* sourcebooks or invent their own. Technically the only limits to this spell are those imposed by the sorcerer's own imagination.

Cause Disease

Magnitude	Example Disease
1–2	Nose Drip
3–4	Slow Rot
5–6	Green Rot
7–8	Boneless Death
9–10	Red Plague
11+	Black Plague

Nose Drip: For each turn the spell applies, the character is at –5% to all rolls. His nose runs and itches, while his eyes tear up and his skull pounds with a dull headache. This disease is never fatal.

Slow Rot: The victim's muscles ache and twitch in repeated minor tics as they magically decay over time. For every day the spell is in effect, the victim suffers –10% to all rolls (to a maximum of –90% after nine days) and loses 1 Hit Point from a

randomly determined location. When a Hit Location is reduced to 0 Hit Points, it is considered rotted to the point of uselessness. Arms and legs must be amputated. Abdomens, chests and heads reaching zero result in the character's death.

Green Rot: The victim's skin turns an unhealthy green as corruption spreads through his blood and organs. The effects mimic those of Slow Rot, though the Hit Point loss affects 2 Hit Locations a day and the character suffers double the penalty on all rolls involving CHA as his skin appears gangrenous in many places.

Boneless Death: The victim's bones become holed and eroded in a short space of time with this magical disease. For every minute the disease is active, the victim suffers a cumulative -1% to all rolls. With each -10% suffered, the character takes 1D4-1 damage to a random location. When a Hit Location is reduced to 0 Hit Points, the bones are eroded to the point of uselessness. Arms and legs must be amputated. Abdomens, chests and heads reaching zero result in the character's death.

Red Plague: The victim's skin breaks out in pus-filled sores and infections all over. His skin begins to slough off in chunks. For every turn the disease wreaks through his body, the character suffers 1D4 damage to three random Hit Locations. When a Hit Location is reduced to 0 Hit Points, the skin is completely sloughed off, revealing bare, bloody tissue underneath. Arms and legs must be amputated. Abdomens, chests and heads reaching zero result in the character's death.

Black Plague: The effects of the Black Plague mimic those of the Red Plague, except the sores are black and stinking with rot, inflicting 1D6 to four random Hit Locations per turn.

Cloud of Hate

Casting Time 30, Duration: Special

The white serpents coiled past the pillars, brushed the low ceiling, moistly caressed the backs of their devotees and source and then in turn coalesced to pour up the curving black hole of a narrow spiral stairway, the stone steps of which were worn almost to chute-like smoothness – a sinuously billowing white cylinder in which a redness lurked.

– The Cloud of Hate

Mechanically, the Cloud of Hate functions the same as Web of Night-Smog (see page 153), with the following exceptions:

- The mist is white, like unpolluted coastal fog.
- Up to 2D4 tendrils can manipulate weapons as if in the Cloud's arms. The weapons must be destroyed to disarm the Cloud of Hate – striking the tendrils does no damage.
- The Cloud 'sees' by a reddish eye in the centre of the mist. Dealing a single Hit Point of damage to this eye renders the Cloud of Hate blind and any attacks it makes suffer

penalties as if it were fighting in pitch darkness.

- **Duration:** For every worshipper at the Temple of the Hates chanting along with the Archpriest, the spell lasts a single turn. Seeing as *thousands* of devotees are usually present, this means the spell can usually last as long as it needs to, unless it is severed.
- A Perception test reveals a pinkish-silver line threading back from the fog tendrils to the Temple of the Hates. This can be severed by inflicting a single Hit Point of damage, which dissolves the Cloud of Hate in a burst of clear, foul-smelling slush.
- **Possession:** The Cloud of Hate can heighten the negative emotions of any truly hateful, selfish and immoral soul. Those that the Games Master considers potential victims of the fog make take a Persistence test at a penalty of -10% to -80% depending on the strength of their inner evil. Gnarlag of the Two Swords, a violent mercenary who relishes in murder, would rate at a -70% penalty. The Grey Mouser, a hateful and envious man at times but with a core of goodness and many heroic deeds behind him, would rate at -10%. Characters that fail the roll are considered possessed until the Cloud of Hate disperses or is destroyed. They act out the express malicious desires of the Archpriest of the Hates, who usually desires naught but death to leach the hate of his worshippers.

Death Spell: Wraith-Fire

Casting Time 5, Instant, Resist (Dodge/Special)

The wizard in the star-symbolized robe howled like a wolf and lifting his arms high above his head, threw them toward the small man with such a force that one expected his hands to come off and fly through the air. They didn't but a bolt of bluish fire, wraithlike in the sunlight, streamed from his out-flung fingers.

– The Swords of Lankhmar

This spell conjures a small bolt of magical fire that causes horrendous burns to a target. For each two levels of Magnitude, the spell does 1D10 Hit Points of fire damage, which counts as magical for all fire-resistant conditions.

A little-known but certainly tried and tested defence against such Death Spells is to somehow *ground* a metal weapon and take the incoming sorcerous bolt on the blade. The Grey Mouser performs this feat perfectly by using a thin metal wire, tied to the pommel of his sword, which was given to him by Sheelba of the Eyeless face. When a magician casts a Death Spell at the Grey Mouser, the energy strikes the blade and tingles his hand as it flows through the weapon, along the wire and into the earth.

Performing a similar feat is possible with the right materials and a successful combat attack roll in order to strike or catch the bolt dead on. Games Masters should watch out for players who overuse such defences. This is not proof against all Death Spells, merely the spell which summons bluish flames.

Erode Willpower

Casting Time 5, Duration: Special, Resist (Persistence)

As the mucky road curved up a little, the towers of Quarmall came into view above the treetops. The Mouser's gaze drifted to them and he studied the lazy pinnacles thoughtfully, wondering whether he'd see them again. Suddenly the whim seized him to return to Quarmall straightaway – yes, to slip off the back of the load and run there. What did the outer world hold half so fine as the wonders of that subterranean kingdom? – its mazy mural-pictured tunnelings a man might spend his life tracing... its buried delights... even its evils beautiful... its delicious infinitely varied blacks... its hidden fan-driven air... Yes, suppose he dropped down soundlessly this very moment...

– The Lords of Quarmall

This spell allows a caster to erode a target's sense of free will, desires and ambitions so completely that he becomes a slave to whatever the sorcerer demands of him. It is used by the lords of Quarmall to lure weak-willed country folk into becoming slaves in the bowels of the mountain kingdom.

A Resist (Persistence) roll at the same difficulty as that of when the spell was first cast is allowed once per week of enslavement under the spell. If the Resist roll is successful, the character's full personality and willpower returns and he is free to act as normal. If the Resist roll fails, he spends another week as a slave, toiling in the black caverns under the earth at the whim of a decadent Quarmallian nobleman.

Mist of Death-Fear

Casting Time 8, Concentration/Special, Resist (Persistence/Special)

The sorcerer summons a supernatural mist around him, usually green or yellow in hue. Visibility is slightly reduced giving a –10% penalty to Perception checks and the smell of death fills the air. For each round the sorcerer concentrates, the radius expands by one metre. Once he stops concentrating the mist will shrink, reducing the radius by one metre each round.

Anyone caught in the mist who fails their Persistence check becomes frozen with fear and they are unable to act. Every subsequent round anyone under the effects of this fear can make another Persistence check, if successful they overcome their fear but suffer a –20% penalty to all skills until the mist has gone.

Nightmare

Casting Time 10, Concentration, Resist (Persistence)

Sorcerers use this spell to torture and torment their enemies by making them suffer terrifying dreams. The sorcerer chooses the nature of the nightmare and it is not uncommon for him to reveal clues in the nightmare to lure the victim towards a

particular destination. The sorcerer can use this spell at any range if he has a personal item belonging to the target.

If the target fails the Persistence check he suffers a number of Fatigue levels equal to the Magnitude of the spell. Anyone witnessing the target suffering the nightmares can attempt to wake them up, halving the number of Fatigue levels suffered from the ordeal.

Shatter Bone

Casting Time 3, Instant, Resist (Resilience)

This is a particularly nasty spell that shatters a single bone in the target's body, rendering it useless until it can be healed. The bone that is shattered and the damage dealt depends on the Magnitude of the spell as listed in the table. All damage done by this spell is unpreventable if the Resilience check is failed.

Shatter Bone

Magnitude	Example Bone	Damage
1–2	Finger, toe	1D2
3–4	Wrist, ankle	1D4
5–6	Hand, foot	1D6
7–8	Arm, Leg	1D8
9–10	Rib	1D10
11+	Neck, back	1D12 and target is paralysed

Summon Ghost

Casting Time 20, Duration: Special

After the ritual is completed, the room grows ice cold and breath from each person present steams into the air in misty white coils of vapour. A faint weeping is heard almost like a tickle in the back of the magician's mind and a wrathful figure manifests before all observers, still bearing the injuries that slew him.

This spell summons a ghost into the character's vicinity and binds it to him, forcing the spirit to obey the sorcerer's will until it is released at the completion of a single task. Ghosts are generally weak creatures, being the mere echo of the person that once lived and are good for little more than terrifying unsuspecting enemies or – much more commonly in Quarmall – spying without being seen.

To cast the spell, a necromancer requires a possession belonging to the deceased, which, among the sick sorcerers of the mountain kingdom, is usually a body part. The ritual involves chanting for the entire Casting Time, demanding that the spirit of the deceased return from the Shadowland and answer the call of the sorcerer. When the ghost finally appears, the Duration of the spell is decided at that moment. The spellcaster must decide what task the spirit must complete in order for it to return to

the grave. The ghost cannot free itself until it has completed this task. The ghost can speak with the caster for the Duration of the spell and *only* the caster can hear.

The only tried and tested way to banish a ghost with magic is via the spell Banish Ghost, which is effectively the same as Summon Ghost, only with the intent and demands reversed. The caster must still possess an item that belongs to the spirit if he hopes to have any success – the ritual will work no other way. Any sorcerer that knows Summon Ghost is considered to know Banish Ghost at the same level of skill and increasing a rating in one also increases the other.

Web of Night-Smog

Casting Time 8, Concentration

With a bellow of rage Fafhrd began slashing at the black barrier but the ropes were replaced from the cucurbit heads as swiftly as he sliced them, while the cut ends, instead of drooping slackly, began to strain hungrily toward him like constrictive snakes or strangle-vines.

He suddenly shifted Graywand to his left hand, drew his long knife and hurled it at the sorcerer. Flashing toward its mark, it cut through three strands, was deflected and slowed by a fourth and fifth, almost halted by a sixth and ended hanging futilely in the curled grip of a seventh.

– Ill Met In Lankmar

This spell takes an existing source of smoke or fog and twists it into hateful, killing tendrils of black smoke. The manifesting tendrils number 1D4–1 per point of the spell's Magnitude. Each tendril is capable of either entangling and strangling an opponent or defending the caster, as directed. Each strand, no matter how it is used, has 6 Hit Points. Upon each strand being severed, the Games Master should make a D100 test. If the result is 25% or less, the strand reforms with 2 Hit Points and continues to perform its directed duty.

For each turn the sorcerer maintains his Concentration, he can restore 1D2 destroyed tendrils at no extra cost.

Strangulation

Each tendril set to attack a foe will inflict a –5% penalty to all Combat Actions, which are cumulative modifiers representing the web of smoke-vines gripping at a character's limbs and preventing his movement. One tendril per victim can be directed to strangle a character. These attack with an Unarmed Skill of 40%. A successful test means the victim takes no immediate Hit Point damage but is subject to the rules for Suffocation.

Defensive Web

Each tendril set to defend the spellcaster works to give him a Parry action. Striking the defending webs inflicts the weapon's damage against them and is likely to destroy them.

Ice Magic

Particularly when working together, the Snow Women were reputed to wield mighty magics, particularly through the element of cold and its consequences: slipperiness, the sudden freezing of flesh, the gluing of skin to metal, the frangibility of objects, the menacing mass of snow-laden trees and branches and the vastly greater mass of avalanches. And there was no man wholly unafraid of the hypnotic power in their ice-blue eyes.

– The Snow Women

In the *Swords* stories, little in the way of the Snow Women's sorcery is displayed. Their magic seems to be a limited, ritualistic form of elemental spellworking not quite related to the arcane powers of Black Magic. For the purposes of game mechanics, the mystical workings of the northern witches are collectively referred to as Ice Magic.

Ice Magic is not a complete magical discipline in the way that Black Magic is. It is a slower, subtler art that falls close to coming under Games Master prerogative rather than set of skills and a list of spells. It is, put bluntly, unnerving but generally not very powerful compared to the dark sorceries of other Nehwonian magicians and it is recommended that Player Characters do not learn its secrets. The exceptions to this are female barbarian characters but even these might find Ice Magic to be absolutely useless outside of the Cold Waste and ill-suited to most adventures. From a thematic perspective, Ice Magic's power lies in the fact that it is frightening, not in the Hit Point damage it can inflict.

The main precept of Ice Magic is that it can be used in a host of minor ice-, wind- and snow-related methods but is essentially little more than a way of lowering the temperature (often dramatically). For example, Ice Magic can be used to create cold winds or lower body temperature so that the person quickly freezes to death.

To actually use Ice Magic, a character must possess the Advanced Skill: Ice Magic. The Snow Woman must also know the victim she is casting the spell on. She must know the person's face and name, having them both clearly in her mind at all times while incanting. The distance for any Ice Magic effect is the caster's POW in miles.

The Ice Magic Skill

This skill is learned as any other advanced skill and increased through practice or research. It operates on the character's base POW characteristic. It is only available to female barbarian characters of the Cold Waste.

To use Ice Magic, a character decides what she wishes to do and rolls her skill check, comparing the results to the following descriptors. Minor Task effects take ten minutes. Difficult Task effects take 1D4 hours. Legendary Task effects take 2D4 hours.

For each other Snow Woman (who possesses Ice Magic) helping with the incantations, chants and the secret rituals, the time for Task effects are reduced by one hour. An effect can never be created in faster than one minute. Additional Snow Women helping do not make the task any easier – only faster. The magic is driven by the bitterness of the ritual leader.

- **Minor Task:** Causing someone's boot to slip on a rock (imposing a –60% check on the next DEX-based check).
- **Difficult Task:** –20% to the check. Freezing objects over time, such as making a tree freeze overnight so that it falls come the dawn; creating a sheet of ice crystals that thicken on a tent's cloth and eventually crush the occupants for six Hit Points of damage to each Hit Location.
- **Legendary Task:** –40% to the check. Calling up a freezing wind that forces multiple characters to suffer the effects of cold weather as noted in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*; lowering a person's body temperature so that he suffers 1 Hit Point of ice damage a turn to each Hit Location; causing an avalanche that streams down the face of one of the Mountains of the Giants.

A Note on Ice Magic

Games Masters might prefer to expand on the Ice Magic seen in the source material and described here in the rules. For some campaigns, the players might prefer Ice Magic to take the form of a full discipline like Black Magic or the styles described in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook* and its supplements.

Given how limited Ice Magic is in the *Swords* tales, this is a bold step to take but it might be satisfying for groups that spend a great deal of time in the Cold Waste or play in northern-focused games. Some Games Masters may even want to take it further, allowing for a host of spells from ice and cold runes to feature in the game sessions. These are matters of personal choice, however. The standard 'stripped-down' rules for the Snow Women's cold sorcery accurately represent what this unnerving magic is capable of if one goes by the source material.



CHRONICLES OF LANKHMAR

Fafhrd and the Mouser are rogues through and through, though each has in him a lot of humanity and at least a diamond chip of the spirit of true adventure. They drink, they feast, they wench, they brawl, they steal, they gamble and surely they hire out their swords to powers that are only a shade better, if that, than the villains.'

— Author's Note, The Swords of Lankhmar

This chapter details many of the most noteworthy adventures of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser, compiling a list of their most famous escapades, their troubles, the woes and victories that make up their legend. Games Masters can use this section to design similar adventures for their players, mining elements for personal campaign use as they see fit or simply use the lore herein as tales told over the tables of the Silver Eel regarding Lankhmar's most famous adventurers. The final option can inspire some healthy jealousy in players or annoy them to no end, so Games Masters should tread carefully.

The chapter is also designed to be part-index, part-inspiration, reminding Games Masters which stories are in which books and helping Games Masters with any subsequent readings. Players unfamiliar with the source material can either choose to resist the temptation of spoilers or glean a taste of what forms Fritz Leiber considered Nehwon adventures to take.

SWORDS AND DEVILTRY The Snow Women

'Aye, your father now bitterly regrets Gran Hanack, White Fang, the Ice Queen and all his other mountain paramours. They cannot help him now. They have forgotten him. He stares up endlessly from lidless sockets at the home he despised and now yearns for, so near, yet so impossibly far. His fingerbones scrabble feebly against the frozen earth, he tries futilely to twist under its weight...'

This is the story of Fafhrd's origins, detailing a great deal about the culture of the Cold Wastes. As he approaches his twenties, Fafhrd is displeased with his place in life as a singing skald of the Snow Clan and he chafes under the oppressive matriarchy in the tribe, of which his mother Mor is an influential part. It is revealed that his father, Nalgron, was a passionate climber who also showed signs of defiance to the matriarchal rule. He died while mountaineering and Fafhrd believes his mother used her Ice Magic to send Nalgron to his death on White Fang. Of greatest discomfort is that his family tent in the arctic nomad tribe's current home of Cold Corner is pitched directly above his father's grave.

The Snow Clan makes its annual midwinter trip south to meet with the southern traders and allow the males of the tribe to enjoy a performing troupe that traditionally accompanies the merchants each year. The performances take place in Godshall, the only structure of the Snow Clan where women and children are barred. It is from among these exotic southerners that Fafhrd falls for his first love, Vlana. She is a dancer as well as a freelance thief that ran afoul of the Thieves' Guild in Lankhmar. When Fafhrd decides to leave Cold Corner and the Snow Tribe, he vows to accompany Vlana and aid in wreaking vengeance upon the Guild in her name. Vlana is not as honest as Fafhrd hoped — she has made similar pacts with other strong warrior males among the Snow Clan, though Fafhrd kills them in a rage and takes his place at Vlana's side. In his wake he leaves a furious mother and a pregnant lover, Mara.

Campaign Information

The Snow Women reveals a great deal of the northern arctic barbarian tribes, including the slow-working and sinister Ice Magic of the barbarian witch-women. Potential character backgrounds and story hooks from this first tale involve arctic hunters and singing-skalds, along with merchant traders and troupe performers. A Games Master and his players will likely find no shortage of inspiration for characters among the wealth of personalities detailed in this story of the icy north.

A lesson on romance in *Lankhmar* campaigns lurks here, as well. Characters might find themselves besotted with another person who ultimately has his or her own interests at heart and is not above a little treachery in order to get things done.

The Unholy Grail

The wizard lay just inside the buckled door. And he had fared as his house: the beams of his body bared and blackened; the priceless juices and subtle substances boiled, burned, destroyed forever or streamed upward to some cold hell beyond the moon.

Here the origins of the Grey Mouser (then called Mouse) are revealed; at least, what is known of them is revealed. Apprenticed to the minor wizard Glavas Rho, Mouse returns from a quest set by his master to find the elderly magician slain and his home burned to the ground. The blame lays firmly at the feet of Duke Janarri, the superstitious and hateful liege lord of the region. His daughter Ivrian was also an apprentice of Glavas Rho, though not a talented or dedicated one. Janarri had the old wizard killed to prevent her receiving further instruction. Mouse believes her foolishness or naivety led to Janarri tracking Rho down and he swears vengeance on the duke and his daughter.

Ivrian inadvertently leads her father and his men to Mouse's location, interrupting the Black Magic spell he was casting to end Janarrl's life. Captured and taken to the duke's dungeon, Mouse is ready to be killed by racking and plans one last hate-driven spell to take the duke with him into death. Ultimately Mouse's spell is successful, resulting in Janarrl's death and Ivrian releasing him from the rack. The two join together in flight, heading to Lankhmar in order to put everything behind them.

Campaign Information

The Unholy Grail highlights some of the authority that local liege lords wield even when they are far from Lankhmar City and offers teasing hints without anything solid about what White Magic may or may not be. What Games Masters looking for campaign flavour are sure to find most interesting is the Mouser's use of Agony and Sympathy in manipulating a Black Magic spell designed to murder Duke Janarrl.

Ivrian is a good example of how to play Games Master characters as trustworthy and untrustworthy to keep the players guessing. The Mouser suspects she has betrayed him because she is often weak before her father – it appears that she was the only way Janarrl could have tracked down Glavas Rho. In truth, Ivrian was revealed to be innocent of at least conscious betrayal.

Ill Met in Lankhmar

Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser faced each other across the two thieves sprawled senseless. They were poised for attack, yet for the moment neither moved.

Each discerned something inexplicably familiar in the other.

Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser meet for the first time over the bodies of unconscious thieves. They had both picked the same heist and sprung their respective ambushes at the same time. In that moment, as they regard each other in the heady moments after a fast success, they feel a connection.

After spending some time getting to know one another and each openly delighted to meet a witty and urbane companion to relate with, the two small-time thieves collect Vlna from her inn room, purchase a few jugs of wine and assemble at the Mouser's squat-home behind the Silver Eel. Here, in good company and flush with the success of their heist, the two men get drunk. When Vlna's grudge against the Thieves' Guild comes up again, the soused pair decides it would be a wonderful idea to scout out

Thieves' House that very night. They dress as beggars, hide their weapons as best they can and infiltrate the den of thieves.

Though they catch many an eyeful of what goes on within the walls of Thieves' House, they are exposed before Krovas, the Master Thief and are forced to flee for their lives. By the time they have reached the house behind the Silver Eel, the Guild has already taken its vengeance. Vlna and Ivrian lay dead, smothered by sorcerous night-smoke and stripped to the bone by a horde of rats. It seems Hristomilio, Krovas's magician, works fast. The two companions burn down the house, eradicating the loathsome evidence and cremating their lovers.

Fafhrd and the Mouser return to Thieves' House in a rage, storming the building and butchering the guild members that get in their way. Even apprentice children are not spared the blade in the duo's mad rush to reach the sorcerer's chamber. Fafhrd and the Mouser manage to reach Hristomilio's room and attempt to slay the ugly sorcerer, though his magic nearly proves their undoing. It is only a last-moment hurl of Vlna's silver dagger, cast by the Mouser, that kills the black magician and ends the night-smog spell that threatened to overwhelm the two adventurers.

Vowing never to return to Lankhmar, the pair leave immediately, seeking forgetfulness in other lands and other cities.

Campaign Information

The obvious information in the story is Hristomilio's use of Black Magic and the goings-on inside Thieves' House. Games



Masters will find these examples invaluable if their campaigns feature either of them.

It might also be worth noting just how the original heist was planned. Fafhrd and the Mouser both had enough information to hit journeyman thieves as they returned to Thieves' House from a successful heist themselves. That means both the northerner and the Grey One had information about where the thieves had been, what they had taken and the route they had used to get back to Thieves' House. The pair must have gotten the information somewhere, which indicates bribery, either in the Guild itself or perhaps from some constables who were pre-bribed by the thieves and decided to take Fafhrd and the Mouser's money as well.

Characters might find themselves as Guild members when Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser assault Thieves' House – losing friends and perhaps even being maimed in the defence of the headquarters. It is likely that Krovas dispatches his own men and hires members of the Slayers' Brotherhood to chase the adventurous pair down in order to slit their throats for their presumptive attack. Characters looking to be part of a strike team hunting the duo are in for a rollicking tour of Nehwon as they follow Fafhrd and the Mouser across the world. A long-lasting campaign could be founded on the characters being one step behind the duo, always seeking to catch up to their prey but being repeatedly delayed by their own adventures. Such a campaign could boast a variety of character backgrounds, for example: a hunter hired to track the adventurers (since the thieves and killers sent by Krovas have no wilderness skills), a slave freed because he has information on the duo's whereabouts and a barbarian from the Cold Wastes with a childhood grudge against Fafhrd.

SWORDS AGAINST DEATH

The Circle Curse

They lived by thievery, robbery, bodyguarding, brief commissions as couriers and agents – commissions they always or almost always, fulfilled punctiliously – and by showmanship, the Mouser entertaining by legerdemain, juggling and buffoonery, while Fafhrd with his gift for tongues and training as a Singing Skald excelled at minstrelsy, translating the legends of his frigid homeland into many languages. They never worked as cooks, clerks, carpenters, tree-fellers or common servants and they never, never, never enlisted as mercenary soldiers – their service to Lithquill having been of a more personal nature.

Fleeing Lankhmar to avoid the wrath of the Thieves' Guild and distance themselves from the fresh pain of their lovers' deaths, Fafhrd and the Mouser embark on a Nehwon-spanning series of adventures that form the beginning of their joint legend. It is as they set out from Lankhmar that they first meet Sheelba of the Eyeless Face and as they return that they first meet Ningauble of the Seven Eyes.

In the three years between these meetings, the pair rack up an impressive list of feats and deeds. They travel to the beggar city of Tovilyis to seek the Mouser's origins, though they discover nothing of note. A long trek northward takes them in search of Fafhrd's Snow Clan, though again they are met with disappointment and a tale of the tribe having been slaughtered by Ice Gnomes some months before. An adventure across the Great Steppes, avoiding capture and enslavement by the roaming Mingol warbands, leads into a quest to great Horborixen, citadel-city of the King of Kings and then even further east into the never-detailed lands beyond Tisilinit. At one point the pair even enters the service of Lithquill, Mad Duke of Ool Hrusp, arranging 'mock-duels, simulated murderers and other entertainments.' Prospecting for gold in the Mountains of the Elder Ones proves as fruitless as the Mouser's hunt for his origins, while adventuring in the fringes of the Kleshite jungle likewise offers little reward worth speaking of.

Their minds turn to thoughts of what adventures remain in Nehwon, which in turn spins their thoughts back to Lankhmar. Realising that time away from the Imperishable City has not healed the painful memories of their dead loves, the pair decide to abandon their self-exile and return to Lankhmar, using the city as a base for further questing.

Campaign Information

Games Masters will note that *The Circle Curse* offers a lot of hinting with little detail about what these fabulous places the heroes visited were actually like. This does offer a lot of freedom in planning any quests to these areas, though the truly most significant aspects of the story as they pertain to a *Lankhmar* campaign are the appearance of the two wizardly mentors and the perspective Nehwonians have of Lankhmar itself.

Sheelba and Ningauble appear when Fafhrd and the Mouser are abandoning Lankhmar, are in trouble with powerful enemies and are somewhat lost in life. A worthwhile factor in deciding if Sheel and Ning appear to the characters is just when to introduce the wizards. When the characters leave Lankhmar (perhaps for the first time) it can be as good a moment as any, especially if the adventurers are on the lam or in some kind of trouble that a touch of sorcerous assistance could help with.

The fact that Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser hanker to return to Lankhmar but are kept away by their oaths paints the city in a very honest light: it is a dark and dirty place but it is also the hub of the world's events and the greatest gathering of humanity on Nehwon. It is a common saying that there are adventures to be had everywhere but most have a habit of starting in Lankhmar.

The Jewels in the Forest

'I wonder whose skull this may be?' said the Northerner calmly.

The Mouser regarded the thing and the scattering of bones and fragments of bones beside it. His feeling of uneasiness was fast

growing to a climax and he had the unpleasant conviction that, once it did reach a climax, something would happen.

Following a note in the margin of a parchment in the library of Lord Rannarsh of Lankhmar, Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser set out to locate the so-called Treasure House of Urgan of Angargni. Urgan, it seems, was a wealthy architect and sorcerer who created an impenetrable treasure house to thwart all manner of thieves. The writing appears to be at least 500 years old, promising a diamond the size of a man's skull, rubies the size of cat skulls and riches of similar ilk.

Racing to beat them to the prize is Lord Rannarsh himself, accompanied by several of his guards and enraged at the theft of his parchment.

Upon arriving in the region – a day's ride south of the village Soreev – Fafhrd and the Mouser are ambushed by the nobleman and his men but manage to escape into the treasure house, which appears as a large, shallow dome, resting on walls that form an octagon. In front and merging into it are two lesser domes, while a tower rises asymmetrically from the rear part of the main dome. The entire structure features only a few windows and is formed of uniformly dark grey stone.

Within the large and unusual structure, Fafhrd and the Mouser find bodies and many bones that appear crushed as if by great falls of stone. In the pursuit through the treasure house, the Mouser slays Lord Rannarsh, though he feels a surge of disgust at being the cause of the man's pointless death.

As they go from room to room, they come across Arvlan of the Angargni, who claims to be the descendent of Urgan and on a quest to destroy the accursed treasure house. He reveals that his ancestor was a man who had congress with demons and was afflicted so that he could never enjoy pleasure or even simple lust. The pious Arvlan, who appears to be a priest or at least a hermit dedicated to the Great God, is later found dead – also apparently crushed.

The Mouser surmises that the treasure house has some kind of magical guardian, which can be detected by the premonitory stirrings of supernatural fear felt in the victims. Fafhrd and the Mouser reach the treasure room, marked with Urgan's declarative writing and set about removing the stone block upon which it is written that the jewels hide behind. The Mouser, feeling a bout of sickness, not fear, goes to the window and sees a peasant girl approaching the treasure house, apparently gripped by the supernatural terror of the place. He flees out of the building to warn her away, leaving Fafhrd to finish the plundering.

As the Mouser reaches her, the treasure house appears to bend and warp, with the stone itself lashing out at them. The tall tower bends into a club-like appendage and hammers down into the ground. Inside, Fafhrd has found the jewels, though they are connected with gold bars and resting in a strange fluid, appearing eerily organic in some way. They thrum and

move as the treasure house starts to warp and Fafhrd flees empty-handed.

The duo return to Lankhmar, no richer for the experience but with quite a tale to tell.

Campaign Information

This adventure has many aspects that Games Masters may wish to weave into their own storylines. The notion of ancient parchments and texts containing mention of long-forgotten tombs and treasure houses is a classic and interesting plot hook and if rival groups seek the treasure at the same time as the characters, the campaign can take some interesting turns as both groups seek to thwart the other's quest.

It is best to open up such an adventure by offering a decent riddle, poem or historical text based on the location in question. The hints and descriptions written in Lord Rannarsh's parchment speak teasingly, challengingly, defying any would-be treasure-hunters to risk their lives against powerful and unknown defences in order to gain incredible wealth. Even in the centuries after their death, sorcerers can leave a legacy of evil, harming others long after they are gone from the mortal world.

This adventure also highlights how worrying it can be when a nobleman sets his sights on ending a character's life, since most have the pride and resources necessary to put up a sincere chase. Lord Rannarsh and his crossbow-bearing guards were very nearly the end of Fafhrd and the Mouser. Few antagonists will have the influence and resources of Lankhmar nobility and killing them will often bring new troubles. Though Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser are not concerned about the law finding out about the murder, the Mouser feels intensely uncomfortable at having killed a man for such a poor reason. They both suspect the nobleman hurled himself into battle purely to die, hoping to escape the supernatural fear and the shame of revealing his terror to strangers.

The treasure house itself is a mixture of ancient legendry, magical traps and apparent evil. Its only intent was to harm those who came seeking the riches within and judging by the bones, the bodies and the story of Arvlan, it has done just that many times over the centuries.

The supernatural terror and warping, crushing walls will be difficult for any group to oppose if they take a trip to the southern Lankhmar forests and seek entrance to the treasure house. However, there is a great deal of potential danger and excitement in such a quest, especially if the characters are ultimately successful and destroy the malicious, living structure once and for all.

Thieves' House

Only then he realised the hateful dusty odour was thick in his nostrils, that the room was in utter silence, that from the corridor came a hot wind and the sound of marching bones clicking against the stone

pavement. He saw Slevyas look over his shoulder and he saw a fear-like death in Slevyas' face. Then came a sudden intense darkness, like a puff of inky smoke. But before it came he saw bony arms clasp Slevyas' throat and, as the Mouser dragged him back, he saw the doorway crowded with black skeletal forms whose eyes glittered green and red and sapphire. Then utter darkness, hideous with the screams of the thieves as they fought to crowd into the narrow tunnel in the alcove. And over and above the screams sounded thin high voices, like those of bats, cold as eternity.

Certain members of the Thieves' Guild become aware of a scrawled note that states that centuries ago, a skull with jewels for eyes was stolen from them by the priests of the Temple of Votishal. It is also noted that this skull should be returned immediately to the Guild so that they can place it in the Thieves' Sepulchre. Though the current Master Thief and his advisors know nothing of this skull or any 'Thieves' Sepulchre,' the mention of the skull having rubies for eyes awakens their interest.

They arrange for Fafhrd and the Mouser to sneak into the Temple of Votishal, get past the crypts which are rumoured to be locked by wards beyond the skill of mortal thieves, overcome the legendary beast that guards these subterranean cellars and steal the skull themselves. Once this is completed, the thief Fissif steals the jewelled skull from the adventurers and flees back the Thieves' House.

Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser are less than thrilled at this deception, especially given how much effort the theft took on their parts. They go to Thieves' House, emboldened by their previous assault on the building and seek Master Thief Krovas. They find Krovas strangled and his mistress, Ivlis, fleeing down a secret passageway with the skull. In the ensuing fracas as the defenders of Thieves' House pile in, the Grey Mouser escapes and Fafhrd becomes lost in the bowels of the huge building.

While the Mouser works to get the skull back from Ivlis, Fafhrd lurches around in the darkness and eventually stumbles into the Thieves' Sepulchre – the tomb of the Dead Master Thieves deep in the cellars of the Guild headquarters and forgotten by all thieves still living. Fafhrd is threatened by unseen voices; promised death if he does not return the skull of Omphal to its rightful resting place. Confused and unnerved in the extreme, Fafhrd flees from the cellars and is captured by Slevyas, the new Master Thief.

In a final confrontation, the Mouser disguises himself to steal the skull from Ivlis and makes his way to Thieves' House via the passageway, seeking Fafhrd. Fafhrd has revealed all he knows about the Dead Master Thieves and demands the skull's return. His words chill the assembled thieves, excepting their leader. In the following battle, Slevyas gets hold of Omphal's skull, smashing it with his sword blade to rouse the suddenly superstitious thieves. It has the opposite effect and in the dusty darkness that follows, the Dead Master Thieves walk the rooms

of Thieves' House, slaying any that stand in their way as they seek Slevyas. As the black-boned mummies strangle the Master Thief in revenge for his blasphemy, Fafhrd, Ivlis and the Mouser escape in the chaos.

Campaign Information

Thieves' House provides Games Masters with the first look at how some of the guilds and orders of Lankhmar have deep, rich traditions that can delve into the unnerving, the dark and the outright supernaturally malevolent. The Dead Master Thieves are a perfect example of the deathly secrets Lankhmarts either keep for lifetimes or forget and which then rise up to harm those who lack the proper reverence. Lankhmar is a city of secrets and few of them are pleasant. This is an example of one of the worst.

Another aspect of the story worth noting is the scarcely mentioned Temple of Votishal, whose priests stole the skull of a Dead Master Thief for no reason that is ever made apparent. Games Masters can use Votishal's cult in any way they see fit, defining it as an order of secretive rival thieves following their own thief god or perhaps as a group of magicians that required the skull for a ritual centuries ago and, for obvious reasons, never saw fit to return it.

Characters belonging to (or allied with) the Thieves' Guild might take it upon themselves to find out just what else these priests of Votishal have in their crypts. The locks of incredible complexity and the guardian beast, whatever form each of these threats take, are bound to be significant dangers to an adventuring group but the rewards for overcoming them appear to be grand indeed. If the Games Master decides that any plunder from the Votishal crypts comes with its own curse attached, much like the skull of Omphal, so be it. That could serve as a springboard for a further adventure, as players seek to rid themselves of the curse's effects and sell the artefact to another poor soul.

The Bleak Shore

'So you think a man can cheat death and outwit doom?' said the small, pale man, whose bulging forehead was shadowed by a black cowl.

On a night spent drinking, gambling and gaming in the Silver Eel, a small, slightly deformed man approaches Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser, engaging them in conversation. The talk turns to the notion of death over and again as the little man returns to the topic repeatedly. By simply speaking the words 'the Beak Shore' three times, he enchants Fafhrd and the Mouser, putting them under a magical compulsion to sail the Outer Sea to find the rumoured western continent and walk its shore. The two heroes set out to do so at once, unable to refuse.

The passage across the Outer Sea takes many days, during which Fafhrd and the Mouser seem nothing at all like themselves. When they finally arrive at the Bleak Shore, they order their

Mingol sailor-slaves to return to Lankhmar and abandon them, for they are sure they will not be returning. 'Do not follow. We are dead men,' the Mouser says, 'Return if you can.'

As the pair stumble across the shore and explore, they discover a large nest of strange, man-tall black eggs surrounded by hundreds of bones belonging to various animals such as boars, great cats and wolves, as well as at least one ribcage of a man or ape. The eggs begin to crack and split open, the heroes regain their senses.

The great reptilian humanoid beasts that rise from the eggs swing bladed claws at the duo and both Fafhrd and the Mouser find themselves fighting defensively, in a desperate battle for their lives. One of the eggs draws the Mouser's eyes – a glossier and smaller one than the others. He cracks this open with his sword, spilling out the foul contents to the bone-strewn beach. Within the egg is the small man with the bulging forehead; here seeming half-embryonic as the Mouser slays him. At the moment of the creature's death, the lizard-like creatures keel over dead and the other eggs crumble to dust. The two companions are faced with a long journey home through unknown lands.

Campaign Information

This story highlights the dangerous supernatural compulsions that feature in some campaigns. It suffers when translated directly to a game session because the characters have so little free will until the very end. There are ways around this. Games Masters should probably refrain from massively powerful magical demands whenever possible, since few players will have any fun meekly nodding and agreeing for a few hours and having no influence over their own characters. Instead, in situations where the Games Master has a story arc based around a supernatural compulsion, consider sweetening the deal by limiting the rigid effects of the demand and having some kind of reward on offer, perhaps named as a treasure in a local tale or something similar. If they have to go, make it worthwhile. Better yet, make the 'compulsion' more of a temptation, so they can decide for themselves if they want to make the trek in the first place. If the situation is compelling enough and the payoff sounds about right, they will most likely go of their own free will.

If the players resist the temptation to go where they are magically summoned, consider setting it up so that the effects of the summons will apply to them even if they remain where they are. The events of *The Bleak Shore* did not need to take place where they did – a Games Master could vary the setting by having the deformed man warn them that doom is in their future no matter where they go and the next time they enter the Great Salt Marsh or wander through a forest, the eggs and bones are there waiting for them. A little variation can negate the need for heavy-handed Games Mastering.

The final battle highlights an interesting dilemma in combat scenes. For Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser (as well as *Lankhmar* characters in individual campaigns) the right answer when the

blades swing and the blood flows is not always to fight to the bitter end. Sometimes flight is an option and sometimes victory is only really possible through wits and quick thinking, such as smashing the central egg and killing the creepy malformed puppeteer behind the whole thing. Games Masters can make scenes increasingly interesting if players uncover more options and possible solutions as time passes. The risk is that such a scene can have a solution too difficult to discover in time and the characters may be killed before they see the light. It can be a difficult balance.

A sensitive factor in the story is the presence of slavery. Heroes (even tarnished and conflicted heroes like Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser) still accept slavery as a part of everyday life and for the most part the pair's Mingol slaves are well-treated subordinates, if not full companions. Players dealing with this will obviously form their own opinions (and that of their characters') regarding the practice of slavery but the truth of the setting is that it does exist.

The Howling Tower

The sound was not loud, yet it seemed to fill the whole vast, darkening plain and the palely luminous, hollow sky: a wailing and howling, so faint and monotonous that it might have been inaudible save for the pulsing rise and fall; an ancient, ominous sound that was somehow in harmony with the wild, sparsely vegetated landscape and the barbaric garb of the three men who sheltered in a little dip in the ground, lying close to a dying fire.

On their long journey back to Lankhmar, Fafhrd, the Grey Mouser and their hired guide are seemingly stalked by the sounds of mournful wolf-howls, apparently emanating from a distant tower on the barren, rocky landscape. They make camp to avoid the bite of the bitter wind, though when the heroes awaken the following morning, the guide is nowhere to be seen. The very next morning, Fafhrd is gone when the Mouser rises. He eats a grim breakfast of cold meat and sets out for the howling tower.

Once there he finds a near-deserted tower and its courtyard, with muffled hound howls coming from somewhere nearby, yet no reek of caged or leashed animals. Exploring the rooms of the tower, he finally finds Fafhrd and the guide in a room resembling an apothecary's shop or a wizard's ingredient lab. Both are heavily bandaged for some reason and while Fafhrd's bandages are clean and the big warrior seems to be asleep, the guide's are blood-smeared and he is quite dead.

Fafhrd cannot be roused. As the Mouser tries in vain, he hears footsteps descending the tower and coming into the room. He confronts the tower's owner, an old and cruel-faced man, who reveals that he is haunted by the ghosts of his family's hounds, which he locked in the cellar decades ago and allowed to starve. The dogs feasted on each other until only one remained, then finally none but the mournful howling only grew louder. The old man knew he was being tortured by the howls of the dogs' spirits.

To silence their howls now, at least temporarily quiet them, the old man summons travellers to the tower by Black Magic and tricks them into drinking a potion that separates their souls from the bodies. Once the souls are free in some otherworldly realm, the ghosts of the starved hounds tear the traveller's spirit to pieces and feast. The old man confesses to having forced Fafhrd and the guide into drinking. The Mouser, with his sword at the ready, demands that the old man give him a dose of the potion so he can go to save Fafhrd and forces the man to drink the purple, blood-flavoured and sickly potion as well. Both of their souls manifest in the ghostly realm, where the Mouser rushes to save Fafhrd.

On the vast, alien plain where Fafhrd battles the spectral hounds, the Mouser witnesses the pack flee from the barbarian and swarm after another pale, retreating form – that of the old man. When the vision of the otherworld fades and both heroes awaken, the old man's body remains lifeless. Fafhrd finally admits that he was ensorcelled when he came to the tower, believing the old man when he was told the potion would make him a god.

Campaign Information

The Howling Tower has some excellent elements for use in individual campaigns. In regards to the irresistible summons that calls to the guide and Fafhrd, it is hardly any effort to make resisting the spell a possibility, having the characters come across the tower in the course of their adventuring (perhaps seeking shelter) or simply altering it so that a Non-Player Character affiliated with the party cannot resist the summons and leaves his friends as he marches to the tower alone. In this last scenario the Player Characters obviously need to go after their friend and save him, which can be a decent setup for many adventures anyway and is especially appropriate here.

The deaths of the hounds and their unloving state as tortured spirits is a dark and eerie look into the supernatural of the *Lankhmar* setting. What if other animals, monsters or even people will come back from the dead as spirits purely to harm those that wronged them in life? Games Masters should note that the hounds were not just murdered – they were starved to death over weeks, even after they resorted to eating each other to stay alive. All the while, their master looked in on them every day and hoped they would all be dead. It is clear that a great deal of suffering and a torturous death is the victim's part in this ghostly rebirth, while the one responsible must be evil in a particularly cruel way to warrant such hate-filled after-death vengeance.

The old man is a relatively accomplished black magician but has no ability to save himself from the Mouser's threats and his eventual fate. This should be a guiding example in how weak such evil souls can be at times, especially when unprepared for resistance.

Lastly, the presence of the guide is notable. Nehwon is a dangerous place, especially when adventurers are hiking in unfamiliar territory. It can be hard on a group's coin-purses but hiring an experienced guide is never a waste of money. Games

Masters might decide to play this up, having guideless and inexperienced groups running into more than their fair share of trouble while out in the wilds.

The Sunken Land

'My people, the legends say, went raiding against them one summer and none of the boats returned save one, which came back after hope had been lost, its men almost dead from thirst. They told of sailing on and on and never reaching Simorgya, never sighting its rocky coast and squat, many-windowed towers. Only the empty sea. More raiders went out the next summer and the next, yet none ever found Simorgya.'

Having secured a ship from some unknown western continent port, Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser embark on the return voyage across the Outer Sea and sail eastward home to Lankhmar. While on the voyage, Fafhrd guts a fish and while preparing it for food discovers a gold ring in its belly – a ring marked with strange symbols and featuring a curious key atop it, as if it were destined to unlock something. Fafhrd is overjoyed. The Mouser is unsettled, as he feels it focuses an uncomfortable feeling he has been having for days.

The pair meet a dragon-prowed northerner ship, crewed by barbarians from the Cold Wastes. Fafhrd is taken aboard after falling into the water, while the Mouser sails on, seeking to pursue the northerner ship and recover his friend. On board the barbarian vessel, Fafhrd meets the captain, Lavas Laerk, who tells how he and his crew seek ancient Simorgya. Perhaps unbelievably, they find it – a portion of it, at least – risen from the seas and the crew makes landfall. Fafhrd is taken as an untrustworthy prisoner.

Exploring the island reveals a cliff face that could be an eroded castle, with a large door set in the front. Within are hallways and corridors, all decorated by slime-streaked and encrusted Simorgyan hieroglyphs. The rooms they walk through are all illuminated by sourceless yellow light that seems to come from all around and nowhere at the same time. Eventually they reach a treasure room, though the chests of gold are all mouldy and soft to the touch and a great door dominates one of the walls, unerringly drawing Lavas Laerk's attention. He takes Fafhrd's ring, uses it to unlock the door... and Fafhrd sees no more, fleeing to quell the rising sense of panic setting in.

Running back to the beach, he spies the Mouser offshore and returns to his ship. The Mouser meanwhile sees what Fafhrd does not. The barbarians are attacked by cloak-like beasts; the hapless victims run across the beach and ultimately fail to fend off the smothering creatures. Once each northerner is enveloped in one of the creatures, the beasts all crawl slowly back inside the cliff-castle to devour their prey.

Campaign Information

Simorgya is the Atlantis of Nehwon. It is a legend to the people of the world, though the key difference is that a rare few people

have walked the ground of Simorgya when parts of the ancient sunken island have risen up above the waves. These events are extremely rare but will provide an incredibly exotic location for one or more game sessions, especially if the Games Master wants to shake things up.

Adventuring in Simorgya is a difficult prospect. The parts of the island that rise do so for indeterminate amounts of time and are inhabited by strange, alien creatures that resemble nothing else on Nehwon. What treasures Simorgya has likely remain down in the deep, though the people of Rime Isle apparently lay claim to the most revered and valuable of the sunken city's artefacts. Perhaps rather than find themselves looting Simorgya's waterlogged ruins for forgotten gold, characters might even find themselves having to travel to Rime Isle and steal one of Simorgya's treasures in order to return it to some entity that dwells within the temporarily-risen city.

A good way to draw characters to Simorgya is to follow Fafhrd's example. He discovered something of Simorgyan origin – something clearly set as a trap to bait in curious and greedy souls. Adventurers are almost always a combination of both these traits and the right bait will reel them in perfectly. Failing that, it will at least give them something interesting to sell to scholars back in Lankhmar.

The Seven Black Priests

Finally Fafhrd said, in a faint unnatural voice, 'The earth we walk on once lived – a great hot beast, breathing out fire and spewing molten rock. Its constant yearning was to spit red-hot stuff at the stars. This was before all men.'

'What's that?' the Mouser queried, stirring from his half-trance.

'Now men have come, the earth has gone to sleep,' Fafhrd continued in the same hollow voice, not looking at the Mouser. 'But in its dream it thinks of life and stirs and tries to shape itself into the form of men.'

Coming via the Outer Sea and across the Bones of the Old Ones, Fafhrd and the Mouser find themselves targeted by a small conclave of Kleshite holy men intent upon their destruction. Their first encounter with one of the black-clad priests ends in the man's death as he tumbles mid-fight into a chasm. Bemused and confused, the pair travel on.

One mountain in particular draws their attention. It seems to have a masculine face, eyes, lips and all, with one great eye open and decorated by a shining jewel. Even the colour of the rock appears to reinforce the image; all pinkish stone and a reddish patch resembling lips and the rock is hotter than the surrounding mountain range, for all snow has melted on and around the face.

Between a lack of caution and their general curiosity, the duo make their way to the mountaintop and prise the large orb-

shaped diamond from the open 'eye' of what they believe is a giant mountain idol. Kleshite hieroglyphs are in evidence around the socket where the diamond nestled. Drawing the jewel out reveals it to be half-covered in black, tarry ooze.

The priests take understandable offence at the violation of their idol and redouble their efforts to kill Fafhrd and the Mouser. Though the companions battle it out several times and reduce the numbers of the holy men at each meeting, Fafhrd becomes increasingly distant and odd as he carries the diamond eye-orb. He speaks to himself, mumbling and murmuring incessantly in his sleep of the ancient earth god Nehwon and his hatred for humanity. In these midnight mumblings, the Mouser hears Fafhrd explain that lava-blooded Nehwon is forming himself into the shape of a man in order to awaken and destroy humanity, wiping them clean from his body. The parallels between this legend and the stone face are frightening, especially when Fafhrd's night-speeches delve into the true believers worshipping Nehwon, helping him reform and how the blood of heroes is required to mix in with Nehwon's lava blood, in order for the god to rise.

After the priests are finally slain, the diamond's corrupting influence on Fafhrd takes complete hold. Though the barbarian is still asleep, his body moves to attack the Mouser, speaking with eyes closed about how their blood is needed as sacrifice to Nehwon. Only when the Mouser shatters the diamond with his sword is the spell broken and Fafhrd awakes as the stone face-mountain erupts in a burst of lava. As the companions flee, they remark that it seems all properties of life are now banished from the stone face and that it appears the god is bleeding to death.

Campaign Information

The Kleshite priests present an excellent antagonistic cult dedicated to bringing about the death of the characters through various ambushes in the wilderness. Better yet, they represent a group with a darkly mystical reason for their actions, becoming all the more sinister once their alien ideology is revealed. Enemies like these can be memorable and enjoyable antagonists in any campaign, highlighting the difference between the threats of civilisation and the still-human dangers that exist beyond the stone walls of Lankhmar.

The imagery of the earth-god Nehwon seeking to shape itself into man form and rise up to cleanse his body of Man is a frightening one. Games Masters interested in dealing with this storyline might be content to have the priests (or cultish agents of the priests) seek the blood of heroes as an ingredient for Nehwon's resurrection or might go one step further and have the ritual succeed, letting the characters deal with the results. 'The blood of heroes' is an unspecific term; that blood could come from any hero and need not be a notable Player Character. If the priests acquire the blood they need from elsewhere, it will be up to any brave souls with the courage and skill necessary to destroy a stone giant with lava for blood. An adventure like that would be perfect for some groups and perhaps too epic for

others. It is certainly not something beginning characters have much hope of emerging triumphant over without an unusual amount of cunning.

The diamond orb 'eye' of Nehwon exerts a powerful supernatural compulsion that even a strong-willed man like Fafhrd cannot resist. This, again, crosses the boundary of player choices, stealing any decision-making options and running roughshod over a character. Games Masters can combat this by adding a Resist (Persistence) roll to fight the compulsions but this detracts from the artefact's power and will still be unsatisfying if the player fails the test.

The obvious answer is for the effects of the diamond to influence a Non-Player Character attached to the group rather than a Player Character. This allows the horror of the story to impact properly – stealing the reason of a close ally – without sacrificing freedom of choice among anyone sitting at the gaming table. Someone like a guide, an important character the Player Characters are supposed to be escorting and protecting or a longstanding Non-Player Character friend are all interesting choices to have fall under this compulsion. If the Games Master allows it to take hold of a character with little attachment to the Player Characters, there is a strong risk of them simply killing the afflicted person rather than seeking to remove him or her from the orb's influence.

Characters that fall under the orb's sway might find themselves stripped of the eye-diamond by players with knowledge of the setting and source material. In this instance, a change of location and a focus object can work wonders. The cult could take the form of an Ilthmarish gutter-lurking thieves' guild seeking to draw heroes with an enchanted blade or valuable antique before taking them bound and gagged to the Parched Mountains or some other eastern mountain range. If a character is repeatedly separated from the orb, the Games Master can either have the orb work its insidious magic on *all* of the characters carrying the diamond (after all, someone has to hold the thing) or have the Non-Player Character repeatedly steal the orb back, such as when the characters are asleep or their attentions are elsewhere. Failing that, it is perhaps even more worrying for the diamond to exert influence over a distance, 'choosing' a character and seducing him telepathically even without skin contact.

Claws from the Night

Fear hovered in the moonlight over Lankhmar. Fear flowed like mist through the twisting thoroughfares and mazy alleyways, trickling even into that most intricately curved and crevice-like street where a sootily flickering lantern marked the doorway to the tavern of the Silver Eel.

It was a subtle fear, not the sort inspired by a besieging army or warring nobles or revolting slaves or a mad overlord bent on wanton slaughter or an enemy fleet sailing from the Inner Sea into the estuary of the Hlal. But it was none the less potent.



During a year that later comes to be known as the Year of the Feathered Death, a horde of night-birds menace Lankhmar's womenfolk, swooping down and mutilating the faces of beautiful women and stealing jewellery from bedchambers and from women's flesh. The ladies and demoiselles of Lankhmar take to a new fashion – wearing silver-gilded cages around their heads in order to protect their faces. The thefts continue for some weeks, with more and more birds being reported stealing valuable jewellery. Priests of the Great God maintain that it is a divine rebuke for feminine vanity, predicting greater animal revolts to come. Considering the Rat Plague in *The Swords of Lankhmar*, this is some eerie foreshadowing for Games Masters to use if they are running a long chronological campaign based on the events in the stories.

During this time, Muulsh the Moneylender purchases a fist-sized ruby for his young wife Atya. As he is revealing the jewel to her, it is stolen by one of the ravens responsible for the thieving of Lankhmar's riches. On the rooftop, Fafhrd and the Mouser lay in wait. They had planned a heist of their own, inventively using a fishing rod and Kooskra, Fafhrd's trained falcon. Once the raven is sighted clutching the jewel, Fafhrd releases Kooskra to hunt. The bird brings down the raven with ease, allowing the pair a moment of victory at acquiring what is surely the largest gem in Lankhmar – a gift fit for an empress.

Their jubilation lasts for several heartbeats until the jewel is stolen once more by another raven. The great black bird flies off to the tower of an abandoned temple in the waterfront district. Fafhrd's falcon tries to pursue but falls dead. Upon examination, it seems the ravens bear poisoned talons and Kooskra was slain merely by taking a scratch in the clash with the first raven he killed.

Following the raven, Fafhrd infiltrates the forbidden temple grounds while the Mouser waits and ponders his friend's fool's errand. While inside, Fafhrd sees the truth of the raven 'plague': an eyrie in the abandoned temple with many dozens of cawing black birds that have limited capacity for intelligent thought and croaky speech. He is attacked en masse by the avian marauders with their poisoned claws but manages to seal himself in an empty room. Until the Mouser arrives, he is forced to listen to the murderous cackling of the birds. His patience finally expires and he goes to confront the woman he sees at a nearby altar. It is Atya, the wife of Muulsh the Moneylender.

When the Grey Mouser does finally come looking for his companion, Fafhrd is already speaking with the woman who reveals herself to be Tyaa, goddess of the temple and a returned deity who wishes to see the women of Lankhmar pay tribute in penance for their vanity. Sacrifices of beautiful and expensive jewellery will be demanded once Tyaa fully returns to the city and becomes openly acknowledged among the populace.

Fafhrd and the Mouser (who has infiltrated this close to the goddess by posing as one of her falconer-servants) both leap to the attack, overwhelming Tyaa and forcing her to retreat. She leaps from high in the tower down into the River Hlal, though none see her hit the water. As the cloud of ravens flees the temple and makes for the Mountains of Darkness, both men believe they see a larger, almost human-sized black bird among the flyers.

Campaign Information

Claws in the Night reveals one thing immediately: if Tyaa's faith is anything to go by, it is easy to see why the priests of the Great God banished the ancient religions from Lankhmar. They are destructive and based on a culture of reverence through fear.

Games Masters can get a lot of mileage out of resurrecting these ancient cults in their campaigns. Lankhmar is littered with abandoned temples which entry is forbidden upon pain of death. Each of these was likely the source of some malicious (if not outright evil) religion that is now consigned to the history books and the hearts of secret cultists. Despite being abandoned by most Lankhmarts, it is quite believable that quiet rituals by unknown cults still take place in some of the temples. When one of these hidden orders feels they have the strength to make a resurgence in the city, the results can be chaotic and unpleasant for all. Tyaa's faith of sacrifice and penance for the sins of pride and vanity is unlikely to be the only dark cult of the elder days. Others might even also be

based on the Seven Deadly Sins, if the Games Master enjoys the theme. Whatever fork the faith takes, some form of Black Magic is probably behind the cult's powers.

The Price of Pain-Ease

Coming one night half drunk by way of Plague Court and Bones Alley from the Golden Lamprey tavern at Cash and Whore to an inn of most merry yet most evil recollection called the Silver Eel – they spied behind it the still uncleared cinders and blackened, tumbled stones of the tenement where their first loves Ivrian and Vlana had, after many torments, been burned to white ashes, some atomies of whom they might even now be seeing by the murky moonlight.

The grief of Vlana and Ivrian's murders still weighs heavily on the two heroes' hearts. Unthinkingly, they both move into the site where the Mouser's squat-home burned to the ground, purely because it seems convenient. This is achieved by stealing the wooden garden house of Duke Danius. Forty porters are hired and blindfolded to carry the smallish garden house to the ashen lot behind the Silver Eel and Fafhrd and the Mouser move immediately into their cosy, new, several-roomed home.

As the weeks pass, both men privately begin to dream of their lost loves, even hallucinating in their grief. They each secretly consult all manner of hedge magicians seeking some kind of solace but none is to be found. Finally, the Mouser wakes to find Fafhrd missing. He realises the only wise soul he has not yet consulted is Sheelba of the Eyeless Face, the mystical hermit of the Great Salt Marsh. Upon reaching this revelation, close to breaking point and very real madness, he finds a horse waiting for him outside the house. The boy hired to clean the privies reveals that Fafhrd left that morning on a horse of his own. The Mouser suspects that his friend, likewise at the edge of sanity, has also gone to see Sheelba.

Racing through the city and the Great Salt Marsh, the Mouser finally reaches Sheelba's hut. He pleads for some help in overcoming his grief or in forgetting Ivrian completely, to which Sheelba replies he can aid the Mouser if the Grey One concedes to serving the magician in one task now and for 'not more than three months out of every thirteen' in the future. The Mouser, offered little other option to escape his grief, agrees. The quest he is set is to travel to Death's realm, the Shadowland and return Death's favourite mask to Sheelba. On the way, Sheelba insists the Mouser will encounter Ivrian and gain the solace he seeks.

In the caves of Ningauble of the Seven Eyes, Fafhrd is swearing the same oath for the same reward. Each magician warns his servant that Duke Danius, a man with a great fear of mortality, has entered the Shadowland in order to slay Death himself. Both heroes are forced to swear an additional oath to return the mask even if it means facing and killing anyone and anything that comes in their way. This, also, is agreed to.

Both heroes travel to the Shadowland from different directions, each encountering a black pavilion in the rainy and dark realm.

These tents house the spirits of Vlana and Ivrian, each seeming pale and cold in death and who both insist their still-living loves should leave at once and get over their grief.

The heroes, rattled by the appearance and demeanours of their dead loves, travel on to Death's castle, arriving at the same time. Death's mask lies on the throne and as each hero moves to take it for his sorcerous patron they realise that Sheelba and Ningauble have somehow arranged this confrontation between the two friends, who are now sworn to kill one another to do the magicians' bidding. As they face this haunting fact, Duke Danius arrives and neatly splits Death's mask in twain with a sword blow. Death himself manifests at this moment, casually strangling Danius while Fafhrd and the Mouser flee, each bearing a half of the shattered mask.

Displeased but unable to say either hero broke their oath, Sheelba and Ningauble still take out their petty anger at only possessing half of Death's mask each. They destroy the stolen home that Fafhrd and the Mouser were using behind the Silver Eel. This sits well with the companions who, after seeing their dead loves in a new and different light, are able to put the bulk of their grief behind them and move on to affairs with new loves.

Campaign Information

This story represents the moment Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser bind themselves to Sheelba and Ningauble. Games Masters interested in having a similar event take place in their own campaigns should consult the *Of Sheel and Ning* chapter for further information. Notably, the story highlights how petty the wizards can be when they do not get their way to the exact letter.

The Price of Pain-Ease also deals with the Shadowland for the first time. This haunting realm is dealt with in more detail in *The East* chapter, page 89. Any Games Masters planning a campaign that takes the characters to Death's dark country are dealing with some of the bleakest imagery in the setting. Here they might meet the shades of relatives and loved ones long-dead and such meetings can either help a character come to terms with loss or unnerve him beyond anything he has ever suffered before. If the deceased thinks well of the still-living character, the meeting is likely to be a bittersweet one. If on the other hand the dead soul harbours loathing even past death – or death has changed him into a hateful being – the character could be in for some emotional torture, if he even manages to leave the Shadowland alive.

Therein lies the second problem. Death is a supernatural entity even above the gods, answering only to the Three Powers unknown to mortals: Chance, Necessity and Fate. If Death takes an interest in killing a character, he merely needs to wish it so and the character will expire. Games Masters should take note of Death's love of drama and thrilling deaths where heroes are concerned. Unless the characters make real nuisances of

themselves, he might appear and speak with them but rare is the occasion that would ever bring him to slay them out of hand.

Bazaar of the Bizarre

'The Devourers menace Lankhmar!' Sheelba rapped out in a voice as harsh as a tree cracking and so suddenly that Fafhrd almost started – and for all we know, Ningauble, too.

Fafhrd waited a moment to avoid giving false impressions and then switched his gaze to Sheelba. His eyes had been growing more accustomed to the darkness and he saw much more than he had seen at the alley's mouth, yet he still saw not one jot more than absolute blackness inside Sheelba's cowl.

'Who are the Devourers?' he asked.

Sheelba and Ningauble rarely leave their respective homes in the Great Salt Marsh and the distant caves unless the need is dire. When a new shop opens in the Plaza of Dark Delights, openly defying the tradition of dim lighting in favour of bright torches and illuminated windows, the need is apparently dire enough to force both magicians out of their seclusion. Fafhrd and the Mouser receive separate notes from their sorcerous mentors, each asking for a meeting at the Spire of Rhan come midnight.

The Mouser arrives early. Stricken by curiosity of the new, brightly lit shop, he ventures inside and discovers wonders of the like he had barely imagined previously. He browses through books that contain the private lives of devils, the secret histories of murderous cults, as well as lore on the erotic techniques of lamias and succubi. Peering through brass and bronze tubes reveals glimpses into the treasure rooms of dead kings and the bedchambers of young queens. Almost all he sees is on sale for mere Tiks.

Fafhrd arrives outside on time and is summoned to the side of the plaza by two cowed figures in an unnaturally dark alleyway. Sheelba and Ningauble retreat further from the light, eventually explaining to Fafhrd what evil is unwinding just across the way. The 'Bazaar of the Bizarre' is actually the haven of planar-travelling beings called the Devourers. These beings sell illusionary wares (which are really no more than worthless trash) and believe that mindless, servile beings are the best worshippers for all gods. To this end, they entice the most intelligent and curious souls into spending their wealth on worthless pursuits, finally capturing them when their minds are dizzied by the riches around them. Once the world's foremost minds and bravest souls are snared and out of the way, the merchants open the way for greater worldwide trade and take the wealth of all nations in return for trash, leaving the world ruined and worthless in their wake.

Fafhrd is nervous about dealing with these mighty illusionists alone. Sheelba and Ningauble both offer gifts to bolster his skills and courage in this endeavour. The former hands over the Blindfold of True Seeing; the latter lends the Cloak of Invisibility.

Sheelba's present resembles a cobweb to be laid over the eyes and reveals all illusions as they truly are. Ningauble's gift is a small and worn rag which when wrapped around the shoulders renders the wearer invisible, provided he does not bleed or cross the path of a master sorcerer. So equipped, Fafhrd enters the Bazaar in order to save the Mouser and somehow destroy this outpost of the Devourers.

Once inside, Fafhrd sees blank-paged books instead of tomes filled with secrets, telescopes displaying images of agonising hells and cages containing not sweet, comely young girls but woman-sized giant spiders clicking their mandibles. At the very end of the store is the Black Wall, which the Mouser perceives as a liquid surface which he can plunge into and which turns his skin flawless in the black water. Fafhrd sees his friend immersed and appearing as a silver skeleton beneath a vertical wall of water.

Fafhrd drops his sword and pulls the Mouser from the wall, who then promptly stumbles almost drunkenly into a nearby black coffin. A man-sized black statue bearing a two-handed sword storms in from its pedestal outside the Bazaar, eyes Fafhrd's sword Greywand where it lays on the floor and begins swiping left and right with its blade, suspecting some invisible intruder, which is entirely the case. The Mouser, still duped by the illusions all around, sees the black statue as a serving slave and addresses him repeatedly in attempts to purchase various 'treasures' in the shop. Meanwhile Fafhrd sweeps up his blade (which turns invisible in his hands, again falling under the spell of the Cloak) and rushes to attack the statue. The statue reaches for a strange trumpet and blows into it but instead of an alarm sound being raised, white powder explodes outward all over Fafhrd, rendering him at least partially visible as if coated in flour.

The Mouser finds this all in the greatest heights of comedy, yelling encouragement to the 'slave boy' who 'mock-fights' a flour-covered Fafhrd with a 'broom.' Fafhrd on the other hand is battling for his life, notching his sword each time he parries a blow from the black iron blade wielded by the statue. Every strike he makes is blocked or dodged and even a thrown hand-axe comes flying back at him, reversed by some unseen sorcery on the statue's part.

Wounded and tiring, unable to hurt the iron statue, Fafhrd tosses his axe to the deluded Mouser and jovially invites him to join in the mummery with the axe as his 'slapstick'. Grinning inanely, the Mouser slaps his 'stick' against the slave's head. Fafhrd sees the truth of it, relieved as the Mouser splits the statue's head open from behind with the axe.

With the statue's death, the shop rumbles and shakes and flashes of light whirring around. The companions flee, one eagerly and the other with great reluctance, before the Bazaar of the Bizarre vanishes from its spot in the Plaza. As Fafhrd catches his breath, his thoughts turn to the future deeds he will perform with the

Cloak and Blindfold. Just as his imaginings reach their most ambitious point, Sheelba and Ningauble reach down from a low roof behind him and whisk their gifts back with twin chuckles.

Campaign Information

The Bazaar of the Bizarre is one of the best-loved of Leiber's tales and Games Masters will find it contains a wealth of information regarding Sheelba and Ningauble as well as the city of Lankhmar. Probably the greatest temptation where this tale is concerned is to use the Bazaar of the Bizarre in individual campaigns, perhaps having it appear in Lankhmar again. Maybe even in the very same spot in the Plaza of Dark Delights.

Games Masters employing this storyline will almost certainly need to have the characters equipped much as Fafhrd was before they enter the shop. The Devourers' wares will appear remarkable and wondrous to any character and a Persistence roll is simply not going to cut through the aura of wealth and worth surrounding the wares. If characters are to have any protection at all, they will either need to bargain with a sorcerer for some kind of magical defence or go to Sheelba and Ningauble for artefacts of power. If the characters are already in service to Sheel and Ning, then it is more than likely that the two will send notes to their favourite characters and demand a meeting the same night that the Bazaar appears. Any gifts they bestow are going to be reclaimed afterwards, naturally.

The key to destroying the Bazaar might not necessarily be to kill the black iron sword-bearing statue. Games Masters might prefer to have characters examine the store for potential sources of power that somehow 'anchor' the Bazaar to Nehwon. It could be that banishing the store will only be possible if the giant spiders are killed or the Black Wall is somehow smashed. Literally any wondrous object in the store could be the lynchpin.

Swords in the Mist The Cloud of Hate

The single-halled subterranean temple was so long and wide and at the same time so irregularly planted with thick pillars that at no point could a person see more than a third of the way across it. Yet it had a ceiling so low that at any point a man standing tall could have brushed it with his fingertips – except that all here grovelled. The air was swooningly fetid. The dark bent backs of the hate-ensorceled worshippers made a kind of hummocky dark ground, from which the nitre-crust stone pillars rose like grey tree trunks.

The masked Archpriest of the Hates lifted a skinny finger. Parchment-thin iron cymbals began to clash in unison with the drums and the furnace-red flickerings, wringing to an unendurable pitch the malices and envies of the blackly enraptured communicants.

Peace has ruled over Lankhmar for some time and hatred with no outlet has built up among the residents. The capstone to this welling of dark emotion is the nobility celebrating in decadence

the betrothal of the overlord's daughter to the Prince of Ilthmar, leaving the peasantry to seethe with bitterness.

In a subterranean hall large enough to house thousands of worshippers, the Archpriest of the Hates leads many Lankhmarts, all masked to conceal their identities, in a sermon of hatred. This ritual is the magical way of dispelling the rising levels of hatred flowing through the city. As the chants continue into the night, white fog-like tentacles reach out from the underground temple and begin to flow through the streets of Lankhmar, only distinguishable from natural fog by the occasional reddish glints within.

This fog has a purpose. It stalks a beggar girl, killing her and shoving her body around, almost like a beast nosing at her, before moving on. She was not the kind of life the hate-mist was seeking.

Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser are hired for the night as gate guards near the Rainbow Palace, two of many mercenaries employed to make sure the betrothal celebrations are not interrupted by commoners. Fafhrd senses a change in the air, a taint in the fog tonight, though the Mouser continues to speak of all the reasons they should be rich, crossing each off in turn by citing the many ways the pair spend the wealth earned by their heroism.

Meanwhile, the tainted fog drifts through the streets, seeking the most hateful and violent souls it can find. Killers called Gnarlak of the Two Swords, Gis the cutthroat, Kreshmar and Skel – assassins and alley-bashers, all become possessed and enraged by the power of the hate-mist. The fog thins to a single tiny cord of silver and red lading from the Temple of the Hates to the four killers, fuelling them with the hatred of the worshippers. These men, enslaved by their heightened malice and anger, slaughter several black-clad constables during their measured march to the Rainbow Palace.

The stalking four meet Fafhrd and the Mouser on guard duty. The hate-mist fails to influence the heroes (though it comes close to winning over the Mouser) and directs the four killers to attack the two companions. In a brief battle where Fafhrd wields a brazier in his free hand to burn his attackers and make them flinch back from the flames at telling moments, the two fighters make short work of their opponents.

As they congratulate themselves and indulge in their standard friendly bickering of who performed the best in the battle, the mist spreads out, somehow picking up the blades of the fallen killers. A red eye-disc forms in the fog at the centre of the weapon-clutching mist, which the Mouser pierces with his blade immediately, apparently blinding the hate-cloud. As Fafhrd parries and dodges the small army of randomly flailing weapons, the Mouser spies the pinkish silver thread stretching out from the back of the cloud and severs it with a sword strike. In a burst of stench, the mist dissolves into ectoplasm that splatters the ground and instantly drops the blades to the cobblestones.

In the Temple of the Hates, five thousand worshippers rise up with groans, each feeling a few ounces lighter than when they began their chants. Whatever hate-leaching effects the cloud possessed seem to have worked.

Campaign Information

Whenever hatred builds within Lankhmar's populace during a campaign, the Archpriest of the Hates could go to work in order to 'bleed out' some of the rising fury and loathing. In a sick and twisted way, this ritual is actually a benefit to the people of the city, allowing them to vent their hates for a time. At least, that is one way of looking at it. Another would be through a darker lens; seeing thousands of worshippers so driven by their hatred that they seek the death of those they envy as the only outlet for their negativity.

Games Masters have a powerful antagonist in the cult of Hate and one that will remain interesting since it acts only rarely. One instance might have the characters foiling the plot as Fafhrd and the Mouser did but failing to track the mist back to its source. In another year, they might have more luck trailing the silver thread and come some way to solving the mystery of where the cult is based. Perhaps the next time involves a confrontation with the Archpriest of the Hates himself and the cult scatters to perform its rituals in isolated areas throughout the city from that point on. A slight variation on the theme can change the entire plotline's flavour enough to throw veteran Leiber fans off the scent, at least for a while.

The Cloud of Hate also hammers home just how the night-smog and coastal fogs of Lankhmar really permeate (sometimes even choke) the city. They are part of everyday life, yet often contain hidden dangers both mundane in the form of thieves and killers and supernatural in the form of sorcery spells based on mist, which feature several times in the *Swords* stories and are a favourite enchantment of Lankhmar's magicians.

Lean Times in Lankhmar

Once upon a time in Lankhmar, City of the Black Toga, in the world of Nehwon, two years after the Year of the Feathered Death, Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser parted their ways.

Exactly what caused the tall brawling barbarian and the slim elusive Prince of Thieves to fall out and the mighty adventuring partnership to be broken, is uncertainly known and was at the time the subject of much speculation. Some said they had quarrelled over a girl. Others maintained, with even greater unlikelihood, that they had disagreed over the proper division of a loot of jewels raped from Muulsh the Moneylender. Srith of the Scrolls suggests that their mutual cooling off was largely the reflection of a supernatural enmity existing at the time between Sheelba of the Eyeless Face, the Mouser's demonic mentor and Ningauble of the Seven Eyes, Fafhrd's alien and multi-serpentine patron.

The likeliest explanation, which runs directly counter to the Muulsh Hypothesis, is simply that times were hard in Lankhmar, adventures few and uninviting and that the two heroes had reached that point

in life when hard-pressed men desire to admix even the rarest quests and pleasurings with certain prudent activities, leading either to financial or to spiritual security, though seldom if ever to both.

During a time when adventures were few and far between, Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser temporarily went their separate ways. Fafhrd found religion, breaking his sword over his knee and serving as the destitute acolyte of Bwardews, the one and only priest of the largely ignored god Issek of the Jug. The Mouser meanwhile worked as a lieutenant of Pulg, one of the extortionists that preyed upon the Street of the Gods.

With Fafhrd's charisma, barbarian size and his singing voice serving as a draw for crowds, Issek's faith moved fast westward up the Street of the Gods. It soon came time for the Mouser and his bullies to extort Fafhrd's religion and despite their distance this was not something the Grey One relished attending to. Not least of all was the worry that Fafhrd would resist violently and things get out of hand. The Mouser decides to get Fafhrd drunk elsewhere while his bullies do the extorting. The plan is partially successful.

Fafhrd does indeed fall unconscious through drink. The Mouser's plot is interrupted by Pulg making an appearance to judge his lieutenant's performance and in a fit of meanness shaves the unconscious Fafhrd bald and removes his eyebrows. The Mouser heads out to do his work, taking Pulg and his bullies with him. With comically appropriate timing, as the crowd demand evidence of Issek (having lost faith with the disappearance of the charismatic acolyte) Fafhrd, hairless and strapped to a table, manages to stand up, move into the street and – still in need of alcohol – shouts for his jug. The crowd abase themselves at this apparition of Issek's 'avatar' and Issekianity takes off massively thereafter.

In the interests of keeping a low profile for the immediate future, Fafhrd and the Mouser leave the city on their sloop, *Black Treasurer*.

Campaign Information

This is another of Leiber's most renowned tales of Lankhmar. A great many variations and story ideas based on *Lean Times in Lankhmar* can be found in the Street of the Gods section of the *Lankhmar: City of Thieves* chapter, page 42.

Their Mistress, the Sea

Nights they would lazily talk for hours, feeling nearest then to the stars, the sea and each other. They argued as to whether the stars had existed forever or had been launched by the gods from Nehwon's highest mountain – or whether, as current metaphysics asserted, the stars were vast firelit gems set in islands at the opposite end of the great bubble (in the waters of eternity) that was Nehwon. They disputed as to who was the world's worst warlock: Fafhrd's Ningauble, the Mouser's Sheelba or – barely conceivably – some other sorcerer.

Straight out of Lankhmar harbour, the pair fall ill to seasick and the *Black Treasurer* is briefly captained by their ageing slave, Ourph the Mingol. When they recover their sea legs, the companions indulge in a spot of piracy. The first target turns out to be a Lankhmar bait-ship specifically designed to lure pirates so the Overlord's Navy can put them out of their illegal business. The second attempt is more successful, involving a mild plunder of a small ship crewed by five Mingol witches. The companions take what they need and a few things that catch their eyes but hardly leave the women destitute.

Campaign Information

Piracy in the Inner Sea is big, big business. Characters of any background and profession might find themselves open for a patch of buccaneering when all else seems bleak and unprofitable. After all, characters need to eat.

Games Masters without campaigns dedicated to freelance roguery on the high seas should always bear in mind that piracy is a common and legitimate option when traditional adventures have hit a dry spell. For every cutpurse and burglar there is an equivalent 'thief of the sea' looking to make some coin at the expense of others. Principally, this is noteworthy because it makes any travel across the Inner Sea a risky prospect once out of sight of Lankhmar's Navy. The upside to this fact is that it means characters in need of some plunder can take to the piratical life themselves without too much risk of capture and facing justice.

Swords Against Wizardry In the Witch's Tent

Fafhrd remarked, 'It's unfortunate the old lady was interrupted just when she was about to tell us something important.'

The Mouser snorted. 'She'd already sung her song, the sum of which was zero.'

In this short tale, Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser are travelling through Illik-Ving of the Eight Cities when they decide to consult a tent-dwelling crone rumoured to have the power of true prophecy. They seek the words of a seer before they make the final leg of their northern travels and attempt to climb Stardock.

The hag's warnings dwell on dangers faced and threats overcome, which Fafhrd takes very seriously indeed and the Mouser takes with a pinch of salt.

Campaign Information

Prophecy can be tricky for any Games Master to manage. Done well, it can resonate throughout a campaign and add a great deal to the atmosphere and player immersion. Done badly and it breaks the suspension of disbelief as firmly as anything can.

The hag's prophecy in *The Witch's Tent* shows a good example of how to do prophecy the right way, whether the Games Master is sure of what will come next in the campaign or not. The key is to be vague but interesting – hints should be clear enough that players can at least attempt to guess the truth behind them but doubtful as to which one of many possibilities they could refer to.

The hag speaks of enemies dogging the characters' heels, foreshadowing the pursuit up Stardock by Fafhrd and Mouser's violent rivals, Kranarch and Gnarfi. She also reveals that they are headed north, though as the Mouser readily points out, she could have attained that information from any gossipy mouth before performing their reading.

Prophecy is unreliable. That can make it fun and certainly keeps it true to the setting but it can also make it annoying if the Games Master uses it as a method to tease the players, overuses it in the storyline or sets out a destiny that cannot be changed no matter how the characters act.

Stardock

Fafhrd said dreamily, 'They say the gods once dwelt and had their smithies on Stardock and from thence, amid jetting fire and showering sparks, launched all the stars; hence her name. They say diamonds, rubies, smaragds – all great gems – are the tiny pilot models the gods made of the stars...and then threw carelessly across the world when their great work was done.'

Following a parchment with a written rhyme (which resembles a myth from Fafhrd's youth about making love to the daughters of the Snow King and finding jewels atop Stardock), the eager barbarian and a somewhat less-excited Grey Mouser set out to scale the unscalable peaks of the Mountains of the Giants. Their rivals in this challenge are two burly killers from Illik-Ving by the name of Kranarch and Gralfi, each of whom own a trained bear making the climb alongside them. Fafhrd and the reluctant Mouser are accompanied by Hrissa, an ice cat about the size and shape of a cheetah, only white-furred and skilled at rock climbing.

The climb takes many days, with the pair making consistent progress despite bone-aching weariness. They move from the face of one mountain to another, travelling wherever the climbing is easiest on the treacherous peaks. On the ascent they are menaced by snow serpents, ambushes sent by their rivals from Illik-Ving, as well as invisible attackers that strike out from the backs of unseen steeds. All the while, both Fafhrd and the Mouser infrequently 'hallucinate' that Stardock has a beautiful female face and they both hear occasional bursts of girlish laughter.

Climbing difficulties force the pair to split up close to the peak of Stardock. Both are captured separately by packs of Ice Gnomes and taken through tunnels and caverns within the mountain to the respective bedchambers of Hirriwi and Keyaira, the

Princesses of the Invisibles. These women remain in darkness or cover themselves in cosmetics in order to be seen by the men. Both heroes enjoy a night of passion in accordance with the legend from Fafhrd's youth, though when morning comes the princesses ask that the heroes descend immediately and call off their quest to reach the summit.

The invisible attackers that preyed upon them as they ascended the mountain are revealed to be Prince Faroomfar, the brother of the princesses and the son of King Oomforafor. The girls are certain Faroomfar and some of their cousins allied with him will take out their petty anger on the duo for sleeping with the princesses, despite the fact it is apparently essential. The Invisible race is dying out, the heroes are told. The seed of outsiders – the potent seed of heroes – is desired to breed the next generation.

Fafhrd and the Mouser wake the next morning, find one another and unite in their refusal to quit this close to the peak of Stardock. At the top, finding Kranarch and Gralfi slain and mutilated, the Mouser recalls Keyaira's words that in other instances Oomforafor has taken a man's seed by gorier methods than those employed by his daughters. After a final stalemate battle with Prince Faroomfar atop his flying invisible manta ray, Fafhrd and the Mouser are saved by the princesses and flown to safety.

A pouch of invisible gemstones is further reward for their efforts, pressed into the Mouser's hands at the last moment by one of the girls. It transpires that the jewels only glow at night, appearing completely invisible at all other times.

Campaign Information

Adventures taking place out here in the most desolate and isolated parts of the natural world are far removed from the themes and atmosphere of Lankhmar City. This is pure wilderness, where strange monsters may exist in equal numbers to the scattered and rare humans of the region and feral beasts far outnumber both.

Adventures in these regions so far removed from civilisation will often be based around the folklore and mythology of the nearby cultures or driven by exploration and a curiosity to verify the garbled tales of other travellers. Few adventuring groups will find themselves employed to come this far north, though campaigns focused on barbarians in their native Cold Wastes will obviously fit well in the region.

The Invisibles are human in all important ways except for their appearance. Their dealings with any characters are likely to be based on any groups that manage to ascend the summit of Stardock and the flavour of the interactions will depend entirely on which members of the family the characters happen to meet. Sexual encounters are likely if the princesses are involved. Attempted disembowelling and castration is the intent of King Oomforafor and his guards. Petty battles for the sake of killing intruders are Prince Faroomfar's habit.

For more detail on running adventures in the Cold Wastes and the Mountains of the Giants, see *The Northlands & Beyond* chapter.

The Two Best Thieves in Lankhmar

'Coal,' Fafhrd said.

The Mouser clawed his hands over his faintly twinkling box, as if about to pick it up and hurl it through the wall and across the Inner Sea. Instead he unclawed his hands and hung them decorously at his sides.

'I'm going away,' he announced quietly but very clearly and did so.

This story sees Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser getting royally fleeced upon their return from Stardock. They go to deal with two separate fences, having spent too much time with one another and grown somewhat tired of each other's company for the time being. The Mouser takes his share of the invisible jewels to Ogo the Blind, while next door Fafhrd deals with Nemias of the Dusk. The fences are not as they appear, as explained in the chapter *Lankhmar: City of Thieves*, page 47. Through great cunning and sleight of hand, the jewels are exchanged for worthless replicas and Fafhrd and the Mouser are duped completely.

Hours later, as they reminisce in the Silver Eel, they discover the deception. Fafhrd's jewel pouch turns out to be filled with small lumps of coal. The Mouser's box is no longer filled with faintly glowing gems but with small glowing insects tied down with fine silver wire.

Unwilling to stalk back to the shops and slaughter two women, yet unable to remain in Lankhmar after being cheated so thoroughly out of a fortune in mystical gems, The Grey Mouser announces his intention to leave the city immediately. To that end, he finds work as a mercenary in distant Quarmall. Fafhrd remains behind for a time, freeing the glow-bugs and burning his coal pieces in the table brazier. Then he too makes plans to leave the city, also taking employment in far-off Quarmall without realising the Mouser is likewise bound there.

Campaign Information

Overconfidence is a dangerous trait in any character. In Lankhmar, there is almost always a cutthroat a blade's width more deadly than he who claims himself the best and a thief more capable in thievery than the self-proclaimed best of burglars. *The Two Best Thieves in Lankhmar* highlights this truth of the underworld perfectly. Despite coming back from a grand adventure with more profit than ever before in their lives, Fafhrd and the Mouser are fleeced by thieves even more skilled than they.

This shows the danger of falling foul of equally-immoral criminals as well as the worries of operating independently; Ogo and Nemias would rarely rip off the Thieves' Guild like this but loners like Fafhrd and the Mouser are prime targets. Best of all,

it shows that no character (or his coin-purse) is ever really safe in Lankhmar. The City of Thieves has a hundred and more ways of taking a character's money – not all thieves are unsubtle stalkers that leap out from the mouths of alleyways.

Oftentimes, the richest pickings are the ones that draw the most scavengers. Characters will need to learn to be very careful about whom they deal with when they have goods to fence or black market items to sell.

The Lords of Quarmall

The room was dim, almost maddeningly dim to one who loved sharp detail and burning sun. The few wall-set torches that provided the sole illumination flamed palely and thinly, more like will-o'-the-wisps than true fire, although they released a pleasant incense. One got the feeling that the dwellers of this region resented light and only tolerated a thin mist of it for the benefit of strangers.

Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser find themselves in the centre of a sorcery-heightened civil war between sibling princes. Gwaay and Hajaral of subterranean Quarmall each seek to inherit the throne of their father, Quarmal. To this end they maintain groups of sorcerers chanting spells at all hours of day and night, with Hasjarl's magicians seeking to infect Gwaay with a dozen diseases and Gwaay's magicians concentrating on deflecting the harmful energies away from him.

Fafhrd and the Mouser are the sword-champions of Hasjarl and Gwaay respectively and each hero finds his employer generally unpleasant to be around. Quarmall itself is a dim and dreary place, with eerie aspects that unsettle the nerves after a while. Slaves work air-treadmills their entire lives, pushing fresh air into the stifling lower tunnels, while nobles relax and play games of chess, moving the pieces across the board with their minds. Neither protagonist is comfortable in Quarmall; both find they wish to leave sooner rather than later.

Dalliances with slave girls aside (who Fafhrd and the Mouser free from their masters) the heroes impassively witness the progression of the sibling rivalry. The stalemate ends with the apparent death of Quarmal and the decision by Hasjarl to escalate the war tenfold in order to seize the vacant throne. The Mouser, in seeking to aid his employer Gwaay, uses his single spell – written on a scroll given to him by Sheelba of the Eyeless Face. It is his intent to slay the so-called 'Second Rank' magicians in Hasjarl's service, stopping the disease magic and allowing Gwaay's 'First Rank' magicians to act on the offensive. Instead, whether through Sheelba's deception or the Mouser's incorrect reading, Gwaay's sorcerers are slain by the spell, becoming small piles of grey dust where they once sat. Gwaay is immediately stricken with a dozen lethal diseases that rot his body in moments.

That night, at a pre-arranged meeting, the disease-wracked and near-death Gwaay meets Hasjarl in front of Quarmal's population. The Mouser and Fafhrd, as appointed sword-

champions, meet in battle before the wide audience – a mock battle filled with good-natured insults and flawless theatrics the moment the heroes recognise one another. All the while, Gwaay's restless ghost looks on from above and Hasjarl considers his victory certain.

Both brothers die at the climax of the fight, as Gwaay's out-of-body spirit magically pulls a ceiling stone down, crushing his already-ruined body as well as Hasjarl's, in the moment his brother moves to stab him. As the hall resonates with the crash, the ruse of Quarmal is finally revealed. The King never died – he merely wanted his sons out of the way for fear they would arrange his death and take the throne. His next child, growing in the belly of a concubine, shall inherit Quarmall instead of his slain sons.

With the ruler's thanks and the freed slave girls at their sides, Fafhrd and the Mouser leave Quarmall for good.

Campaign Information

Quarmall as presented in this tale is a nest of political conflict, eerie sorcery and treachery on all sides. Setting a long-lasting campaign there would be a challenge since the people of Quarmall are so insular but adventurers coming to the 'city within a mountain' will find more than their fair share of excitement if the political climate matches that of *The Lords of Quarmall*.

Players portraying characters with the slave cultural background might have escaped from Quarmall before the campaign starts. It can be interesting to see if the character's return, armed and armoured amongst a group of professional adventurers, sparks any recollection in the eyes of his previous owners.

The Swords of Lankhmar

Ningauble shrugged his cloaked, bulbous shoulders. 'I thought you were a brave man, addicted to deeds of derring-do.'

Fafhrd cursed sardonically, then demanded, 'But even if I should go clang those rusty bells, how can Lankhmar hold out until then with her walls breached and the odds fifty to one against her?'

'I'd like to know that myself,' Ningauble assured him.

'And how do I get to the temple when the streets are crammed with warfare?'

Ningauble shrugged again. 'You're a hero. You should know.'

Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser return to Lankhmar, only to find themselves beset by creditors. In a quick decision to flee the city before anyone else they owe money decides to come collecting, the duo take ship aboard a grain ship carrying a diplomatic offering to Movarl, Overlord of the Eight Cities. Aboard this ship are some of the curious entertainments for the Overlord's party, chief of which is the Demoiselle Hisvet and her 12 performing

white rats, who wear capes, carry swords and perform acrobatic tricks as well as mimic human behaviour. Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser are both smitten with Hisvet, though the barbarian also takes a shine to Frix, Hisvet's dark-skinned maidservant. Dogging Fafhrd's heels for much of the journey is a small black kitten, the ship's cat, who seems to loathe the rats intensely.

During the voyage, several ships in the grain fleet come under mysterious attack and sink, with hordes of rats seen leaving each as it goes down. One witness reports seeing a white rat at the head of one such horde and Hisvet is accused of being a beast-talking witch responsible for the disasters. While Fafhrd and the Mouser (who defended her honour thoroughly) dine in her cabin, they succumb to food drugged by the ship's crew. The intended targets of the sleeping drug, Hisvet and Frix, have not eaten enough to be affected.

The white rats, aided by a legion of their mundane brethren, storm the ship and try to kill the crew. Hisvet and her father Hisvin, a famous grain merchant travelling on another ship, are revealed as the leaders behind this rodent uprising. Due to the actions of Karl Treuherz, a time-travelling, reality-crossing German riding a dragon (no, really) the rats are driven from the ship. During the battle, one of the rats fires its tiny crossbow at the Mouser and strikes him in the temple with a near-painless miniature bolt, which tingles with the presence of magic. At the end of the voyage, the Mouser decides to return to Lankhmar and apprise Overlord Glipekero personally of the events that took place. Fafhrd remains in leafy Kvarch Nar.

In the Blue Audience Chamber of Overlord Glipekero, the Mouser is stunned to find Hisvin and Hisvet meeting with Lankhmar's ruler. As he tries to inform Glipekero of their great treachery and beast-talker magic, the tiny needle in his temple floods his body with pleasantly tingling magic and he finds himself unable to speak against Hisvet. Meanwhile, Hisvin is lamenting over the apparent Rat Plague Lankhmar is suffering through and insists that he alone has the magic to end it. He vows to do so when the stars are right.

As the days pass, the Rat Plague intensifies. The vermin are no longer merely seen everywhere, now they are attacking and killing Lankhmarts by night. The populace lock themselves in their homes and pray for a solution to the problem. The overlord pressures Hisvin to end the Plague but the merchant continues to insist the time is not right for his spell.

The Mouser's supernatural allegiance (and natural attraction) is for Hisvet, not her father. He takes it into his own hands to stop the Rat Plague and seeks out Sheelba of the Eyeless face for some kind of magical solution to the problem. The wizard hands over a potion that shrinks the drinker to rat-size and with a disguise pilfered from a murdered member of the Supreme Thirteen white rats, the Grey Mouser infiltrates Lankhmar Below and learns of their invasion plans. He also learns that Hisvin is truly Lord Null, a member of the rat council.

Sheelba sends a warning note to Fafhrd, who is dallying with the ghoulish woman Kreeshkra and trying to stay out of a three-way war between the Mingols, the ghouls and the Eight Cities. Along with the note is the advice: do not lose the whistle, relating to a tin whistle Fafhrd found in his travels. He leaves the ghoulish and rides hard for Ningauble's caverns, where his own sorcerous mentor informs him that Lankhmar is gravely threatened and perhaps the only way to save it is to ring the bells atop the Black Temple of the Gods of Lankhmar. He believes the tin whistle will summon the War Cats – the 13 greatest members of the feline race, just as the white rats are the greatest rodents.

Fafhrd meets Sheelba in the Great Salt Marsh and the wizard uses his walking to hut to give Fafhrd a ride to a stone's throw from the walls of the Imperishable City. Once inside, the barbarian makes his way to the Black Temple and rings the ancient bells in the tower. The swarms of rats and human-sized rodent warriors (who have drunk the growth potion) are temporarily beaten back by the march of the black skeleton Gods of Lankhmar. Every rat they strike with their staves dies instantly. The citizenry also flees at the sight of their deities walking, which is understandable.

The rat archers use fire arrows against the Gods of Lankhmar and while the mummies are not destroyed or permanently harmed, they are eventually driven back inside their temple. Further reinforcements for Lankhmar arrive in the form of Kreeshkra and a small army of ghouls that slay the rats in the streets. The little kitten from the ship comes to Fafhrd at this point, reminding him of a whistle he carries with him. Fafhrd blows the whistle, amazed at the sound produced being more a lion's roar than a metallic whistling.

The 'military aristocracy' of the feline races attack the rats en masse with the ghouls and ordinary Lankhmarts, making short work of the rodent legions. The Mouser meanwhile appears in the Rainbow Palace again, reverting back to normal size and duelling human-sized rat swordsmen through the halls of the citadel. Fafhrd arrives just in time to lend a much-needed blade to proceedings. Hisvet and Hisvin flee to Lankhmar Below along with the rodent survivors of the ill-fated invasion.

Campaign Information

The Swords of Lankhmar contains by far the largest gathering of information on Lankhmar and Nehwon, as well as featuring Sheelba and Ningauble more than once and displaying magic spells, underground kingdoms and the apparent 'aristocracy' of the animal races. Games Masters will find the novel an absolute treasure trove of ideas and information.

For campaign planners uninterested in matters of the Rat Plague and Lankhmar Below, the story still has some very serious elements that can heighten any plot arc. The scene is perfect for a high-society Throne War game, with the reigning Overlord Glipekero backed by many members of the social elite and his cousin, the scholarly Radomix Kistomerces-Null,

backed by another faction. Characters would be immersed in a time of great scheming behind the rising panic in the streets, with Glipekero's backers trying to prevent his suicide and keep control over Lankhmar and Radomix's supporters trying to convince the ambitionless scholar to take the throne and rule with a wiser demeanour than his cousin.

When the time comes, Glipekero's agents sent to kill Radomix might be the characters themselves, though ultimately if the Games Master is sticking to the established canonical timeline, these assassins will fail. Likewise, the characters within Radomix's faction could be the ones to help him flee the Rainbow Palace to the relative safety of hiding in the slums. High society characters might be engaged with trying to talk Glipekero out of having Radomix murdered, working against the clock to convince the overlord to call off the assassins. Meanwhile any lowborn characters could be guarding Radomix with their blades and their lives, killing any assassins that come for the overlord's cousin. House-to-house and room-by-room combat would be dangerous and deadly as the characters fight for Radomix's life, moving him from one safehouse to another as they are breached one by one.

The chaos at the height of the Rat Plague also makes for some incredible combat scenes. Ghouls are rampaging through Lankhmar's streets – and though they appear to be killing the rats more often than not, ghouls are well-known flesh-eaters and sackers of cities. Characters could have to deal with ghoulish groups taking out their bloodlust on Lankhmarts instead of the rats and fight the strange humanoids to save the residents of the city. It almost goes without saying that any characters wanting to bleed the ranks of the rats will be spoilt for choice at the height of the siege.

Concurrent with the invasion of the Imperishable City in *The Swords of Lankhmar* is another important event in Nehwon: the siege of Klelg Nar and Sarheenmar of the Eight Cities by the Mingol hordes. Sarheenmar is savagely burned and suffers terribly in the assault, while Klelg Nar is the scene of bitter fighting in the streets, perhaps even more vicious than the butchery occurring in Lankhmar. Characters in the Land of the Eight Cities will be unlikely to care about Lankhmar one way or the other – they have their own problems to deal with. Mingol characters might find themselves attacking the Eight Cities, while other Player Characters become involved in the defence or flee with the refugees.

Swords and Ice Magic Trapped in the Shadowland

Death writhed his thin, smiling lips and moved his bony fingertips in tiny, cabalistic curves, as he worked a small but difficult magic. His incantation done, he noted with approval that on the map a southern tongue of the Shadowland was visibly extending itself in pursuit of the dazzling speck that was victims.

Death's personal grudge against the (literally) death-defying heroes reaches as close to a fever pitch as can be used when referring to the lord of the cold Shadowland realm. In the past he has magicked berserkers and assassin-women into their bedchambers and done all he can to arrange grand and poetic death scenes for the duos. Now his patience begins to run out and he uses his power to extend the rainy, dark borders of the Shadowland, trapping them within his realm.

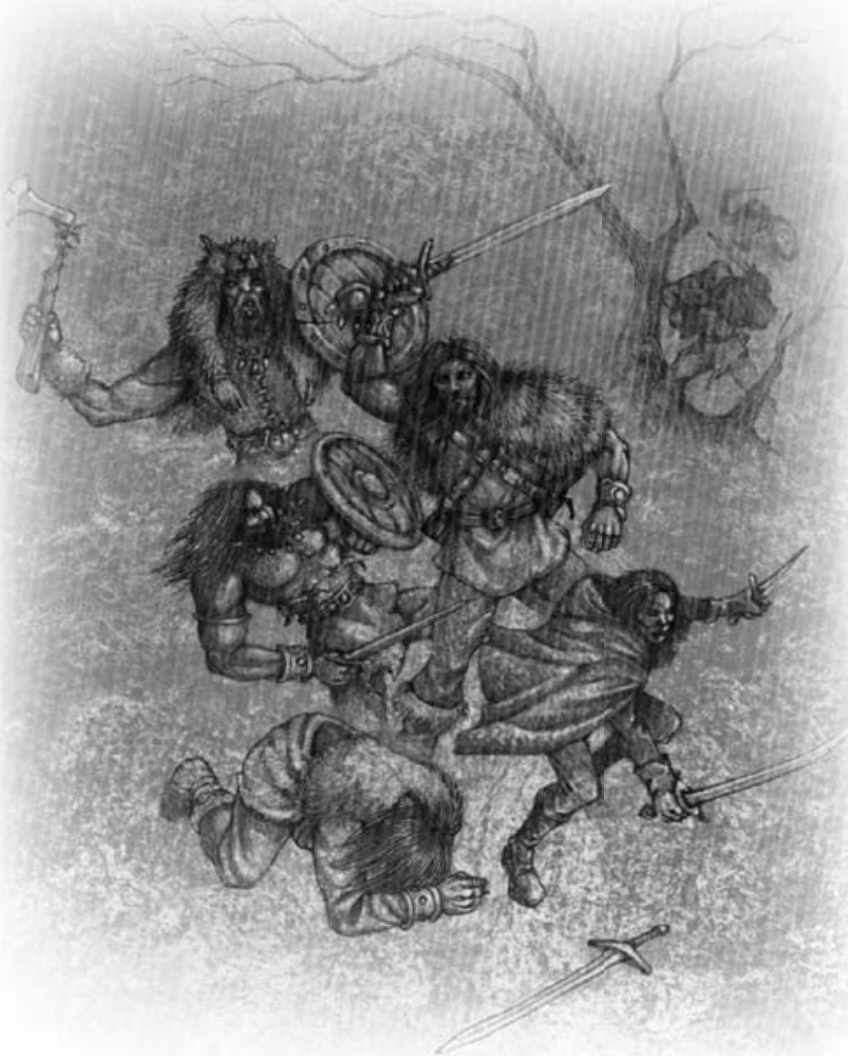
As Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser return to Lankhmar after twin failed attempts to find their latest loves, they find that no matter which direction they travel, the ground of the Shadowland stretches from horizon to horizon in every direction. Rain scythes down onto them and they encounter battle-mad northern berserkers, whom they defeat soundly, spoiling for a fight.

The Shadowland stretches south across Nehwon, past the city of Ilthmar whose resident population are gladdened to see the dark ground stretching past them, even if they are apprehensive at seeing it at all. Finally, at the gates of Lankhmar, Ningauble and Sheelba stand waiting as Fafhrd and the Mouser arrive. Through powerful yet imperceptible will-worked magic, the two archimages cause the Shadowland to retreat once more and berate the two heroes for taking so long in their travels when there is questing to be done. In the final moments of the tale, the two wizards use their magic to send the lusty heroes into the arms of two previous lovers, Hisvet and Frix, knowing full well that by doing so Fafhrd and the Mouser will be further obligated to them in the future.

Campaign Information

Games Masters using Death in their campaigns will find teasing hints of the being's power in this story. The Shadowland is a grim and awful place to be lost, though it is unclear what else Death hoped to achieve by trapping the heroes within its borders. Maybe after magicing warriors and killers into the duo's bedchambers, this symbolic threat was something he simply enjoyed. More likely there was some dark trick waiting to be unleashed and it was interrupted by the two sorcerous patrons. The story illustrates just how far Death is willing to go in his petty feuds with characters – even to the point of extending his realm over a quarter of Nehwon.

Death's great love for the dramatic deaths of heroes seems to lead him down irrational and overemotional paths at times. He is ruthlessly dedicated to his duty as laid down by the Lords



of Necessity: Chance, Necessity and Fate – watching over the souls of Nehwon and choosing their moments and methods of mortal expiration. However, he also spends a great deal of time ruminating on various ways to kill great heroes and not always succeeding. Rather than treat it as a game and a challenge, he becomes increasingly frustrated at his failures. Yet not once does he simply end the lives of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser out of pique even though to do so would take mere milliseconds.

The crux of the story comes in the final 'favour' done by the wizards, seemingly out of a need to keep the heroes indebted to the sorcerers. Games Masters should be aware that any favours done by Sheelba and Ningauble will require service in return, most likely of a painfully difficult and arduous type.

Under the Thumbs of the Gods

After a while the Mouser said, 'By Mog, this is more like it.' Fafhrd agreed. 'By Issek, yes. Kos damn all spooked adventures.'

The three gods, hearing their names were taken in vain as they rested in paradise from their toils, were content.

Kos, Issek and Mog are steadily losing worshippers as the years pass. Two of their favourite followers – Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser – have not called upon them or even taken their holy names in vain, in several years. Kos, the northern god of dooms, has rarely heard Fafhrd curse by his name since the barbarian left the Cold Wastes. Issek has heard little in the way of worship from Fafhrd since his time as an acolyte (and apparently an avatar) under Bwadres. The Mouser only worshipped Mog for a few weeks as a means of humouring Ivrian at the time.

The three deities decide to visit a touch of divine displeasure on their wayward worshippers in the hopes that cursing them will drive the heroes back to their faiths. To this end they arrange for a special confrontation as the pair leaves a night of revelry at the Silver Eel. For reasons unknown to either Fafhrd or the Mouser, they find themselves leaving by the back door in the kitchen and bribing the cook into brooking no complaints as Fafhrd kicks the bolted door down.

Out the back of the Silver Eel, they find the door opens into a long corridor lit by torches, rather than the burned ashes of their old home as they had been expecting. Believing this to be yet another new temple or cultists' hangout sprung up overnight, the two go walking from room to room.

In each room, the men find their past loves, *all* of their past loves and each is uniformly cold and callous, refusing to make love and generally being catty and waspish. Initially the heroes take this with bemused smiles, which angers the gods who feel their work is failing. The stream of lovers grows colder and more spiteful – Vlana even spits in Fafhrd's face – and the heroes walk on, becoming unnerved and increasingly upset. Yet they do not curse or ask their forgotten gods for comfort, no matter how many times ex-lovers curse them by the names Mog, Issek and Kos.

Finally, when Issek and Kos have given up, Mog works his one last miracle. The Eyes of Ogo and Nemias of the Dusk, both impoverished and miserable from dry spells in their careers, open a door in their apartment to see Fafhrd and the Mouser, just as miserable as they, coming into the room from the other side. The women jokingly order the men into acts of petty servility, such as foot-washing and cooking. Fafhrd and the Mouser are so grateful simply being acknowledged that they comply.

Finally at the end of the evening, the two couples who were bitterest enemies for some time now make peace in the spirit of misery loving company – any company. After their ordeal is over, Fafhrd and the Mouser swear heartily using the gods' names in vain. The gods rest, satisfied.

Campaign Information

The gods of Nehwon are petty beings, reminiscent of the personalities that make up the Greek and Roman pantheons but lacking much of their supposed power. When the gods curse their followers, in jest or in spiteful seriousness, the curses are rarely life-threatening and more inconveniences than anything serious. The gods are like omnipresent mortals with their own petty urges and emotions rather than anything approaching divine perfection.

Games Masters wishing to involve the gods of Nehwon in their campaigns can do so easily enough. A lapsed worshipper makes a promising target for a minor curse or a supernaturally-forced habit, such as stargazing or collecting trash, which the character cannot resist from doing every free moment he gets. More direct intervention such as in *Under the Thumbs of Gods* necessitates a temporary removal of the worshippers from their current location to some 'other realm' where they come face to face with various visions designed to teach them a lesson. It is unlikely the characters can be truly harmed in these encounters – at least not physically.

A potentially interesting story arc could grow around a god that begins to resent a character calling on him too much, perhaps by continued use of Divine Intervention. The god might even take plans to have the character find another deity, a near-forgotten one who *needs* the worship. A cult based around the god might begin to confront or threaten the character, citing that his constant demands for attention are lessening the god's presence for other worshippers.

Whatever the story, Games Masters are advised to lay off the gods where beginning characters are concerned. Though the deities of Nehwon are not overtly powerful by the standards of, say, Sheelba and Ningable, their presence generally goes unnoticed by the majority of Nehwonians and highlighting them from the beginning of a campaign can cause new players to lose perspective, seeing the deities as a major part of day-to-day life – a false fact in the lives of all but the holiest preachers on the Street of the Gods.

SWORDS AGAINST BLOOD

Based on an idea by Mike 'Mordy' Furnedged

This scenario can be used with an established party but is best played as an introductory adventure where the Player Characters do not yet know or trust each other. The events of this scenario will ultimately bring the players together as a party and can serve as the beginning of a campaign. Suggestions are provided throughout this scenario for plot hooks that lead on to other adventures.

It is recommended that the players have very little money and will accept almost any work to earn some extra coin. The players begin the game in Lankhmar and need to travel to the Northlands, specifically Kvarch Nar. Games Masters can change the starting location or destination to fit in with their campaign or other scenarios they are using. There are a number of reasons why each of the Player Characters is travelling and Games Masters can use these reasons to add additional plot hooks if required. Some examples are listed below:

- The character simply wants to travel the lands of Nehwon, seeking adventure and riches.
- The character has been employed or tasked to deliver a letter or item.
- The character has been employed or tasked to find or steal an item from a person or location.
- The character is seeking someone believed to be living in the Northlands, perhaps an old acquaintance, someone who owes the character money or on behalf of a third party.

- There are certain individuals or even a guild in Lankhmar who wish to capture or kill the character. This could be anything from the character owing a large sum of money, stealing from the antagonists or not paying guild fees.
- The character is an escaped slave and must flee Lankhmar.
- Games Masters using a themed adventure group can have the players belong to a cult or guild and are travelling to the same location to begin their career or service.

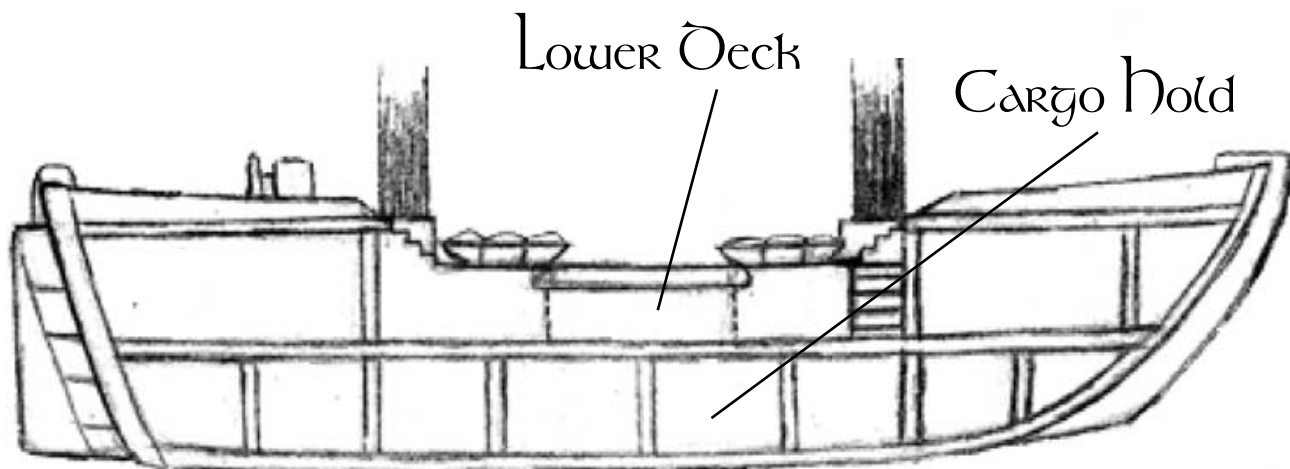
The Dauntless

The players will start the game having either booked passage or making their way to the docks to find a cheap ship. Either way, they will end up onboard the *Dauntless*. It costs 3 Silver Smerduks per day of travel, including food and board in a shared cabin. The captain will agree a fixed fee based on the estimated duration of the journey.

The *Dauntless* is a medium sized sailing ship with two masts and three decks. The ship might be small but its speed and agility makes it ideal for avoiding the pirates of the Inner Sea. The ship has obviously seen some action but it is well maintained by the captain and his motley crew.

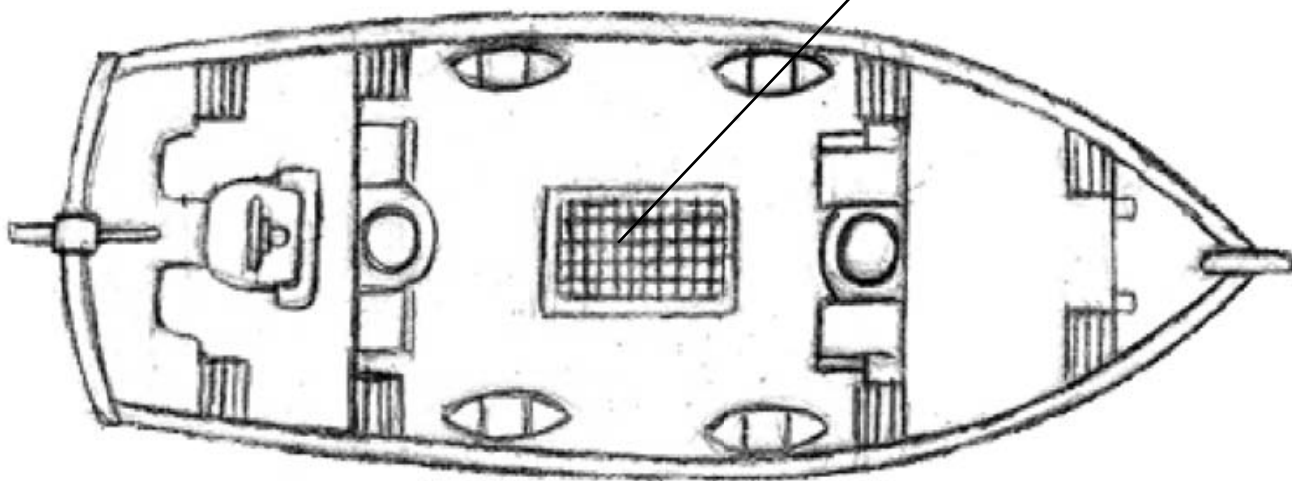
The lower deck has the captain's quarters and three crew cabins that sleep five crewmembers each. Six two-birth passenger

The Dauntless



Upper Deck

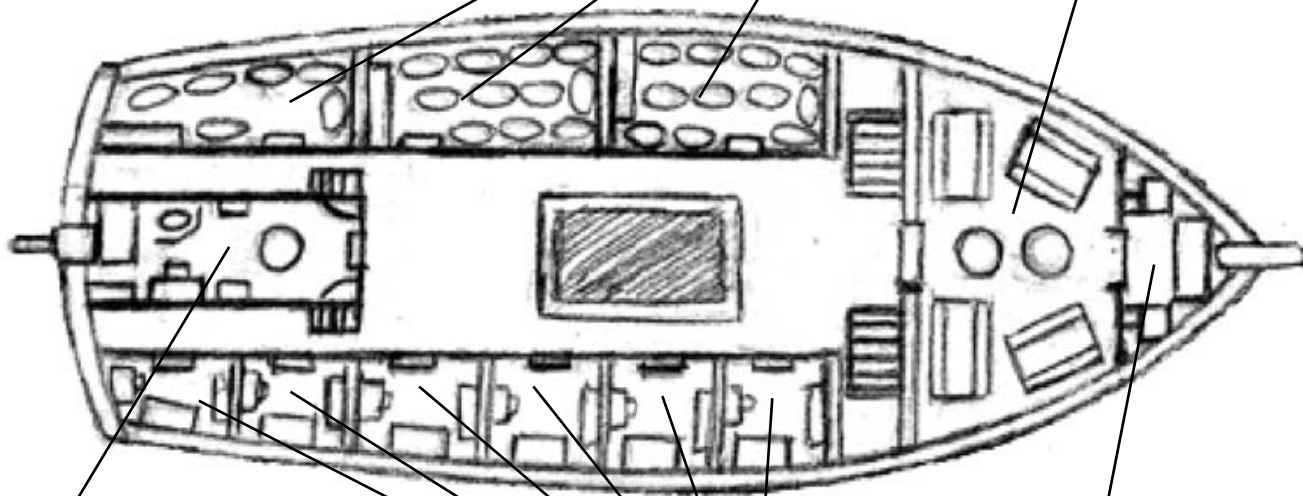
Cargo Hatch



Lower Deck

Crew Cabin

Mess Hall



Captains Cabin

Passenger Cabin

Galley

cabins are also situated on this deck, along with the galley and mess hall. Below this deck is the cargo hold, which can be accessed from cargo hatch on the upper deck and through a small entrance in the galley.

Crewmembers

The *Dauntless* crew is bunch of misfits who would have a hard time finding work on most ships, a fact that the captain uses to his advantage to make the men work hard for a low wage.

Captain Lucas

Lucas is the captain of the *Dauntless* and a shrewd businessman who trades a variety of goods between the major ports of the Inner Sea. Lucas has greying hair tied in a short ponytail and his weathered skin is evidence of constant exposure to the elements. Lucas likes his sleep and gets very irritable if he is woken for no reason, a fact that is well known by the crew.

Characteristics

STR	15
CON	12
DEX	14
SIZ	15
INT	13
POW	10
CHA	13

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/6
4-6	Left Leg	0/6
7-9	Abdomen	1/7
10-12	Chest	1/8
13-15	Right Arm	0/5
16-18	Left Arm	0/5
19-20	Head	0/6

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Scimitar	69% (67%)	1D6+1+1D2
Unarmed	35% (33%)	1D3+1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3
Strike Rank: +14
RQI Skills: Acrobatics 29% (27%), Athletics 44% (42%), Boating 70%, Dodge 44% (32%), Evaluate 43%, Influence 53%, Lore (World) 43%, Perception 38%, Persistence 30%, Resilience 37%, Language (High Lankhmarese) 63%, Shiphandling 83%, Survival 23%
RQII Skills: Athletics 39% (37%), Boating 70%, Evade 33% (31%), Evaluate 43%, Influence 43%, Insight 33%, Lore (World) 41%, Perception 38%, Persistence 30%, Resilience

37%, Swimming 39%, Acrobatics 29% (27%), Commerce 56%, Language (High Lankhmarese) 63%, Shiphandling 83%, Survival 23%

Typical Armour: Leather hauberk (-2%)

Drell

A giant of a man, this friendly barbarian hails from the Cold Wastes. He is a keen gambler who is constantly being accused of cheating by his fellow crewmates. Drell does indeed cheat but he is very good at it and is rarely caught doing so. Despite his less than honest approach to gambling, he is well liked by the crew and he always looks out for his friends.

Characteristics

STR	14
CON	14
DEX	12
SIZ	17
INT	8
POW	11
CHA	12

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/7
4-6	Left Leg	0/7
7-9	Abdomen	0/8
10-12	Chest	0/9
13-15	Right Arm	0/6
16-18	Left Arm	0/6
19-20	Head	0/7

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Great Axe	66%	2D6+2+1D4
Sling	32%	1D6
Unarmed	24%	1D3+1D4

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2
Strike Rank: +10
RQI Skills: Acrobatics 32%, Athletics 46%, Boating 29%, Dodge 30%, Influence 32%, Lore (World) 13%, Perception 24%, Persistence 21%, Resilience 40%, Sleight 42%, Language (Cold Wastes) 58%, Language (Low Lankhmarese) 38%, Shiphandling 48%, Survival 19%
RQII Skills: Athletics 46%, Boating 29%, Evade 29%, Influence 22%, Insight 19%, Lore (World) 21%, Perception 24%, Persistence 21%, Resilience 40%, Sleight 42%, Swimming 46%, Acrobatics 26%, Gambling 48%, Language (Cold Wastes) 58%, Language (Low Lankhmarese) 38%, Shiphandling 48%, Survival 19%
Typical Armour: None

Fegro

A small young lad from Lankhmar who failed to join the Thieves' Guild so joined the crew of the *Dauntless* instead. He now just steals for fun, a habit that is well known by the crew and although it annoys some, to most it has become a game to help pass the time on long journeys. If confronted he will admit to his 'mistake' and return any specified items but if he gets away with the crime he will keep anything he takes and sell them the next time he is in port.

Garuf often bullies Fegro, so the thief tends to keep his distance from the angry Mingol. However when he is feeling particularly brave or bored, Fegro will take something belonging to the Mingol and will then hide behind Drell, the thief's closest friend onboard the ship.

Characteristics

STR	9
CON	8
DEX	12
SIZ	9
INT	8
POW	12
CHA	14

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/4
4-6	Left Leg	0/4
7-9	Abdomen	0/5
10-12	Chest	0/6
13-15	Right Arm	0/3
16-18	Left Arm	0/3
19-20	Head	0/4

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Dagger	31%	1D4+1-1D2
Light Crossbow	42%	2D6

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Strike Rank: +10

RQI Skills: Acrobatics 32%, Athletics 51%, Boating 29%, Dodge 23%, Influence 34%, Lore (World) 31%, Perception 20%, Persistence 32%, Resilience 25%, Sleight 52%, Stealth 53%, Language (High Lankhmarese) 58%, Shiphandling 38%, Survival 26%

RQII Skills: Athletics 51%, Boating 29%, Evade 24%, Influence 34%, Insight 20%, Lore (World) 31%, Perception 20%, Persistence 32%, Resilience 25%, Sleight 52%, Stealth 53%, Swimming 31%, Acrobatics 31%, Language (High Lankhmarese) 58%, Gambling 48%, Shiphandling 38%, Survival 26%

Typical Armour: None

Stop Thief

Fegro provides Games Masters with several potential plot hooks. For a small encounter, Fegro can simply steal something from one or more of the players. Once they discover their items are missing they must find out who has taken them. If this is timed well, a player will only notice an item is missing when they need it most, such as discovering their weapon is gone as they enter combat.

For a longer encounter, Fegro could steal something that one or more of the players must deliver upon their arrival in the Northlands. They might not discover it is missing until after Fegro has sold it in Kvarch Nar and the player must then track down who it has been sold to. This in itself can lead to a number of adventures.

Garuf

Garuf is the only Mingol crewmember and known for his terrible temper, especially when he loses at cards to Drell or when Fegro steals something. Garuf tends to be quite rude to most people, even the passengers and has been known to bully people that are smaller or weaker than he is. Garuf uses the sailor statistics on page 193.

Jallonar

Jallonar is an escaped slave from Quarmall who found his freedom onboard the *Dauntless*. He still has a hard time taking orders, complaining at any task he is given to do and will usually try to palm off the job to someone else. Jallonar only has few friends amongst the crew but his flute playing is a welcome diversion enjoyed by most of his shipmates.

Characteristics

STR	13
CON	14
DEX	13
SIZ	13
INT	10
POW	13
CHA	11

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/6
4-6	Left Leg	0/6
7-9	Abdomen	0/7
10-12	Chest	0/8
13-15	Right Arm	0/5
16-18	Left Arm	0/5
19-20	Head	0/6

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Unarmed	53%	1D3+1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3

Strike Rank: +12

RQI Skills: Acrobatics 23%, Athletics 41%, Boating 33%, Dodge 30%, Influence 31%, Perception 23%, Persistence 33%, Resilience 42%, Language (Native) 60%, Play Instrument (Flute) 41%, Shiphandling 40%, Survival 23%

RQII Skills: Athletics 36%, Boating 36%, Evade 36%, Influence 21%, Insight 23%, Perception 23%, Persistence 33%, Resilience 42%, Swimming 30%, Acrobatics 26%, Gambling 30%, Language (Native) 60%, Play Instrument (Flute) 41%, Shiphandling 40%, Survival 23%

Typical Armour: None

Mallathar

Mallathar is a disgraced Lankhmarine who was discharged from service. He will never speak of this and if pushed he will suggest that the question is never asked again or he will not be held responsible for his actions. He is the most experienced fighter onboard the *Dauntless* and is the first line of defence if the ship is boarded by pirates. Mallathar uses the Lankhmarine statistics on page 190 but only wears a leather shirt and treads (giving a total skill penalty of -4%).

Mellovir

Mellovir comes from Kvarch Nar and his superstitious nature is legendary amongst the crew (even more so than Sten) and rivalled only by his cowardice, nervousness and paranoia. However, his greed has been known to overcome his many weaknesses. For all his flaws, Mellovir he is a good sailor and well liked by the crew, even if they do constantly mock him. Many consider him as the ship's mascot.

Mellovir is also very friendly and will warm to several of the players upon their arrival. In Mellovir's mind, the more friends he makes, the greater protection he has from the many dangers that exist in the world. Mellovir uses the sailor statistics on page 193.

Melthis

Melthis is an old friend of the captain. He is the ship's cook and is rarely seen without a meat cleaver or knife in hand and his bloodstained apron. Worryingly, he is also the ship's doctor and has a terrible bedside manner. Melthis can often be heard shouting and cursing whether he is preparing food or tending to the injured. Most people soon learn not to disturb him whilst he is working.

Characteristics

STR	12
CON	11
DEX	12
SIZ	13
INT	14
POW	13
CHA	6

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-9	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Meat cleaver	44%	1D6
Cooking knife	34%	1D4

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Strike Rank: +13

RQI Skills: Acrobatics 27%, Athletics 39%, Boating 37%, Dodge 24%, First Aid 64%, Influence 26%, Lore (Animal) 19%, Lore (World) 34%, Perception 32%, Persistence 23%, Resilience 29%, Language (Low Lankhmarese) 64%, Healing 57%, Shiphandling 24%, Survival 27%

RQII Skills: Athletics 34%, Boating 37%, Evade 29%, First Aid 64%, Influence 16%, Insight 27%, Lore (Animal) 29%, Lore (World) 43%, Perception 32%, Persistence 23%, Resilience 29%, Swimming 34%, Acrobatics 24%, Gambling 24%, Healing 57%, Language (Low Lankhmarese) 64%, Shiphandling 24%, Survival 27%

Typical Armour: None

Sten

Sten is the eldest member of the crew, a deeply superstitious and religious man. It is rumoured amongst the crew that he used to be a priest but he will neither confirm nor deny the fact. Originating from Ilthmar, he worships the shark god and always mutters a brief prayer before the ship sets sail from port, a habit that some of the crew are not particularly fond of.

Sten has a mysterious air about him. He does not mingle much with the crew but when the mood takes him he will tell ghost stories and dark tales from Ilthmar, usually involving the shark god. Many think he enjoys making his crewmates feel uneasy but he is rarely seen to smile. Sten's odd behaviour makes him something of an enigma to the crew, most of which regard him with curiosity and suspicion.

Characteristics

STR	11
CON	12
DEX	9
SIZ	12
INT	12
POW	14
CHA	9

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-9	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Dagger	40%	1D4+1

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Strike Rank: +11

RQI Skills: Acrobatics 29%, Athletics 40%, Boating 41%, Dodge 37%, Influence 29%, Lore (World) 27%, Perception 46%, Persistence 34%, Resilience 41%, Language (High Lankhmarese) 62%, Lore (Theology) 42%, Shiphandling 52%, Survival 23%

RQII Skills: Athletics 40%, Boating 41%, Evade 38%, Influence 29%, Insight 46%, Lore (World) 39%, Perception 46%, Persistence 34%, Resilience 41%, Swimming 40%, Acrobatics 30%, Language (High Lankhmarese) 62%, Shiphandling 52%, Survival 19%, Theology 44%

Typical Armour: None

Other Sailors

The remaining seven crewmembers will be out of action for most of the scenario after they fall ill in scene two.

Characteristics

STR	12
CON	11
DEX	12
SIZ	13
INT	10
POW	9
CHA	11

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-9	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Dagger	34%	1D4+1

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Strike Rank: +11

RQI Skills: Acrobatics 27%, Athletics 49%, Boating 57%, Dodge 29%, Influence 31%, Lore (World) 35%, Perception 34%, Persistence 19%, Resilience 35%, Language (Native) 60%, Shiphandling 60%, Survival 19%

RQII Skills: Athletics 49%, Boating 57%, Evade 29%, Influence 21%, Insight 19%, Lore (World) 35%, Perception 34%, Persistence 19%, Resilience 35%, Swimming 49%, Acrobatics 24%, Gambling 35%, Language (Native) 60%, Shiphandling 60%, Survival 19%

Typical Armour: None

Passengers

In addition to the players, there are three other passengers that are travelling to Kvarch Nar. Games Masters may also add their own passengers as required for their own story arcs or Non-Playing Character party members. The players might befriend some of the passengers and Games Masters can have them join the party if appropriate.

Brido

Brido is a Mingol slave bound to Nida as her bodyguard. Like his mistress, he never speaks but will defend Nida with his life and never leaves her side. Brido uses the Mingol statistics on page 191 of the Appendix.

Nida

Nida is a quiet woman who keeps to herself to avoid anyone discovering that she is a sorcerer. She spends most of her time in her cabin that she shares with her bodyguard Brido. As the story progresses Nida's secret might be discovered making her a prime suspect for the events that take place later on in the scenario. Nida uses the sorcerer or sorcerer-noble statistics as detailed in the Appendix.

Nida's Destination

Games Masters are free to choose why Nida is travelling to the Northlands and exactly where she is headed. This can be anything from fleeing Quarmall to seeking the Forbidden City of Black Idols.

Nida's destination is another opportunity for Games Masters to add in plot hooks to continue the story once the *Dauntless* arrives at its destination. Ideas include following Nida to discover her plans or she might hire the party to escort her to her destination, especially if Brido is killed. Alternatively she could become an important antagonist that the players must face later on in the campaign.

Pi-paire

Pi-paire is a strange fellow with large pointy canine teeth and coupled with his pale complexion this leads many to believe he is a vampire. Pi-paire insists that he just has unnaturally large teeth and a pale complexion. However, his unusual features could well make him a suspect for the events that happen later on in the scenario.

Pi-paire is actually just a simple trader who has fallen on bad times. All his savings were stolen, presumably by the Thieves' Guild so he is travelling to Kvarch Nar in the hope of starting a new business there. Pi-paire uses the merchant statistics on page 191.

Pi-paire's Lockbox

Although Pi-paire's savings were stolen, he still has a few items of value that he plans to use to set up his new business in Kvarch Nar. These items are kept in a small lockbox that he has brought with him along with his meagre belongings.

Games Masters can decide what Pi-paire keeps in his box and may want to use this as part of their campaign. If Pi-paire befriends any of the players he might ask them to help set up his business or escort him to a buyer for the valuables he carries. Once he establishes himself in Kvarch Nar, Pi-paire could make a useful ally or patron for the players.

Scene One: Setting Sail

The *Dauntless* will set sail from the Lankhmar docks at midday, so if the players have any business to attend to or need supplies they will have time to do so before they leave. The players will most likely arrive at different times but the following description need only be read out once:

The western waterfront is a hive of activity with boats being loaded and unloaded. As you make your way along the docks you hear captains shouting at their crew and traders arguing with porters. The offshore breeze is cooling and fills air with the smell of the sea.

Looking down the piers you eventually see a medium sized ship with the name 'Dauntless' painted across the stern of the ship. The Dauntless looks to be a good seaworthy vessel sporting two masts and a crew of ten or so men who are busy loading crates and sacks into the cargo hold.

Standing on deck by the gangplank is a man of average build with grey hair tied back in a ponytail. The man, presumably the captain, looks up and sees you approaching.

The captain will welcome all passengers aboard the *Dauntless* and will get Jallonar to take them to their allocated cabin.

Jallonar will mumble something under his breath and grudgingly carry any luggage whilst he leads the players to their cabins. Depending on the number of players, some of them may have to share cabins with each other or other passengers on the ship.

Once all of the passengers are onboard and the cargo hold secured, Captain Lucas will give the order to set sail. The journey to Kvarch Nar will take between two to three weeks, depending on the weather.

Getting to Know the Crew

The first few days of travel will be uneventful. There is little to do on a ship at sea and most of the 'excitement' happens below decks in the mess hall during meal times and the frequent gambling sessions. Passengers can use this time to get each other and the crew. The best way to befriend the crew is to gamble with them.

Some of the crewmen and passengers will make an effort to befriend the players, especially Mellovir and Pi-paire. Sten will do his best to unnerve the passengers and Jallonar will lighten the mood with his flute. Garuf will undoubtedly lose his temper and find someone to pick on but Drell will intervene. Drell will also be keen to win some money from the players and can often be found playing cards or dice.

Much of the enjoyment of this scenario comes from the interaction between the crew and passengers onboard the ship. Many of the Non-Player Characters are quirky to the extreme and Games Masters should do their best to bring these characters to life. Once the main plot of this scenario begins in Scene Three, the friendships and animosities formed by the players will play an important role.

Cargo

Some of the players might be curious as to what is being transported in the cargo hold. Access to the hold is not secured but since Melthis spends much of his time in the galley and there are always crewmembers on deck near the top hatch, sneaking in can be difficult. However, this might not deter anyone who is determined to take a peek at the goods.

Should any of the players be successful in gaining access to the hold they will be disappointed to discover that the cargo consists only of grain and other foodstuffs. Supplies for the galley are also kept here including the ships meagre supply of wine and ale.

If the players are discovered here and reported to the captain, he will demand payment for any goods they have consumed. The culprits will also be locked in one of the cabins for 1D3 days.

Scene Two: Sea Sickness

A few days into the journey the unnamed crewmembers will sneak into the cargo hold one night and gorge themselves in a drunken feast. If any of the players want to gain access as

detailed in the last scene the two events can be combined, either by having the player join the crew or one party discovering the other.

Unfortunately for anyone participating in the feast some of the food has perished but goes unnoticed in their drunken state. The next day, everyone who raided the hold will fall ill from food poisoning and will each be bed-ridden for 1D4+3 days. Their illness will be punishment enough but the captain will not be happy and will dock their pay for each day they are sick.

If any of the players ate the food, they must make a successful Resilience test or they too will fall foul of food poisoning. Player Characters can make a Resilience roll every day to see if they recover with a cumulative +10% bonus each day.

A Sailor's Life

Since he is now short-handed, Lucas will ask the passengers to help out. Any with the appropriate skills will work as part of the crew and anyone else who wants to help will be given simple tasks such as scrubbing the decks and standing watch at night. Lucas will pay 4 Silver Smerduks per day to anyone with the Shiphandling skill and 2 Smerduks for those doing simple chores. He will also refund the cost of their room for each day worked, which is a good incentive for the players to help out.

Helping out will earn the players respect from the captain and many of the crew, providing further opportunities for the players to befriend some of the Non-Player Characters. The captain will assign each passenger on the payroll to a crewmember that can show them the ropes and watch over them. This will be arbitrary and passengers can arrange between themselves to swap partners if all parties agree.

The players will soon settle into their new routine and apart from the usual crew interactions, several more days will pass without incident.

Scene Three: Ghost Ship

After the *Dauntless* has been travelling for six days, one of the players will be on night watch with Mellovir.

The night is cold and damp. Even Mellovir seems quieter than usual. In the early hours of the morning he points towards the bow of the ship. 'What's that?'

*For a moment you do not see anything but as your eyes adjust to the darkness beyond the *Dauntless*, you see a faint glow through the night-time fog. You both wait in anticipation as it slowly drifts towards you.*

*'It's a ship,' states Mellovir. Obscured by the fog it is difficult to see clearly but it looks to be of similar size to the *Dauntless*. A single lamp emits a dull yellow glow, revealing no signs of life and giving the ship an eerie quality. The silence is broken by the occasional*

creaking of timbers and lapping of waves against the hull. Mellovir looks uneasy and grabs your arm.

'A ghost ship,' he whispers.

Eventually the ghost ship will drift alongside the *Dauntless* and even though he is terrified by the idea of a ghost ship, Mellovir's greed will overcome him and he will suggest they both board the ship and claim salvage rights on anything they find. If the player suggests they notify the captain or anyone else, Mellovir will do his best to talk them out of it, not wanting to wake the captain or share any of the loot they find. Once the player is convinced, read out the following or adapt it as necessary:

With trembling hands Mellovir ties off the ships and gently pushes you towards the other ship. Knowing that bravery is not Mellovir's strong point you climb onboard the so-called 'ghost ship'. Once onboard, Mellovir follows a short distance behind.

Searching the Ship

The ship has a similar layout to the *Dauntless* so the player should be able to find their way around without too much difficulty. Searching the ship should be a daunting task; the dark unknown, the fog and Mellovir's nervousness will all help convey a feeling of dread as the player explores ship. Games Masters can add to the player's paranoia by asking for Perception rolls and Mellovir will frequently grab onto the player whispering that he heard or saw something.

The bow end of the upper deck is illuminated by a lantern hanging from the foremast. A successful Perception check will reveal several blood stains on the deck but there are no bodies or other signs of struggle. To explore further the player will need a light source or they can take the lantern attached to the mast.

As the player and Mellovir venture into the lower decks, the ominous atmosphere increases as no evidence can be found that would suggest the fate of the crew. As they explore the ship Mellovir will eventually pluck up enough courage and wander off on his own.

Plot Hooks

This is a good opportunity for Games Masters to include clues or items that will lead the players to other adventures once they arrive at their destination. This can be anything from treasure maps to strange artefacts or a corpse clutching a hastily written letter of his dying wish or clues to lost booty.

As the player searches the lower deck, Mellovir will make his way to the cargo hold which is empty but for a few crates of food and a barrel of wine. He will fill a few wine skins he has brought with him and climb back onto the deck.

With your search complete you head back to find Mellovir. As you near the upper deck you hear a brief scream and run towards the sound. You arrive to see Mellovir pushing someone overboard and hear the splash as the unknown assailant falls into the sea.

Mellovir will explain that the man, presumably one of the crew, came out of nowhere and grabbed him. They wrestled for a bit before Mellovir pushed the man away who then fell over the side. If they look over the ship there will be no sign of the body, presumably it has been carried away by the current or has sunk beneath the waves. Mellovir is still in shock from his ordeal and will suggest that they return to the *Dauntless* and not mention this encounter to anyone.

Once you are both back onboard the Dauntless, Mellovir unties the other ship. As the ship drifts away, Mellovir pulls out a wine skin. 'Salvage,' he smiles.

The rest of the watch passes without incident and Mellovir insists that they keep the night's events a secret. No one else need know what happened here.

Scene Four: Unwelcomed Visitor

Unknown to the player who explored the ship, Mellovir was actually attacked by a corpse inhabited by a strange supernatural entity. The entity left the corpse and possessed Mellovir who, under its control, threw the body overboard.

The Blood Mist

The blood mist originated from Rime Isle where it possessed a sailor. Its one weakness is saltwater and once at sea the entity panicked, which resulted in the death of the entire crew. It lay dormant in one of the corpses until a pirate ship happened upon it and the blood mist has been trapped on the Inner Sea ever since, moving from one ship to the next trying to get to dry land.

As its name suggests the blood mist is an intangible being composed entirely of blood. The creature survives by inhabiting a living body and consuming its blood. It is an intelligent creature and to avoid drawing attention to itself it usually drains a small amount of blood before moving to a new host. When entering a new host it takes 1D4 rounds before the entity gains full control of the body.

The creature has full control of its host's body and apart from a slight personality change it is difficult to detect who the blood mist has possessed. Only a successful Perception test (-30% penalty) will reveal a salty residue on the current host. The blood mist has the same skills as its host with a temporary +5 STR bonus.

When the blood mist leaves or is forced from its host, the victim takes 1D4 rounds to recover and has no recollection of the experience. For a short time after they will also have the salty residue described previously. For every two hours the blood mist controlled the host, they suffer one level of fatigue due to blood loss.

The blood mist can only be forced out of its host by showering or submerging the host in saltwater. This will compel the creature to leap out and enter another host.

To move between hosts the creature must take on its natural blood mist state. The mist can pass through most solid objects and can also coagulate into a column with two arm-like appendages. When damaged the blood mist will regenerate 1 Hit Point per round. Any hit location that is reduced to 0 Hit Points will be severed from the main body but reattaches itself as it regenerates. Saltwater damage (as indicated in the table) does not regenerate and can only be healed by draining additional blood from a host at the rate of 1D6 Hit Points per hour.

Saltwater Damage

Quantity	Damage
Mug	1
Wave Splash	1D3
Bucket	1D4
Small Wave	1D6
Large Wave	2D6
Fully Submersed	3D6 per round

Characteristics

STR	20
CON	30
DEX	15
SIZ	30
INT	15
POW	45
CHA	0

Blood Mist Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-12	Lower Body	8/14
13-15	Right Arm	8/11
16-18	Left Arm	8/11
19-20	Upper Body	8/12

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Unarmed	65%	1D4+1D6

Special Rules

<i>Combat Actions:</i>	3
<i>Strike Rank:</i>	+15
<i>Movement:</i>	5m
<i>Traits:</i>	Dark Sight, Night Sight, Life Sense
<i>Skills:</i>	Dodge/Evade 45%, Perception 50%, Persistence 100%, Resilience 100%
<i>Typical Armour:</i>	Supernatural resilience (AP 8, no Skill Penalty)

Passenger

A few hours after dawn, the crew are going about their daily business until an unexpected discovery gathers everyone at the stern.

Everyone crowds around as Drell, dripping with water, climbs onto the deck with a body slung over his shoulder. He gently lays the body on the deck.

'I thought the rudder was acting up and found this fella caught in it. He's in a bad way but he is still alive, just.'

The survivor will be taken below deck where Melthis treats him for his injuries and malnutrition. The man is too weak to talk and soon falls asleep. It will be several days before he is well enough to talk and reveal what he knows.

Mellovir will glance worryingly at the player who explored the ghost ship - this is the same body that Mellovir threw overboard the previous night. They will no doubt want to discuss the situation and Mellovir suggests that they should stick to their original plan of secrecy and deny any accusations that they were involved.

Scene Five: Strange Happenings

Over the next few days, a series of strange events take place onboard the *Dauntless* as the blood mist moves from one host to another. People will act out of character, others will forget conversations or tasks they were given. Games Masters can be creative here, building on the established crew interactions. Some examples include Drell stops gambling, Garuf being nice, Melthis stops swearing, Nida emerges from her cabin and so on.

The players can also be possessed by the blood mist. They will simply find out something they did but have no recollection of doing so. Alternatively, Games Masters may wish to secretly inform a player that they are possessed and to act out of character.

The blood mist's main goal is to get to the mainland. It has learned a lot from its previous encounters and has become far more cunning and subtle in its behaviour. It does not want to be perceived as a threat, for once people are aware of it they try to destroy it and that is when crews end up dead.

Suspicious

Eventually the crew and passengers will start talking, especially those of a superstitious nature. Mellovir and Sten will be convinced that the *Dauntless* has been subject to some strange curse. Most of the crew will agree and then they will start suspecting people as follows:

- The prime suspect will be the survivor they rescued. The strange events only started happening after he was brought onboard. At this point, the blood mist will take the opportunity to kill the survivor to prevent him from revealing any information. The man's death will hopefully be blamed on the superstitious crew.
- Pi-paire will be a suspect due to his unusual appearance. He will of course maintain that he is just a simple merchant.
- The mysterious Nida and her bodyguard will also be high on the list of suspects. If anyone reveals that she is a sorcerer, the crew will form a lynch mob and unless the players intervene, a fight will ensue.
- Sten might also come under suspicion due to his knowledge and worship of the dark gods of Ilthmar.

Any of these accusations can end in bloodshed and a number of factions will form on the *Dauntless* as people take sides to accuse or defend each other.

Scene Six: Blood Mist

The hostilities amongst the crew and passengers will continue until some clues or evidence is found that will actually explain what is going on. Some of the players might take it upon themselves to do this and if they have been paying attention they can investigate any of the following:

- Examining someone if they behave strangely can reveal the salty residue.
- Examining someone after they suffer from memory loss can reveal the residue.
- Questioning someone after memory loss can reveal the last thing the victim remembers, which will usually be talking to someone else. If investigated further, the second person will also have suffered some memory loss prior to the first person.
- A victim might remember seeing a shadow, mist or shape before being possessed.
- After regaining consciousness, a victim might recall seeing somebody else running away.
- The players might seek Nida's advice about this supernatural creature but she will have no knowledge of it. However, if the players get stuck she can always suggest an avenue of investigation.

With any luck, the players should discover that there is an entity moving from person to person and once they know what to look for they can track its progress. Games Masters can also leave other clues as follows:

- Whenever the seas are particularly rough or it is raining, the person possessed by the blood mist will always go below deck to avoid the saltwater. This might draw attention if the captain shouts orders for that person to return to their task.
- If the blood mist does not have the opportunity to change host, the victim will appear pale as their blood is slowly drained. Although this does keep the entity alive it will weaken the host body.
- If the players' are close to discovering the facts, the person possessed by the blood mist will do his best to avoid being examined or questioned.
- The players can find a Non-Player Characters getting up from the floor. The character will explain that they just 'woke up' here but they saw someone running off and can therefore identify the new host.
- One of the players glimpses the blood mist in its natural form as it enters or leaves a host.

Confrontation

If the players' have enough information or discover the current host, the blood mist will confront the players and fight them. The entity will initially fight using the host's body until it can no longer fight, at which point it will leave the host and continue to fight in mist form. The blood mist will continue to fight until there is only one opponent and then simply possess that person. If the entity is losing, it will pass through the timbers to the deck below and find somewhere safe to regenerate.

Games Masters should try to engineer the confrontation to take place on the upper deck. At some point during the fight the blood mist can then be hit by a wave splash, causing it to thrash wildly and dive through the deck. A successful Perception check will also reveal that the blood mist diminished slightly when the water hit it. It is important to show the players that the entity is susceptible to saltwater as this is the only way they can destroy it.

Final Fight

Once the players and crew know how to defeat the blood mist, they can now plan ahead and lure the creature into a trap. However, a few buckets of water will only injure the creature forcing it to escape and heal itself. Pushing it is also unlikely to work due to its enormous size. The only way to defeat the blood mist is to drag the creature into the sea, which unfortunately means that someone has to go down with it.

Being the largest person on the ship, Drell will volunteer to do this but will suggest that someone ties a rope to him so he can be hauled back onboard the ship. However, there is a chance that the entity will simply possess Drell and bring it back onboard the ship so the players will have to be careful.

Although this is the most likely plan, the players might come up with other ideas. As long as the blood mist is underwater long enough it will be destroyed but there is a good chance it will take at least one person with it.

This final fight should be an epic battle. The blood mist can leap from one host to another and will do so more frequently in this fight in an attempt to disorient its opponents. Games Masters should make sure that some Player Characters are possessed and forced to fight the crew and other players. Eventually the blood mist will be lured into position and dragged into the sea.

Epilogue

Once the blood mist has been defeated, life onboard the *Dauntless* will slowly return to normal. The decks will be scrubbed clean of blood and any casualties will be given a sea burial. Melthis will tend to any injuries and the crewmen who suffered from food poisoning will resume their duties, allowing the players to relax for the remainder of the journey.

Once the *Dauntless* arrives at its destination, the passengers can disembark. Lucas will thank the players for their help and pay whatever money is owed to them. He will even ask them to join his crew if they showed any skill at seamanship.

With the players at their destination Games Masters are now free to continue their adventures using plot hooks set up during this scenario or other ideas they might have.



APPENDIX – NPC STATISTICS

Fafhrd 'Beast-Slayer'

Cultural Background: Barbarian (Cold Wastes)

Profession: Bard

These statistics represent Fafhrd at his physical peak during the events of *The Swords of Lankhmar*. Games Masters wishing to present an aging Fafhrd after the loss of his left hand or a youthful Fafhrd before he attains his status as a legend of Lankhmar should modify these statistics accordingly.

Characteristics

STR	21
CON	21
DEX	17
SIZ	17
INT	14
POW	17
CHA	18

Basic Skills

Acrobatics	37%	(21%)
Athletics	130%	(124%)
Boating	61%	
Dodge/Evade	75%	(69%)
Driving	27%	
Evaluate	44%	
First Aid	24%	
Influence	88%	
Lore (Animal)	34%	
Lore (Plant)	14%	
Lore (World)	104%	
Perception	71%	
Persistence	57%	
Resilience	78%	
Riding	54%	(48%)
Sing	130%	
Sleight	22%	(16%)
Stealth	25%	(19%)
Throwing	57%	(51%)
Unarmed	85%	(79%)

Advanced Skills

Language (Low Lankhmarese)	94%
Lore (Cold Wastes)	64%
Language (High Lankhmarese)	84%
Lore (Lankhmar)	70%

Survival	61%
Dance	17%
Disguise	28%
Shiphandling	52%
Streetwise	50%
Tracking	34%

Weapon Skills

1H Axe	140%	(134%)
1H Sword	170%	(164%)
Bow	50%	(44%)

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Bastard sword	170% (164%)	1D8+1+1D6
Hatchet	140% (134%)	1D6+1+1D6
Show bow	125% (119%)	1D8
Unarmed	40% (36%)	1D3+1D6

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3

Damage Modifier: +1D6

Strike Rank: +16

Movement: 4m

Typical Armour: Heavy leather hauberk, leather treads (–6% skill penalty)

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1–3	Right Leg	1/8
4–6	Left Leg	1/8
7–9	Abdomen	2/9
10–12	Chest	2/10
13–15	Right Arm	0/7
16–18	Left Arm	0/7
19–20	Head	0/8

The Grey Mouser

Cultural Background: Freeman

Profession: Thief

These statistics represent the Grey Mouser at his physical peak during the events of *The Swords of Lankhmar*. Games Masters wishing to present an aging Mouser or the youthful 'Mouse' should modify these statistics accordingly.



Characteristics

STR	15
CON	20
DEX	21
SIZ	10
INT	20
POW	17
CHA	18

Basic Skills

Acrobatics	90%	(86%)
Athletics	125%	(121%)
Boating	50%	
Dodge/Evade	140%	(136%)
Driving	27%	
Evaluate	60%	
First Aid	25%	
Influence	90%	
Lore (Animal)	30%	
Lore (Plant)	20%	
Lore (World)	105%	
Perception	80%	
Persistence	65%	
Resilience	58%	
Riding	50%	(46%)
Sing	20%	
Sleight	100%	(19%)
Stealth	80%	(76%)
Throwing	60%	(56%)
Unarmed	40%	(36%)

Advanced Skills

Language (Low Lankhmarese)	94%
Lore (Lankhmar)	80%
Language (High Lankhmarese)	84%
Survival	40%
Dance	39%
Disguise	60%
Shiphandling	44%
Streetwise	70%
Tracking	28%

Weapon Skills

Dagger	140%	(136%)
1H Sword	170%	(166%)
Sling	48%	(44%)

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Dagger	140% (136%)	1D4+1
Rapier	170% (166%)	1D8
Sling	48% (44%)	1D6
Unarmed	40% (36%)	1D3

Special Rules

Combat Actions:	4
Damage Modifier:	+0
Strike Rank:	+20
Movement:	4m
Typical Armour:	Leather shirt (-4% skill penalty)

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/7
4-6	Left Leg	0/7
7-9	Abdomen	1/8
10-12	Chest	1/9
13-15	Right Arm	1/6
16-18	Left Arm	1/6
19-20	Head	0/7

Generic NPCs**Assassin**

The most skilled assassins in Lankhmar are rumoured to be members of the Assassins' Order (see page 112).

Characteristics

STR	15
CON	13
DEX	18
SIZ	14
INT	13
POW	7
CHA	10

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/6
4-6	Left Leg	0/6
7-9	Abdomen	0/7
10-12	Chest	0/8
13-15	Right Arm	0/5
16-18	Left Arm	0/5
19-20	Head	0/6

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Dagger	73%	1D4+1+1D2
Light crossbow	58%	2D6

Special Rules

Combat Actions:	3
Strike Rank:	+16

RQI Skills: Acrobatics 48%, Athletics 53%, Dodge 14%, Influence 30%, Perception 50%, Persistence 17%, Resilience 30%, Stealth 84%, Disguise 30%, Streetwise 27%

RQII Skills: Athletics 53%, Evade 33%, Influence 30%, Insight 20%, Perception 50%, Persistence 17%, Resilience 30%, Stealth 84%, Acrobatics 53%, Disguise 30%, Streetwise 27%

Typical Armour: None

Barbarian

Barbarians originate from the Cold Wastes and the jungles of Klesh but can be found almost anywhere across Nehwon.

Characteristics

STR 13
CON 14
DEX 12
SIZ 16
INT 9
POW 9
CHA 11

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/6
4-6	Left Leg	0/6
7-9	Abdomen	2/7
10-12	Chest	2/8
13-15	Right Arm	0/5
16-18	Left Arm	0/5
19-20	Head	0/6

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Battleaxe 55% (51%)	1D6+1+1D2	
Shortsword	55% (51%)	1D6+1D2
Unarmed	33% (29%)	1D3+1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Strike Rank: +11

RQI Skills: Athletics 35% (31%), Boating 18%, Dodge 31% (27%), Influence 31%, Lore (World) 19%, Perception 33%, Persistence 29%, Resilience 33%, Sing 31%, Stealth 21% (17%), Language (Native) 59%, Lore (Regional) 29%, Survival 28%, Tracking 29%

RQII Skills: Athletics 35% (31%), Boating 18%, Evade 44% (40%), Influence 31%, Lore (World) 28%, Perception

33%, Persistence 29%, Resilience 33%, Sing 31%, Stealth 21% (17%), Swimming 30%, Language (Native) 59%, Lore (Regional) 38%, Survival 28%, Tracking 29%

Typical Armour: Leather hauberk (-4%)

Beggar

Beggars can be found in any city or town. Some are genuine but for most begging is a profession. Beggars often overhear rumours and snippets of conversation making them valuable information gatherers.

Characteristics

STR 7
CON 9
DEX 10
SIZ 10
INT 9
POW 11
CHA 10

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/4
4-6	Left Leg	0/4
7-9	Abdomen	0/5
10-12	Chest	0/6
13-15	Right Arm	0/3
16-18	Left Arm	0/3
19-20	Head	0/4

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Dagger	27%	1D4+1-1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Strike Rank: +10

RQI Skills: Dodge 10%, Evaluate 29%, Influence 30%, Perception 40%, Persistence 31%, Resilience 40%, Sleight 20%, Stealth 30%, Disguise 29%, Language (Native) 59%, Streetwise 54%, Survival 30%

RQII Skills: Evade 20%, Evaluate 29%, Influence 30%, Insight 22%, Perception 40%, Persistence 21%, Resilience 35%, Sleight 20%, Stealth 30%, Disguise 29%, Language (Native) 59%, Streetwise 34%, Survival 30%

Typical Armour: None

Citizen

The population of all towns and cities is largely made up from average citizens, including the crafters, labourers and innkeepers.

Characteristics

STR	8
CON	7
DEX	8
SIZ	13
INT	11
POW	11
CHA	12

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/4
4-6	Left Leg	0/4
7-9	Abdomen	0/5
10-12	Chest	0/6
13-15	Right Arm	0/3
16-18	Left Arm	0/3
19-20	Head	0/4

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Dagger	26%	1D4+1

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Strike Rank: +10

RQI Skills: Dodge 5%, Evaluate 21%, Influence 32%, Perception 32%, Persistence 21%, Resilience 28%, Craft (any) 49%, Language (Native) 61%, Lore (regional) 52%, Streetwise 23%

RQII Skills: Evade 16%, Evaluate 21%, Influence 32%, Insight 32%, Perception 32%, Persistence 21%, Resilience 28%, Craft (any) 49%, Language (Native) 61%, Lore (regional) 52%, Streetwise 23%

Typical Armour: None

Guard

Guards include any type of guards or security staff including the city watch of Lankhmar and the royal guard of Quarmall.

Characteristics

STR	14
CON	12
DEX	13
SIZ	15
INT	11
POW	9
CHA	11

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/6
4-6	Left Leg	0/6
7-9	Abdomen	6/7
10-12	Chest	6/8
13-15	Right Arm	0/5
16-18	Left Arm	0/5
19-20	Head	5/6

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Halberd	57% (40%)	1D8+1+1D2
Club	57% (40%)	1D6+1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3

Strike Rank: +12

RQI Skills: Athletics 52% (35%), Dodge 43% (26%), Perception 55%, Persistence 29%, Resilience 41%, Stealth 28% (11%), Language (Native) 61%, Streetwise 30%

RQII Skills: Athletics 52% (35%), Evade 43% (26%), Insight 20%, Perception 55%, Persistence 29%, Resilience 41%, Stealth 28% (11%), Gambling 26%, Language (Native) 61%, Streetwise 30%

Typical Armour: Cuirass and helmet (-17%)

Lankhmarine

The Lankhmarines are the elite naval soldiers of Lankhmar. The most notable Lankhmarine is Captain General Olegnya Mingolsbane (page 31).

Characteristics

STR	19
CON	18
DEX	19
SIZ	16
INT	12
POW	10
CHA	11

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	1/7
4-6	Left Leg	1/7
7-9	Abdomen	3/8
10-12	Chest	3/9
13-15	Right Arm	3/6
16-18	Left Arm	3/6
19-20	Head	5/7

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
War Sword	118% (104%)	1D8+1D4
Unarmed	54% (40%)	1D3+1D4

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 4
Strike Rank: +16
RQI Skills: Athletics 53% (39%), Boating 34%, Dodge 78% (64%), Influence 32%, Lore (World) 32%, Perception 62%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 63%, Language (Native) 62%, Survival 32%, Shiphandling 42%
RQII Skills: Athletics 53% (39%), Boating 34%, Evade 83% (69%), Influence 32%, Lore (World) 39%, Perception 62%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 63%, Swimming 53%, Language (Native) 62%, Survival 32%, Shiphandling 42%
Typical Armour: Ringmail shirt and leather treads (-14%)

Merchant

Merchants can be found in every town and city or travelling between settlements selling their wares.

Characteristics

STR	9
CON	10
DEX	9
SIZ	13
INT	14
POW	12
CHA	14

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-9	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Dagger	28%	1D4+1

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2
Strike Rank: +12
RQI Skills: Boating 19%, Dodge 6%, Driving 32%, Evaluate 74%, Influence 74%, Lore (World) 34%, Perception 46%, Persistence 22%, Resilience 32%, Language (Native) 64%, Lore (Logistics) 44%, Streetwise 26%

RQII Skills: Boating 19%, Driving 32%, Evade 18%, Evaluate 74%, Influence 44%, Insight 26%, Lore (World) 38%, Perception 46%, Persistence 22%, Resilience 32%, Commerce 73%, Language (Native) 64%, Lore (Logistics) 38%, Streetwise 26%
Typical Armour: None

Mingol

Mingols tend to stay with their tribes roaming the Great Steppes but it is not uncommon to encounter individuals who have left their tribe to travel the lands of Nehwon.

Characteristics

STR	14
CON	15
DEX	14
SIZ	14
INT	7
POW	8
CHA	8

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	1/6
4-6	Left Leg	1/6
7-9	Abdomen	1/7
10-12	Chest	1/8
13-15	Right Arm	0/5
16-18	Left Arm	0/5
19-20	Head	0/6

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
War sword	58% (54%)	1D8+1D2
Nomad Bow	44% (40%)	1D10

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3
Strike Rank: +11
RQI Skills: Athletics 38% (34%), Dodge 30% (26%), Lore (Animal) 32%, Perception 45%, Persistence 18%, Resilience 38%, Riding 57%, Craft (any) 51%, Language (Mingol) 57%, Lore (Steppes) 27%, Survival 25%
RQII Skills: Athletics 38% (34%), Evade 38% (34%), Lore (Animal) 39%, Perception 35%, Persistence 18%, Resilience 38%, Riding 57%, Craft (any) 51%, Language (Mingol) 57%, Lore (Steppes) 34%, Survival 25%
Typical Armour: Leather hauberk and leather treads (-4%)

Noble

Most of the cities of Nehwon have an upper class of nobles, courtiers and diplomats.

Characteristics

STR	9
CON	10
DEX	11
SIZ	14
INT	14
POW	13
CHA	15

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-9	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Rapier	55%	1D8

Special Rules*Combat Actions:* 2*Strike Rank:* +13*RQI Skills:* Dodge 32%, Influence 60%, Lore (World) 39%, Perception 42%, Persistence 33%, Resilience 23%, Riding 39%, Dance 41%, Language (Native) 64%, Lore (Heraldry) 34%, Lore (Regional) 34%*RQII Skills:* Dance 36%, Evade 27%, Influence 50%, Insight 27%, Lore (World) 43%, Perception 42%, Persistence 33%, Resilience 23%, Riding 39%, Courtesy 59%, Language (Native) 64%, Gambling 44%*Typical Armour:* None**Overlord**

These statistics represent the ruling nobles such as overlords, dukes, kings and princes.

Characteristics

STR	11
CON	12
DEX	13
SIZ	14
INT	16
POW	14
CHA	16

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/6
4-6	Left Leg	0/6
7-9	Abdomen	0/7
10-12	Chest	0/8
13-15	Right Arm	0/5
16-18	Left Arm	0/5
19-20	Head	0/6

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Rapier	79%	1D8

Special Rules*Combat Actions:* 3*Strike Rank:* +15*RQI Skills:* Athletics 44%, Dodge 39%, Influence 86%, Lore (World) 56%, Perception 70%, Persistence 64%, Resilience 66%, Riding 62%, Dance 63%, Language (Native) 66%, Lore (Regional) 66%*RQII Skills:* Athletics 44%, Dance 53%, Evade 36%, Influence 86%, Insight 50%, Lore (World) 57%, Perception 65%, Persistence 64%, Resilience 66%, Riding 62%, Courtesy 62%, Language (Native) 66%, Lore (Regional) 72%*Typical Armour:* None**Pirate**

The pirates of the Inner Sea are well known but pirates are also know to operate near other trade routes as well, especially near the major ports.

Characteristics

STR	13
CON	13
DEX	13
SIZ	14
INT	10
POW	9
CHA	11

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/6
4-6	Left Leg	0/6
7-9	Abdomen	0/7
10-12	Chest	0/8
13-15	Right Arm	0/5
16-18	Left Arm	0/5
19-20	Head	0/6

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Scimitar	61%	1D6+1+1D2
Unarmed	53%	1D3+1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3

Strike Rank: +13

RQI Skills: Acrobatics 38%, Athletics 51%, Boating 58%, Dodge 29%, Influence 30%, Lore (World) 35%, Perception 44%, Persistence 29%, Resilience 42%, Language (Native) 60%, Shiphandling 60%, Survival 19%

RQII Skills: Athletics 56%, Boating 58%, Evade 36%, Influence 20%, Lore (World) 40%, Perception 44%, Persistence 29%, Resilience 42%, Swimming 36%, Acrobatics 33%, Gambling 31%, Language (Native) 60%, Shiphandling 60%, Survival 19%

Typical Armour: None

Priest

The priests of Lankhmar might be the most renown but preachers and holy men can be found all over Nehwon.

Characteristics

STR	8
CON	9
DEX	8
SIZ	13
INT	13
POW	16
CHA	15

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-9	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Strike Rank: +11

RQI Skills: Dodge 5%, Influence 70%, Lore (World) 38%, Perception 49%, Persistence 46%, Resilience 35%, Language (Native) 63%, Lore (Regional) 33%, Lore (Theology) 63%, Streetwise 31%

RQII Skills: Evade 16%, Influence 40%, Insight 44%, Lore (World) 41%, Perception 49%, Persistence 41%, Resilience 35%, Language (Native) 63%, Lore (Regional) 46% oratory 61%, Streetwise 31%, Theology 66%

Typical Armour: None

Sailor

Anyone travelling by sea will have a lot of contact with these seafarers. Likewise, sailors are often encountered in port town inns and on the docks.

Characteristics

STR	13
CON	11
DEX	12
SIZ	13
INT	11
POW	9
CHA	11

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-9	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Dagger	35%	1D4+1

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2

Strike Rank: +12

RQI Skills: Acrobatics 27%, Athletics 60%, Boating 78%, Dodge 29%, Influence 31%, Lore (World) 36%, Perception 35%, Persistence 19%, Resilience 35%, Language (Native) 61%, Shiphandling 81%, Survival 20%

RQII Skills: Athletics 55%, Boating 78%, Evade 29%, Influence 21%, Insight 20%, Lore (World) 37%, Perception 35%, Persistence 19%, Resilience 35%, Swimming 55%, Acrobatics 25%, Gambling 36%, Language (Native) 61%, Shiphandling 81%, Survival 20%

Typical Armour: None

Slave

Slaves are common in the lands of Nehwon, especially amongst the Mingol tribes and in the subterranean city of Quarmall.

Characteristics

STR	11
CON	12
DEX	10
SIZ	12
INT	7
POW	8
CHA	10

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-9	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Club	31%	1D6
Dagger	31%	1D4+1
Unarmed	41%	1D3

Special Rules*Combat Actions:* 2*Strike Rank:* +9*RQI Skills:* Athletics 46%, Boating 21%, Dodge 18%, Driving 28%, Perception 45%, Persistence 28%, Resilience 35%, Sing 30%, Stealth 18%, Language (Native) 57%, Lore (regional) 37%, Streetwise 28%*RQII Skills:* Athletics 46%, Boating 21%, Driving 28%, Evade 30%, Perception 45%, Persistence 28%, Resilience 35%, Sing 30%, Stealth 18%, Language (Native) 57%, Lore (regional) 44%, Streetwise 28%*Typical Armour:* None**Snow Woman**

The snow women of the Cold Wastes are known to practice the art of ice magic (detailed on page 153).

Characteristics

STR	10
CON	11
DEX	10
SIZ	13
INT	10
POW	14
CHA	9

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-9	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Special Rules*Combat Actions:* 2*Strike Rank:* +10*RQI Skills:* Athletics 30%, Dodge 12%, Influence 64%, Perception 49%, Persistence 34%, Resilience 35%, Stealth 12%, Language (Low Lankhmarese) 60%, Ice Magic 74%, Lore (Cold Wastes) 20%, Survival 24%*RQII Skills:* Athletics 30%, Evade 25%, Influence 64%, Insight 44%, Perception 39%, Persistence 34%, Resilience 35%, Stealth 12%, Language (Low Lankhmarese) 60%, Ice Magic 74%, Lore (Cold Wastes) 30%, Survival 24%*Typical Armour:* None**Soldier**

All the major cities in Nehwon have their own standing armies that form the main line of defence against would-be invaders. Soldiers are more experienced and better trained than the city watch.

Characteristics

STR	16
CON	14
DEX	15
SIZ	15
INT	10
POW	9
CHA	10

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	2/6
4-6	Left Leg	2/6
7-9	Abdomen	2/7
10-12	Chest	2/8
13-15	Right Arm	1/5
16-18	Left Arm	1/5
19-20	Head	0/6

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
War Sword	81% (71%)	1D8+1D4
Heavy crossbow	65% (55%)	2D8

Special Rules*Combat Actions:* 3*Strike Rank:* +13*RQI Skills:* Athletics 60% (50%), Dodge 55% (45%), Influence 30%, Lore (World) 25%, Perception 39%, Persistence 29%, Resilience 48%, Riding 44%, Language (Native) 60%*RQII Skills:* Athletics 60% (50%), Evade 55% (45%), Influence 30%, Lore (World) 35%, Perception 39%, Persistence 29%, Resilience 48%, Riding 44%, Language (Native) 60%*Typical Armour:* Heavy leather hauberk, heavy leather leggings and leather vambraces (-10%)

Sorcerer

There are several powerful sorcerers encountered in the *Swords* novels such as Hristomilio and Khahkht of the Black Ice. The spells and Magnitude skills listed here are those commonly used by many sorcerers but Games Masters can change them as required.

Characteristics

STR	7
CON	8
DEX	8
SIZ	12
INT	14
POW	17
CHA	9

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/4
4-6	Left Leg	0/4
7-9	Abdomen	0/5
10-12	Chest	0/6
13-15	Right Arm	0/3
16-18	Left Arm	0/3
19-20	Head	0/4

Weapons

<i>Type</i>	<i>Weapon Skill</i>	<i>Damage</i>
Dagger	25%	1D4+1-1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2
Strike Rank: +11
Magic Points: 17
RQI Skills: Dodge 6%, Influence 29%, Lore (World) 44%, Perception 41%, Persistence 47%, Resilience 35%, Language (Native) 64%
RQII Skills: Evade 16%, Influence 29%, Insight 41%, Lore (World) 48%, Perception 41%, Persistence 47%, Resilience 35%, Language (Native) 64%
Magic Skills: Manipulation (Magnitude) 66%, Manipulation (Range) 56%, Cause Disease 66%, Death Spell: Wraith-Fire 66%, Web of Night-Smog 66%
Typical Armour: None

Sorcerer-Noble

These are the nobles of Quarmall who are trained in the ways of sorcery from a young age.

Characteristics

STR	7
CON	10
DEX	9
SIZ	13
INT	15
POW	16
CHA	12

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-9	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Weapons

<i>Type</i>	<i>Weapon Skill</i>	<i>Damage</i>
Dagger	31%	1D4+1-1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2
Strike Rank: +12
Magic Points: 16
RQI Skills: Dodge 26%, Influence 62%, Lore (World) 50%, Perception 46%, Persistence 51%, Resilience 26%, Language (Quarmallian) 65%, Lore (Quarmall) 45%
RQII Skills: Evade 18%, Influence 62%, Insight 46%, Lore (World) 50%, Perception 46%, Persistence 51%, Resilience 26%, Language (Quarmallian) 65%, Lore (Quarmall) 45%, Courtesy 47%
Magic Skills: Manipulation (Magnitude) 61%, Manipulation (Duration) 61%, Manipulation (Targets) 41%, Erode Willpower 61%, Mist of Death-Fear 51%, Summon Ghost 71%
Typical Armour: None

Thief, Second Class

These novices are the most common type of thief found in most cities and the lowest ranked in the Thieves' Guild. Fissif and Ivlis are both second class thieves.

Characteristics

STR	9
CON	13
DEX	16
SIZ	11
INT	12
POW	10
CHA	11

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-9	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Dagger	35%	1D4+1
Shortsword	35%	1D6

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3

Strike Rank: +14

RQI Skills: Acrobatics 36%, Athletics 30%, Dodge 27%, Evaluate 27%, Influence 31%, Perception 32%, Persistence 20%, Resilience 33%, Sleight 46%, Stealth 55%, Disguise 38%, Language (Native) 62%, Mechanisms 38%, Streetwise 26%

RQII Skills: Athletics 30%, Evade 32%, Evaluate 27%, Influence 31%, Insight 22%, Perception 32%, Persistence 20%, Resilience 33%, Sleight 46%, Stealth 55%, Acrobatics 36%, Disguise 38%, Language (Native) 62%, Mechanisms 38%, Streetwise 26%

Typical Armour: None

Thief, First Class

First class thieves are much more experienced and skilled than those of the second class. When Fafhrd and the Mouser first meet Slevyas he is a thief of the first class.

Characteristics

STR	12
CON	14
DEX	18
SIZ	11
INT	12
POW	11
CHA	12

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-9	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5



Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Dagger	60%	1D4+1
Shortsword	40%	1D6

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3

Strike Rank: +15

RQI Skills: Acrobatics 38%, Athletics 40%, Dodge 37%, Evaluate 37%, Influence 32%, Perception 53%, Persistence 21%, Resilience 35%, Sleight 68%, Stealth 72%, Disguise 40%, Language (Native) 62%, Mechanisms 45%, Streetwise 33%

RQII Skills: Athletics 40%, Evade 36%, Evaluate 37%, Influence 32%, Insight 33%, Perception 53%, Persistence 21%, Resilience 35%, Sleight 68%, Stealth 77%, Acrobatics 36%, Disguise 40%, Language (Native) 62%, Mechanisms 45%, Streetwise 33%

Typical Armour: None

Thief, Master

Master thieves are extremely rare with no more than a handful in each city if at all. Krovas is a master thief.

Characteristics

STR	13
CON	15
DEX	19
SIZ	11
INT	14
POW	12
CHA	12

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/6
4-6	Left Leg	0/6
7-9	Abdomen	0/7
10-12	Chest	0/8
13-15	Right Arm	0/5
16-18	Left Arm	0/5
19-20	Head	0/6

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Dagger	72%	1D4+1
Shortsword	42%	1D6

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 4

Strike Rank: +17

RQI Skills: Acrobatics 44%, Athletics 47%, Dodge 43%, Evaluate 59%, Influence 42%, Perception 66%, Persistence 32%, Resilience 47%, Sleight 74%, Stealth 83%, Disguise 46%, Language (Native) 64%, Mechanisms 58%, Streetwise 36%

RQII Skills: Athletics 47%, Evade 38%, Evaluate 59%, Influence 42%, Insight 36%, Perception 66%, Persistence 32%, Resilience 47%, Sleight 74%, Stealth 88%, Acrobatics 44%, Disguise 46%, Language (Native) 64%, Mechanisms 58%, Streetwise 36%

Typical Armour: None

Thug

Thugs represent the criminal element found in most cities and towns and includes bullies, extortionists, mercenaries and racketeers. Pulg and Basharat are examples of thugs, as are members of the Slayers' Brotherhood.

Characteristics

STR	15
CON	14
DEX	14
SIZ	15
INT	9
POW	9
CHA	7

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/6
4-6	Left Leg	0/6
7-9	Abdomen	1/7
10-12	Chest	1/8
13-15	Right Arm	1/5
16-18	Left Arm	1/5
19-20	Head	0/6

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Club	69% (65%)	1D6+1D2
Dagger	69% (65%)	1D4+1+1D2

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3

Strike Rank: +12

RQI Skills: Athletics 39% (35%), Dodge 34% (30%), Evaluate 24%, Influence 32%, Perception 48%, Persistence 19%, Resilience 38%, Stealth 24% (20%), Language (Native) 59%, Streetwise 46%

RQII Skills: Athletics 39% (35%), Evade 43% (39%), Evaluate 24%, Influence 32%, Insight 28%, Perception 48%, Persistence 19%, Resilience 48%, Stealth 24% (20%), Language (Native) 59%, Streetwise 46%

Typical Armour: Leather shirt and leather treads (-6%)

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