

A complete campaign module set in the world of HAVEN

CITY OF THE SACRED FLAME



Gamelords, Ltd.



INDEX OF KEY ABBREVIATIONS

Throughout the Haven series, as well as the accompanying books in the Thieves' Guild series, certain abbreviations are commonly utilized. The meanings of these various abbreviations are summarized below.

- AC - Armor Class:** represents the protective value of armor, shielding, and skin carried by a character or NPC
- APP, AP - Appearance:** a measure of the character's personal beauty or comeliness
- BT - bit(s):** a small coin made of iron; 10 BT = 1 CP
- CDN, CO - Coordination:** a measure of the character's dexterity, the ability to make correct deliberate physical movements
- CP - copper piece(s):** a small coin made of copper; 5 CP = 1 SP
- D (3D6, 1D8, xDy, etc.) - Die:** the number (x) of dice of (y) sides to be thrown while resolving a combat or particular situation
- DSC, DN - Discretion:** a measure of the character's common sense, memory, and ability to think clearly under pressure
- EAC - Effective Armor Class:** represents the total effect of skin or various armoring devices used or worn by beings, plus - in the simple method for resolving combat - dodging ability
- FRP(G) - Fantasy Role Playing (Game):** any of a general class of games using constructed or randomly generated characters to adventure in a make-believe medieval land of high fantasy
- GM - GamesMaster:** the referee or moderator of an FRP game; considered to be the "god" of the particular universe s/he has created, in which players adventure
- GP - gold piece(s):** a small coin minted from gold; coins usually weigh 100 to the pound; 1 GP = 10 SP = 50 CP = 500 BT
- HTK - Hits To Kill:** the amount of damage that a character can withstand before dying or becoming unconscious or comatose
- HACØ - Hits Armor Class Ø (Zero):** number that must be equaled or exceeded on the roll of 1D20 to strike an unarmored foe; an enemy's EAC and dodging ability are added to HACØ to get HP
- HP - Hit Probability:** the chances of striking an opponent
- INT, IQ - Intelligence:** a measure of the character's ability to learn and to profit from experience
- MA - Movement Allowance:** the number of hexes (normally 5' from side to side) that a character can move in one 15' melee round
- MAG, MG - Magnetism:** a measure of the character's charisma, attractiveness, sex appeal, personality, and/or leadership
- MGR, MR - Magic Resistance:** a measure of the character's innate ability to resist magic spells and other arcane effects
- mr - melee round:** 15 second span used to regulate the flow of play in combat; minutes and hours are used normally
- REF, RF - Reflexes:** a measure of the character's reaction speed, the time it takes to make instinctive movements
- SP - silver piece(s):** a small coin minted from silver; 10 SP = 1 GP
- SR - Saving Roll:** an attempt to accomplish a feat extraordinary; this is usually tested by rolling 2D12 against a given requisite
- STM, SM - Stamina:** a measure of the character's ability to endure hardship or withstand wounds
- STR, ST - Strength:** a measure of the character's physical power, brute force
- TAL, TL - Talent:** a measure of the character's ability to use and/or understand magic

CITY OF THE SACRED FLAME

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Foreword

City of the Sacred Flame is a complete campaign supplement describing the inhabitants and ongoing activities of the city of Zal' Akhen, a barbarian fortress and trading enclave with a permanent population of about 4000 people. This city lies about 800 miles north of the **Free City of Haven** (the subject of a number of other campaign supplements available from Gamelords) in a small, geographically enclosed region known as the High Valley. This book can be utilized in connection with other Gamelords supplements, but is also designed for stand-alone play, so that GMs may place the city (or the entire High Valley region) on his own campaign maps (Within the Tyrant's Demesne, a campaign module

describing the traditional foemen of Zal' Akhen, the inhabitants of the city of dhar Ankhes, will be available from Gamelords in the near future).

We hope that you and your players will enjoy visiting the city of Zal' Akhen and its primitive splendors, and that it becomes a permanent part of your campaign universe. We will be glad to answer any questions you may have about the material presented in this book, if they are accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope (see the catalog on the inside back cover of this book for our mailing address). Until we meet again, happy adventuring, and may the Flame always light your path!

Historical Background and Introduction

The High Valley

Generations upon generations ago, when the old forest of taru'e'alena was still young, the growing civilization of the allied races of the Dorian River valley made what would be the last in a series of northward expansions upriver, negotiating the rugged defile that would later become known as the Pass of Swords to enter the southwest corner of the great Tamwari Valley. There they built a small stockaded trading outpost which they called dhar Samil, "the Tower of the Gateway" in the dialect of their area. As the years passed, the settlement grew from outpost to town to small and bustling city. The people of dhar Samil prospered among the fertile lands of the Valley and rapidly spread eastward, discovering and befriending the semi-intelligent tamturiki (the beaver-like creatures that inhabit the murky Tumwar fens), and encountering the strange and not quite human caretakers of the massive oaks and cedars of taru'e'alena, powerful in the lore of earth and sky and dedicated to the perpetuation and protection of their richly timbered domain. Most importantly, the Samili expeditions soon came into contact — and began to trade — with the indigenous human population of the area, the barbarian tribes of the Sabahi and Gamuran plains who tamed and bred the wild horses and obtained leather, meat and hides from the other beasts that roamed the Valley.

The men of dhar Samil continued to maintain close economic and cultural ties with the towns of the Upper Dorian, and built up a civilized island on the edge of the wilderlands. In time, the city became an adopted home to many of these neighbors as well.

As the armies of the Namori Empire completed their conquest of the Ten Cities region, many craftsmen, skilled laborers, and learned men whose views did not coincide with those of the new regime chose to seek more hospitable climes or were forced to flee. In response to the Namori threat, the new and old inhabitants of Samil fortified their city, renaming it dhar Ankhes (the Tower of Guard). The Namori forces did indeed venture into the Pass of Swords a decade later, only to discover firsthand the ready defensibility of that narrow rock-riven stretch of land. Dhar Ankhes itself remained unthreatened and its inhabitants rejoiced — little realizing that an even greater threat to their hard-won security lay close on the horizon.

In addition to the general exodus, a number of powerful wizards and magical artificers — all too well aware of the strict controls and surveillance placed on practitioners of the arcane arts in Namori lands — also came to the High Valley to avoid such persecution. Some settled in dhar Ankhes, while others sought the solitude of the valley's encircling peaks or the secrets

of the woodland loremasters. A final, fairly small number of wizards (many of whom were already inured to the adventurer's life) settled in or wandered among the tribes, performing various conjuring services as the need arose (often to the distress of the local shaman) and seeking knowledge wherever it lay. Among this last category was a human mage of considerable prowess named Zaf'ak, whose specialty and particular interest was the power of fire. His coming would soon change the face of the High Valley forevermore.

The Rise of Zaf'ak

At the time of Zaf'ak's coming to the valley, the natives of the plains remained in a fairly pastoral state, despite their periodic contacts with "civilization". The plains people remained basically among their own, and although conflicts among tribes over territory, herds or water rights were not unheard of, they remained the exception rather than the rule. Indeed, on the eve of summer each year, representatives from each of the tribes would come to the Place of Gathering on the Gamur River to renew their troth to the earth in a complex and exhausting ritual that would last into the following dawn. Though the tribesmen willingly traded their horses and hides for items unavailable to them — sometimes swords or other worked metal tools, but more often ornamental goods or talismans for ceremonial use — they mistrusted much of the Samili technology, and the latter's apparent disregard for the sanctity of the earth. They knew little (and cared less) about cities, and possessed no apparent desire for expansion or dominion. Yet these people would be forged by the anvil of Zaf'ak's will into a powerful instrument of conquest.

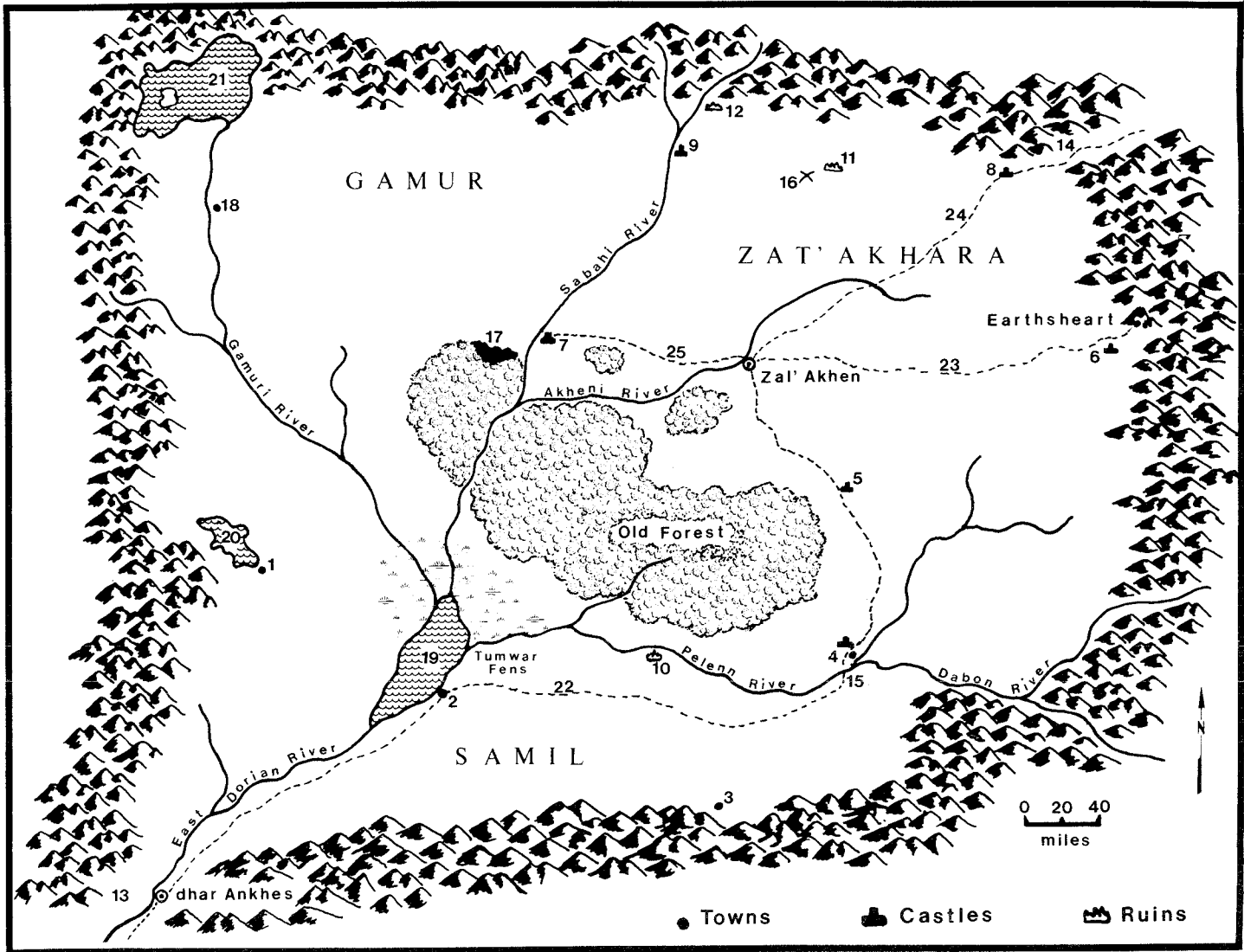
Zaf'ak spent the first few years of his residence in the valley wandering among the plainsmen, and discovered that his mastery of the forces of fire earned him the ready awe and respect of most natives. Sometime during this period, the wizard disappeared alone into the northern hills, following the fragments of tales from the tribal loremasters (and his own sensory awareness of emanations of great power somewhere in the area) in search of a mysterious (and long-lost) place where great flames were said to burn continuously, wild and white-hot. Almost four more years elapsed before the by now half-starved mage located the labyrinthine cave complex now known as Earthsheart. What happened thereafter depends greatly on the storyteller's perspective. The Samili assert that Zaf'ak found an artifact of great power and learned how to tap this device to greatly amplify his already refined arcane skills. The plainsmen say, however, that Zaf'ak awakened an elemental fire-spirit of immense power who had lain restively waiting there since the beginning of Time, and fused with that spirit — in that moment becoming a god. Whether god or man, Zaf'ak emerged from Earthsheart a vastly more potent figure than the one who entered, with even greater control over the primal powers of flame, and a heretofore unobserved warrior's skill.

Zaf'ak's first demonstration of his new powers was made to a small group of wanderers from the casanu tribe, on the night of the ritual of the New Moon. Zaf'ak appeared among them suddenly in the midst of a great ball of fire, a corona of red-orange flame above his head, and promised them "everlasting life and power beyond imagining" in exchange for their fealty and aid

in "cleansing the earth of the Unbelievers". Though the group's shaman denounced these promises as a fraud and attempted to mount resistance, his magics proved no match for Za'tak's power, and he was bested (and riven by flames into a lifeless husk) in moments. In a similar fashion, Za'tak and a continually growing army of supporters who recognized his claims to godhood and to their loyalty moved among the other tribes of the Sabahi, slowly, one by one, gaining their vows of allegiance or — in the cases of the tribes of Akhen and Torlach, who categorically rejected these terms — defeating them so utterly in battle that they ceased to

exist as viable units. One legend (false, but emblematic of the view of Za'tak as bringer of divine wrath and vengeance) holds that the bluff upon which the upper city of Zal' Akhen was constructed was built upon a mound of Akheni skeletons, covered over with the earth they died trying to defend.

Within sixteen months, all the lands east of the Sabahi accepted the dominion of the God-King Za'tak. Though the Samili historians view the ease of his conquest as evidence of the weak will and gullibility of the eastern tribes, such a premise ignores a number of circumstances that aided Za'tak in his efforts.



The High Valley

- | | | |
|---------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Rufan | 10. Cadrah | 18. The Gathering Place |
| 2. Tam Terras | 11. Torlach | 19. Lake Tanwar |
| 3. Purlieu | 12. Elbram | 20. Lake Rufan |
| 4. Pelenn | 13. Pass of Swords | 21. Crater Lake |
| 5. Urusah | 14. Casanu Pass | 22. North Road |
| 6. Eastmarch | 15. Ford of Shalish | 23. Pilgrimage Road |
| 7. Thallen | 16. Battlefield of Torlach | 24. Trader Road |
| 8. Casan | 17. The Wrath | 25. Thallen Road |
| 9. Sabah | | |

Foremost, there was Zaf'ak's raw power — a force more potent than the tribal loremasters and shamen had ever encountered. Added to this was the strength of the mage's naturally high magnetism and personal charisma (the proverbial "look of eagles"), now further enhanced by the fervor with which the wizard's fused (or was it possessed?) personality espoused his holy purpose. Finally, many natives themselves were unhappy with the recent course of events in the valley, and receptive to the God-King's promises of change and a new order. The Samili settlers were encroaching on their plains, mining the mountains, and building fast-growing settlements along the river on both sides of Lake Tamwar, threatening the very structure of their lives with their rapid expansion. The natural, often petty rivalries between the tribes had kept them from uniting to face their common foe — the Flame now brought them all together.

All, that is, except the natives of the Gamuran plains. The horse-tamers remained aloof to the God-King's impassioned pleas, loyal to their winged horse-goddess, Kavira, and skilled enough in the arts of horsemanship and war to make an unappetizing foe for Zaf'ak. The Gamurans remained aloof and apart, mistrusting both Zaf'ak and the urban ways of the Samili, at times acting in concert with one or the other when the omens were favorable but just as likely to break off such alliances without notice. In sooth, they viewed — and continue to view — both their neighbors as abominations which they cannot expect to overpower, but hope their sacred Earth Mother will someday claim.

The Reign of the God-King

In the two years following the battle of Torlach, which dispersed the last hostile Sabahi tribe, Zaf'ak began the equally difficult task of consolidating his gains. He assembled his most fervent supporters into religious and military cadres that were the beginnings of today's High Priesthood and Legion of Fiery Vengeance. These units served a threefold purpose:

- 1) to spread the faith and word of Zaf'ak;
- 2) to provide a focus for natives striving to make a place for themselves in the new hierarchy; and
- 3) most importantly to Zaf'ak, to provide a reliable last line of defense against possible revolt.

Almost immediately, these cults began to develop an elaborate mythos to explain the source and nature of Zaf'ak's powers and ideas, enshrouding his life and deeds in mysteries that only further intensified the general belief in Zaf'ak's godhood.

On the second anniversary of Torlach's fall, Zaf'ak began his most ambitious project. He commanded his people to construct a central meeting place which was to be the fortress and storehouse of the new nation. This walled city, called Zal' Akhen ("the Triumph") was built on the former ritual grounds of the vanquished akheni tribe, around a bluff that divided the city into upper and lower sections, and provided an excellent vantage of the surrounding region. Later, he sent teams of Priests and Legionnaires out into the plains to supervise the erection of similar (albeit much smaller and simpler) strongholds in each of the four major tribal territories (casan, thalien, urusah, and sabah), with a fifth watch tower placed in Eastmarch, at the meeting place at the base of the pilgrimage trail to Earthsheart.

The natives who carried out these wishes had little immediate use for their handiwork, carrying out their tasks primarily out of a desire to glorify and please the God-King. Once completed, however, these fortresses played a valuable role in keeping the new nation together in times of crisis (though as events would have it, it would be Zaf'ak's successors rather than the God-King that would reap most of these benefits).

During this period, Zaf'ak led several pilgrimages to Earthsheart, building more elaborate worship chambers, conducting great sacrifices that would release great spasms of pure force and flame from the deep pits in the lowest levels of the caves, and initiating still others into the Brotherhood of the Flame. Elsewhere, he devoted significant effort to assembling and training a coherent fighting force.

In the seventh (and ultimately final) year of Zaf'ak's reign, the rift between the barbarians and the Samili split open like a gaping wound. The stated cause of these hostilities was a famine in the lower plains, which was blamed on damage caused by the Samili settlements along the river. In fact, however, it would appear that the God-King and his minions simply believed themselves ready, and seized this modest provocation with a vengeance. Leaving his still half-built city in the care of a seneschal, Zaf'ak moved south against Pelenn, a long-standing Samili colony, sacked it, and burned it to the ground. The attackers then successfully feinted toward the villages and outposts along the upper Dorian, diverting a sizable portion of the hastily assembled Samili forces to their defense, while the main native force swung southward toward dhar Ankhes. The two armies clashed twice inconclusively, as the many potent wizards of the city held their own against Zaf'ak, but the Samili forces ultimately retreated in each case, yielding valuable ground. The tide then dramatically swung further toward the barbarians as the Gamurans, drawn by a vision of a great all-consuming fire, threw in their lot with the God-King and added their considerable might to his advancing forces.

Scant weeks later, Zaf'ak reached the gates of dhar Ankhes, and besieged the city. After forty days of sporadic fighting and 'cat-and-mouse' duels of magical power, Zaf'ak began a massive conjuration designed to completely sunder the city's gates with great gouts of elemental flame. At a critical moment in this process, several high-ranking Samili mages, working in concert, made a completely unexpected assault, adding their own fire-summoning powers to those of Zaf'ak in a last-ditch attempt to overload the latter's absorptive capacities. The plan worked to perfection, consuming the God-King in the very conflagration he had unleashed — yet even as he burned, Zaf'ak spoke in a voice like thunder, commanding his followers to keep troth at Earthsheart, and vowing that he would someday return to lead them to his final vengeance.

The Growth of the Faith

Though slightly more than three centuries have passed since Zaf'ak's fall, the years have only served to intensify native belief in Zaf'ak's godhood. The God-King's defeat at dhar Ankhes, it was said, did not deny his holiness, it only affirmed that the time was unripe for his triumph. The High Priesthood took on much

greater importance within Zaf'akhari society, becoming the sole interpreters and teachers of his words and deeds and the repository of much of his magical knowledge. The descendants of Zaf'ak's seneschal became the first Chieftains of the nation, acting as the 'voice' of their departed Master, while other great families were appointed 'holders' of the other tribal strongholds. The rituals and ceremonies conducted in Zaf'ak's name were greatly expanded in number and complexity (including major pilgrimages each year commemorating the finding of Earthsheart and the conflagration of Zaf'ak). Over the years, many otherwise unexplainable events were claimed to be manifestations of Zaf'ak, keeping the memory of his great power alive. The average tribesman remains a true believer in the cult, and his belief will remain unshaken until the powerful mythos surrounding Zaf'ak can be undermined — a very difficult, if not impossible, task.

To the south, too, Zaf'ak's rise and passing wrought permanent changes in the Samili way of life. Both dhar Ankhes and its two sister towns, Rufan and Tam Terras, began to maintain small, permanent armed forces, which were supplemented in times of tension by city-trained militia and mercenaries. More importantly, perhaps, the question of the seriousness of the threat posed by the barbarians in the post-Zaf'ak era has created serious political schisms between the city's ruling and merchant classes and among the arcane community. Controversies constantly rage between those who believe that the city's attentions should remain focused on fostering productive trade and political relationships with the towns of the southern Valley, and those that assert that the growth of dhar Ankhes will remain constrained until the northern tribes are vanquished and their natural resources properly exploited.

There have been several major offensives undertaken by both sides over the years, resulting in a slow but steady gain in the amount of territory under Samili control (though Pelenn, rebuilt as a Zaf'akhari stronghold, has remained in native hands except for two short periods of Samili occupation). Neither side has been able to land a crushing blow, however. In part, this is due to Samili inability to get all of its power groups fully committed to a war effort, in part, to the ephemeral and often capricious influence of the Gamurans. Moreover, it often appears that events (e.g., natural disasters, sudden and unexplained deaths of key personnel, etc.) often mysteriously conspire to keep this conflict balanced and inconclusive. Whether this is merely Fate, the deliberate plan and design of powerful third parties like the loremasters of the woodlands or the reclusive mages of the mountains, or the manifestation of Zaf'ak's continuing power, is up to the individual GM.

The City of Zal' Akhen

Today, the city of Zal' Akhen is the center of the barbarian land of Zaf'akhara: the crossroads of the many diverse tribes that comprise the country, the home of intrigue and the struggle for power surrounding the nation's Chieftain, the seat of the religion of the God-King Zaf'ak, and the hub of all commerce. For all its strategic importance, however, it is a small city when compared to a metropolis like Haven, having only 5,000-

6,000 inhabitants at any time (some of whom are transients, foreign traders and men of the countryside visiting the city to buy and sell goods, or pilgrims come to pay obeisance to Zaf'ak). The city's architectural appearance befits the spare, militaristic culture of Zal' Akhen, consisting mainly of low-roofed adobe, wood or thatched structures and a modest number of stone buildings (with little ornamentation). It is no urban paradise, to be sure — yet it is unmistakably the pulse of the strange provincial lifestyle of the people of Zaf'akhara.

Zal' Akhen was built on a bluff above the Akheni River, with its outlying boroughs descending to the banks. The city is divided into two sections: the Upper City, containing the Castle, the High Temple of Zaf'ak, and a few buildings of government required by the warrior Council; and Trade Town, whose outer perimeter houses the merchants and the Legion of Fiery Vengeance, the fanatic warrior unit devoted to the cult of Zaf'ak. Both segments of the city are walled. The inner stronghold is guarded by a high, double-thickness wall of stone whose sturdy exterior has been enhanced by magical enchantments, including Fireproofing. Conversely, the wall around Trade Town, albeit also of stone, is older and poorly kept up, as if to imply that the city felt no danger from that quarter. The two quarters of the city are connected by a single pair of massive stone gates, graven with images of the God-King Zaf'ak in his final triumph of vengeance on the Unbelievers (who are strangely reminiscent of the Samili in this depiction).

The Upper City is dominated by two structures, the solid stone walls of the Chieftain's Castle, and the marble dome of the God-King's temple. The former is a stark, imposing edifice, originally designed with defensibility rather than splendor in mind, and little changed in the ensuing centuries, despite the increased political importance of its occupant. The temple shows a much more majestic style, reflecting the opulence and wealth of the cult, and the contributions of the faithful (and fearful). Its exterior is a prodigious display of stonecarving, and the amphitheater is easily capable of holding the thousands of worshippers who throng to Zal' Akhen for Holy Days; the rest of the complex is an elaborate maze of chambers and passageways wherein the religion's High Priests conduct one of their principal activities — the production of magical artifacts. The Upper City also contains the complex of buildings that house the elite Chieftain's Guard, and the great storehouses used to hold the grain and supplies tithed to the war effort by the other Holds of the country.

The lower portion of the city is divided into three distinct segments. To the north lie the barracks of the Legion of Fiery Vengeance, some 500 strong; the low-slung buildings used to house, feed, and train these men comprise their own microcosmic city, which few outsiders ever enter. The center of Trade Town is dominated by the huge open-air Bazaar, where the native artisans of Zaf'akhari and foreign traders come to exchange their wares. This area is a hodge-podge pattern of tents, stalls and pavilions, filled with a myriad sights and smells, and a cast of characters that changes from week to week. The web of streets leading outward from the Bazaar houses the merchants and the service tradesmen who permanently reside in Zal' Akhen, and the few

establishments that provide food, lodging, and entertainment for travelers of means. The southwestern corner of town is a nondescript mud flat along the banks of the river) alternately known as 'the Parade Ground' and 'the Gauntlet'. This strip of land is a source of continuing controversy — originally reserved for the military's use as a practice ground for their maneuvers, the area is continually encroached upon by squatters; periodically, the interlopers are forcibly expelled, and their crude mud huts razed — only to have them return again in scant weeks. The squatters themselves are the dregs of the culture, men and women desperate enough to try anything for the right price.

Just east of the outer gates of the city lie the corrals and barns of the Horse Market. The horse trade is an important segment of Za'takhari economic activity, for the wild horses caught on the Gamuran plains are highly prized throughout the Valley and in neighboring lands. The Market does a brisk business in beasts year-round, and is often a good place to find employment among the nomadic groups of horsemen who round up and break these herds.

Za' Akhen is a unique institution in the land, the only city of a people traditionally nomadic — but more importantly, a city which was planned according to the design of the God-King (though the execution of that plan was accomplished for the most part after his death). It is almost certain that the Za' Akhen of today is not quite what the God-King Za'tak had in mind.

Political Structure

The political hierarchy of Za' Akhen (and of the entire lands of the Za'takhari) is comprised of an odd mixture of the sacred and profane, of symbolic titles and ritual combined with tough behind-the-scenes power brokering. As befits a government whose stated purpose is to maintain the works of the God-King in a state of readiness for his return, its role is largely that of caretaker rather than ruler, its power passive rather than active. Nonetheless, the appointed authorities of Hold and city are said to speak with the voice of Za'tak, and their words (and demands) tend to be accepted by the vast majority of the native populace without question.

The formal governing authority of the lands of the Za'takhari is the Council of Elders, a ten man body comprised of the Chieftain of Za' Akhen, the Holders of the six tribal steadings (including Pelenn), and three representatives from the Za'takan priesthood. The Council meets once annually during the two weeks surrounding winter solstice (the Chieftain also officially holds court during this same mid-winter period, making it a time of great feasting and festivities as well), and may be summoned to emergency session during times of war or other crises. The Council's functions include the setting of tithing levels for each of the Holds to the central stores; consideration of cases of "high justice" (treason, heresy); selection of replacements for vacancies in the Council ranks; and the overall planning of trade and defense policy.

Administrative control of the holds is usually passed along hereditary lines within extended family units, unless a line dies out or has somehow disgraced

itself by its conduct as rulers. In a similar fashion, the Chieftain of Za' Akhen has been drawn from the thalen tribe for more than 200 years (due in no small part to the long-standing alliance between the thalen and casanu tribes, which tend to control between them the votes of the Eastmarch Hold and the representative of the existing Chieftain as well). The three Priesthood representatives to the Council are chosen by the cult itself, although any Priest who has sufficiently angered his peers can be removed by a unanimous vote of the seven non-cult Council members. It is uncommon for the Archpriest himself to sit upon the Council, though this has occurred in the past (Hrinah, the current cult leader, does not do so).

Since the Chieftain, as head of the Za'takhari army, is often not present in the city, he follows the tradition of Za'tak and selects a seneschal to act in his name during his absences. The Council as a whole also appoints a Warder for Za' Akhen itself, who is responsible for collecting the city's own contributions to the general stores and supplies of the nation, and for the maintenance of common order and justice within the city proper. The seneschal and Warder are usually both selected from among the city's modest cadre of career bureaucrats, a method guaranteed to provide officials familiar with the eccentricities of local affairs. The current Chieftain, Kirill al-Thallen, has broken with this tradition and brought in a close comrade from his home stead as his seneschal. The consternation caused among the local hierarchy by this move has since been lessened, however, by the quiet competence that his appointee has shown in the job, and by the latter's skills in the gentle and not-so-gentle arts of persuasion (oratory and torture).

The Warder of Za' Akhen maintains a small, modestly trained constabulary to man the city's gates and prison, and patrol its major avenues, and a round-the-clock fire watch (in a city where most buildings are of wood or thatch, and so much fire is handled ceremonially on a daily basis, sudden conflagrations are a common and very dangerous occurrence). Whenever they are not off in battle, the members of the Legion of Fiery Vengeance and the Chieftain's Guard aid in keeping order in the city; these groups play by their own rules, however, and may break the city's laws themselves in carrying out their duties.

The Temple of Za'tak has no official political power in the city of Za' Akhen save over temple affairs and justice and the conduct of all religious ceremonies held within the city's walls. Nonetheless, the High Priests hold great influence over almost every aspect of city life, from the Arena to the sale of ritual paraphernalia in the Bazaar. While other power groups tend to ebb and flow with the fortunes of the next war, the Temple's activities — and the perceived sanctity of its purpose — are a relatively constant factor. For the most part, the cult spends its influence privately rather than publicly, exerting subtle pressures on behalf of its initiatives (sometimes so successfully that the pressured party believes the proposal was his own idea). If a character manages to cause sufficient offense to establish himself as an 'Enemy of the Faith' in the eyes of the cult, however, he may find himself the target of public accusation, being quickly and informally declared **persona non grata** in much of the city.

Political Figures of Zal' Akhen

Kirill al-Thallen (#001) the reigning Chieftain, is a rawboned, shaggy blond-maned man of 26 with still boyish features and a crooked grin. He is an unassuming man, comfortable and confident in his leadership role but uninterested in the formal trappings of his position, and well aware of his strengths and weaknesses. He is an excellent warrior and a good — albeit largely instinctive — tactician; conversely, he is a terrible administrator whose attention quickly wanders from the details of government, despite his good intentions. He is happiest in the company of his fellow officers, and often forsakes the Castle for days to travel among the outlying patrols (to the horror of the city's bureaucrats, who do not approve of such extravagant risk-taking).

Kirill is a very popular leader with his troops and the common natives, who perceive him (correctly) as both brave and realistic. His brief campaign efforts to date have been small-scale but successful; the most recent of these involved a series of raids on Samili mining outposts resulting in the capture of a large cache of valuable metal supplies. As of yet, his own strategic plans have not moved beyond these comparatively modest initiatives; Archpriest Hrinah al-casanu, however, has begun encouraging Kirill to undertake a major offensive, and seems to be having a definite impact on the Chieftain's thinking.

Kirill will try to defer any question on city affairs to his seneschal Gubarin il-Thal, even when he himself is present in Zal' Akhen. His faith and trust in Gubarin

appear unassailable. Kirill is particularly fond of the entertainments of the Arena, and attends the games whenever circumstances allow, rooting vociferously for his army comrades and occasionally wagering on their behalf. The Chieftain is also under considerable family pressure to marry within the next year or two, to produce a direct heir to the line.

Gubarin il-Thal (#002) is a tall and slender man of 37 with silvering ill-kempt hair and broad plain facial features; Kirill's seneschal is in many ways the alter-ego of his liege, but the two share a deep bond of trust and comradeship that has existed since Kirill's early childhood. Gubarin was Kirill's teacher in many of the arts of war and the hunt, and served for several years with distinction as the leader of a tribal cavalry unit; yet he derived little joy from battle and the taking of other human lives. Seeing the leadership potential of young Kirill, Gubarin set himself to a new purpose — that of learning the skills necessary to protect his lord (and the nation destined to be placed in his charge) from harm. Gubarin had always been unusually adept at 'book learning' (it is likely he would have entered the Za'takan Priesthood were it not for his conviction that his 'faith' in Za'tak would not have withstood the Ordeal of Fire), but now he drove himself with a vengeance, teaching himself bookkeeping and higher mathematics, and becoming fluent in the dialects of each of the tribal Holds. As a final preparation, while Kirill was himself serving a term in the Chieftain's Guard of his uncle Bill'rasil, Gubarin made his way southward and lived among the Samili for two years, learning their language and social mores, and gaining insights into the mind-set of their sworn foe. On the eve of Kirill's selection to replace his then ailing (now dead) uncle, Gubarin gave his lord his renewed troth, which the young warrior was only too glad to accept.

Though the initial furor over the selection of a non-city dweller as seneschal was great, Gubarin has silenced or won over most of his critics with his quiet dedication and keenly discerning eye; in the first six months of his duties, for example, he uncovered an extensive black market operation involving the military storehouses and brought it to an abrupt close — through the aid of the High Priesthood and several well-placed threats — without ever making the situation public. He gathers intelligence from all corners of the city, even (over Kirill's protests) maintaining regular contact with the mysterious Cleff and his agents, feeling that all information is valuable regardless of the dubious morality of its source.

There do remain a handful of officials — primarily those with thwarted ambitions or those who once made a comfortable profit by ignoring the evidence of corruption that Gubarin has acted against — whose opposition to il-Thal remains unchanged and who actively seek a means of bringing about his ruin. As noted, the relationship between Kirill and Gubarin appears inviolate; Gubarin's personal habits also bear no significant taint (he has a normal fondness for wine, women and song, but pursues no vice to excess). The seneschal does have two thus far unrevealed weaknesses that might be exploitable, however. The first of these, previously noted, is the lukewarm nature of Gubarin's belief in Za'tak's godhood and the likelihood of his



return. Though much too politically savvy to make any public statement that would reveal his doubts, there are several in the High Priesthood (fortunately not including Hrinah) who have observed his reluctance to take a leading role in city-based cult ceremonies, and may someday decide to investigate the matter further. His second weakness relates to his yearning to obtain the fabled **Sword of Samor** for his lord's use; if Gubarin learns of any information regarding the Sword's whereabouts, it is likely that he will commission his own group to adventurers to follow this lead, and withhold the information from the cult leadership (who would certainly keep the Sword for their own uses if it were found by them). Such a deception if uncovered would certainly result in great controversy.

Talassar h'Arrin (#003) the Warder of Zal' Akhen for the past 18 years, is truly one of the city's elder statesmen, a gaunt, bent man of 50 with a sallow and weathered complexion and wispy grey hair. A cautious and prudent individual, h'Arrin has learned well over the years how to use his position of power to turn a handsome personal profit. Gubarin's zeal as an administrator has forced Talassar to curtail much of this lucrative influence peddling, and earned him the latter's undying enmity. Nothing would make him happier than to bring about il-Thal's demise in the most humiliating way possible, and

the Warder has permanently assigned one of his lesser underlings, a ferret-faced sabahi tribesman named Jarez (#004), to seek out a means of bringing about this result.

Although the Warder is an amoral schemer when it comes to his own personal gain, he is also a highly competent administrator, and the city has prospered under his leadership. He has a good eye for human nature, and has an excellent chance of recognizing if a job applicant has talent (and more appropriately, similar objectives). Talassar's caution extends to his personal safety as well; he keeps two personal bodyguards (#005, #006) with him at all times, and the cane that he carries to ease his old 'war wound' (actually a souvenir of a tavern brawl during his youth) is equipped with two enchantments (Shock Wave — does 4D6 damage to anyone in direct physical contact, MGR save for 1/2 damage; and Tanglefield — immobilizes anyone within a 10' radius of the spell's target, range up to 100 feet, REF save at -6 to avoid). Perversely, Talassar is quite a staunch believer in the Zat'akan legends and has always been entirely scrupulous in his dealings with the cult; he has made it very easy for the latter to handle proclaimed 'Enemies of the Faith' by their own means, with little official interference.

The Cult of Zat'ak

Ibath Zat'aku, rathu a'Lar!
Praise to Zat'ak, Lord of Fire!
Zat'aku Urath, a'Lar rathu!
Zat'ak, he who purifies in flame!
Zat'aku Somor, a'Lar Sam'n!
Zat'ak, he who Leads to Victory!
Zat'aku Absil, a'Lar a'Laros Chal Absilar!
Zat'ak, he who bears the Crown of Flame!
a'Lar Zat'aku Urath!
Zat'ak, Lord of Wrath!
a'Lar Zat'aku Samor!
Zat'ak, Master of Warriors!
a'Lar Zat'aku Absil!
Zat'ak, Prince of Fire!

— from the Zat'akan Codex

On Midsummer's Eve, the priesthood of Zat'ak journeys to Earthsheart in the encircling mountains and, somewhere in its labyrinthine depths, casts a virginal young girl into the eternal fire dedicated to the God-King Zat'ak, undying Lord of Fire. Thwarted from his mission by the Unbelievers three centuries ago, he lives on in the heart of earth-fire, gathering His power so that He may return. From the virginal maid he draws his strength, and gives in return the power which the priests convey to the Great Fire at the Temple in Zal' Akhen to call upon in his service. Or so the legend goes.

The faith which has become the state religion is all-pervasive. Though the pursuit of the Fire Cult is not strictly followed by all of Zat'akhar's inhabitants, the rituals which are made for him can be found everywhere in the land, from the simple dedication of a warrior's sword in the fiery glint of the first ray of sunlight to the annual sacrifice of the virgin at Earthsheart. To his followers, the fire which is brought

anew each year from Earthsheart to the Great Temple is the fire which pervades all life, the burning majesty of the God-King, reflected in the sun and stars, the inner fires of the earth, and — most importantly to this culture — in the fever passion which seizes a warrior in battle, making him invincible and one with Zat'ak.

The actual history of the God-King is a closed book. His journey to Earthsheart, his encounter with the fire-spirit, his union of the tribes and his campaign against the Samili are all the stuff of which legend is made; indeed, the best documentation of what Zat'ak said and did can be found in the Holy Book of the People — the Zat'akan Codex, a book of some three hundred closely-written leaves, composed forty to fifty years after Zat'ak's final conflagration during the siege of dhar Ankes. This work, taken to be the Bible (or, perhaps more accurately, the Koran) of the People of Zat'ak, posits a considerable theology and world-view which appears to have been constructed after the fact. Nonetheless, the framework thus established has retained its believability because of its essential nature and the essential nature of the people whose beliefs reside within it. To Zat'akhari, believers and unbelievers alike, manifestations of natural (or unnatural) power may have a supernatural connotation; to primitive people, even an event which might be mundane or explicable to more civilized people — a volcano, a bolt of lightning — might be construed as the act of a god. Because of the nature of magic, especially in a land where the elemental forces are wild and powerful, belief in the power of the God-King can quite literally make it all the more potent. In this light, the role of the True Believer — the fanatic — in this religion and society is extremely significant.

Theologians, ascetics and visionaries, beginning with the authors of the Codex, took the faith which was once a simple adherence to the figure of Zat'ak in

personal devotion, and refined it considerably. The most basic refinement, first developed in the Holy Book, is the concept of 'aspects'. Three prominent 'aspects' of Za'tak — namely, Urath, Absil, and Samor — represent the most significant avenues of approach to Za'tak's power. These are described below.

1) Za'tak Urath, Lord of Wrath and Purification by Fire.

Za'tak, is pictured thus in a great statue at the entrance to the temple complex at Zal' Akhen, a tall dod with an angry face and a hand raised casting a bolt of lightning. Urath is the most accessible of the three aspects; Za'tak Urath is the Lord Who will purify the world and destroy apostasy, as well as the One Who will avenge the deaths of His servants at the hands of unbelievers. This is the form Za'tak takes to defend His priests from harm when they go forth into the land, but anyone may call upon Za'tak and worship Him in this aspect. Urath's symbol is the flame, the tool of purification and vengeance.

2) Za'tak Samor, Lord of War.

Za'tak as Master of Warriors is by far the most frequently-found representation of Za'tak in all of the land. Za'tak Samor commands the fire induced in the rage of blood-lust, instills bravery and ardor on the field of battle, and guards the fallen against seizure by demons or underworld forces. Samor is always shown bearing the Sword of Samor, a powerful talisman said to be concealed in the labyrinth at Earthsheart, and not to be raised until Za'tak's final battle is at hand. Samor is pictured as a great warrior whose head is surrounded by a nimbus of light, and who bears the Sword of Samor but neither shield nor armor, to emphasize His fearlessness.

3) Za'tak Absil, Prince of Fire.

Theologians of the cult have come to identify Za'tak with the primal force of fire, without form or control, and have called that aspect Absil. Absil is that part of Za'tak that commands volcanoes, forest fires, and the like. Calling upon the power of Absil is often the last recourse for a priest, since the power is essentially uncontrollable. Za'tak Absil is pictured as a man-shaped figure engulfed in flame, holding a glowing orb in one hand and a glowing staff in the other; his crown is made of fire-stones and other precious gems.

There is considerable variance in representation of the god even within these three aspects, but for game purposes GMs may use these as guidelines to worshippers' invocations of the deity. A warrior would be most likely to call upon Za'tak Samor to aid him in battle, or to help protect a fallen comrade. Za'tak Absil and Za'tak Urath are both invoked on Midsummer's Eve at Earthsheart. Some representations of the God combine attributes of more than one aspect, for instance, the famous Za'tak Triptych in the Temple in Casanu, which pictures a warrior, enflamed, bearing the Sword of Samor against an army of hideous winged demons.

The priesthood of Za'tak has been ever vigilant in preventing the propagation of 'false' aspects of the God, however; for instance, twenty years ago Urusah Hold was scourged clean of the so-called 'Palag Heresy', in which a group of local acolytes in the village of Palag (GM's Note: this village is 10 miles north of Urusah Castle) preached the belief that the God-King had inhabited an underground cave which periodically filled

with steam and gushed it forth. In actuality, the cave was a new outlet for an underground hot spring. Eygh, who had led this apostasy, had further preached that he was Za'tak's new representative on earth; he was captured and boiled alive in an underground pool of mineral water — thus ended the rebellion.

Despite these aberrations among worshippers of the Fire God, there do exist several subcults which represent unusual points of view, and which have arisen from within the faithful. Some are centered around a particular aspect of the God-King; some seem to gravitate about a person who claims, or is credited with, a 'direct line' to him. Sometimes the claims exceed the bounds set by the Priesthood, and the sect becomes apostate and heretical; sometimes the bounds expand to include the claims. The theology of Za'tak is sufficiently obscured that the truth is constantly in the making. The relative youth of Za'takhara and its religion predicates a dynamic portrayal of the Temple and its political/theological positions; just as heresies are constantly arising and being expunged, new views are constantly gaining orthodox acceptance. Beliefs are not changing overnight, nor, obviously, do all beliefs change; but the practice of religion today as opposed to when it was first given to the tribes is completely different, and when compared to the worship of Za'tak as practiced in far-away Kel is more different still.

It is impossible to describe all of the splinter sects here; instead, GMs may use the descriptions given above to create peculiar sects and subcults. Two prominent ones are provided below.

1) The Brotherhood of the Pure Flame

Closely associated with Za'tak Absil, the Brotherhood is a small group of ascetics who hold that, within the soul of each worshipper of Za'tak, there lies the potential of utter and complete purity — purity so total that the ravaging fires of Za'tak can touch the body in which it resides and not harm it. The ultimate trial of a Brother is the act of self-immolation, which, understandably, few have attempted, preferring to prove their faith in Za'tak in other, less demanding ways. There is a rigid diet and code of conduct; Brothers of the Pure Flame are self-denying, in the image of their God-King. Those who enter the flames and die horribly are viewed as having been impure in one way or another.

One would think that this sect represents an extremely obtuse point of view and that it could expect diminishing returns at best. Nonetheless, it thrives, due to a single outstanding event. One Brother, by the name of Zev'aan, attempted the feat of self-immolation some two years ago, and survived without damage, except the complete removal of all of his bodily hair. Zev'aan claims to have entered mystical union with the spirit of Za'tak Absil, and despite all attempts to discredit his act as a hoax, his credibility has remained unassailable. High Priest Rel m'Chand interviewed Zev'aan not long after his act of 'purification', and was reported to have left the meeting shaken and drawn, completely changed from his haughty demeanor immediately before. While the Brotherhood — and Zev'aan — remain totally inactive in external or internal power struggles of the cult, Zev'aan might at any time choose to stand in the political fire to gain such power.

2) The Legion of Fiery Vengeance

"By the Sword of Samor I swear, to defend my honor and that of my sworn brother, to fight with ardor on the field of battle, to spread the Holy Name of Za'tak across the earth and beyond..." So begins the Legionary Oath, which has existed in one form or another since Za'tak came to this land three hundred years ago. The Legion itself, originally Za'tak's secret personal guardsmen, has grown in power and stature so that today this paramilitary arm of the Temple is almost a power unto itself in Zal' Akhen and abroad in Za'takhara. Most of its five hundred members wear the red mantle openly; however, many public figures have been sworn as secret brothers in the Legion, especially during the rule of the current Grandmaster, Wa'tan t'Sabah, a young son of an old and noble Holder family. It is not an unusual sight to see a member or members of the Legion going through the streets of Zal' Akhen masked, to protect their identities.

Technically the Legion is under the authority of the High Priest of Za'tak, in fact, the Grandmaster and his Legion act on their own, in the name of the God-King and the Priesthood. Structurally, the Legion is composed of four hundred foot soldiers (the Elite Guard), fifty heavy cavalry (the Advance Guard), and a half dozen battle mages, in addition to the standard 'non-combat' personnel attached to every military unit. The members of the Legion are incredibly devout, intensely honorable (admittedly, by their own definitions of honor), and essentially incorruptible. In the past the Legion has served as honor guard in the Midsummer's Eve procession to Earthsheart, and in the festivities within the City; under the rule of Wa'tan, it has expanded its scope to include raids upon 'unbelievers' and 'heretics' (see above — the 'Palag Heresy').

In a related area, Wa'tan has, like many a megalomaniac before him, become extremely superstitious, and is now under the sway of a mystic named Bru'kan, a small, gnarled man whose charlatanry is a thing of wonder and beauty. Bru'kan has ambitions to become the power behind the Grandmaster of the Legion, and thus the Chieftain of the People of Za'tak, and hopes to use the gullible and bull-headed Wa'tan to get him there.

The Priesthood of Za'tak

The development of the godhead of Za'tak precipitated, as a natural result, a priesthood to support it. Three hundred years past, when Za'tak first began the construction of his city, those of the faithful that had served him well in the unification of the sabahi tribes and who had been most fervent in converting their fellows to the worship of the God-King were made priests, intermediaries between the will of Za'tak and the people of Za'tak. The priesthood, from the very start, had a second purpose which coincided with the dual purpose of the religion; just as the Cult of Za'tak acted to regularize and unify the disparate tribes of the plains, so did the priesthood insinuate itself into the lives of the people it 'served', suppressing diversity and 'heresy' and enforcing loyalty to the new order.

While Za'tak reigned in the Valley, the priesthood served only to carry out the orders sent out from the Castle. After he was defeated by the Unbelievers, however, the priesthood and their adjunct, the Legion

of Fiery Vengeance, were left with the awesome task of preserving the faith, and, in harmony with that objective, maintaining their position of power. The actual quality of the faith of the early church fathers can therefore be called into question. On the other hand, the men and women who were witness to the power and charisma of Za'tak himself were able to communicate what they had experienced well enough for a generation that had not experienced the God-King to embrace his worship even more fervently than the previous one had.

In the time that has elapsed since the establishment of the Za'takan Priesthood, the power and devotion of the priests to the cult has waxed and waned. The rule of Archpriest Etar Gar'noth was one of the most bloody in all of Za'takhara's history; nearly 9,000 'heretics', miscreants and enemies of the state were sent to slave labor or death in the arena over a 12-year period. The rule of Archpriest Sabrel Du'rar, by comparison, was exactly the opposite; no less than 200,000 gold sovereigns disappeared from the coffers of the Temple into the pockets of its priests before a daring member of the Legion of Fiery Vengeance penetrated the Temple complex and beheaded him with a single stroke of her sword. In the curious way in which history flows in Za'takhara, that woman became the first Archpriestess, Bolandra Cor'sura; under her leadership the Legion of Fiery Vengeance, largely ignored under earlier Archpriests, was rebuilt into the formidable elite guard it had been in the time of its founding by the God-King. The current Archpriest, Hrinah al'Casanu, has been fairly moderate in his policies; while his personal faith is extremely ardent, Hrinah is far less excessive than Gar'nath in his prosecution of heretics. He is convinced, however, that the omens and signs point to the imminent coming of Za'tak; his intention is that the land of Za'takhara be ready for the God-King's return.

Temple Hierarchy

The priesthood of Za'tak is organized in an almost military fashion, a tightly-knit hierarchy with the Archpriest at its summit. Below him (or her) there are three categories of adherent:

- 1) **High Priests** This group, comprising approximately 15% of the priesthood, has among its responsibilities
 - a) the selection of Archpriests and the holders of the important sinecures in each realm and castle;
 - b) the promulgation of official doctrine, and official interpretation of the Za'takan Codex in concert with the Archpriest;
 - c) declaration and prosecution of heresy in the land of Za'takhara; and
 - d) training and ordination of disciples.

Election to the inner circle of the cult is accomplished by the consent of two-thirds of the High Priests; while there is no fixed limit to the number of High Priests, the group tends to restrict its membership jealously. Often, however, political pressures will force the selection of a Priest whose friends are highly placed. In general, the duties of the High Priests are more practical than ceremonial; but the trappings of ritual and tradition have paid service to the Za'takhari love of ceremony, adding an atmosphere of mystery even to the day-to-day practices of the cult.

- 2) **Priests** The lower echelon of ordained servants of Za'tak constitute 50-60% of the priesthood; in addition to carrying out the regular functions of the cult, many priests serve the needs of the people of the plains, traveling with the tribes as they follow pasturage. The priesthood is open to those who receive ordination after three years of training as acolytes, and who demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the Za'takan Codex and the associated criticisms. Nsaturally, faith and study are not the only means — or the only requirements — to reach priesthood; in most cases, an acute knowledge of human nature and friends in the upper strata of the cult can make one's rise in the hierarchy an easier one.
- 3) **Acolytes** Those of the people of Za'tak who chose to serve him directly enter orders as acolytes, learning the rituals of the cult and the history of the God-King. The acolytes deemed most promising are taught such reading and writing as they can learn, and are trained with an eye toward eventual ordination as priests; many, however, never reach the level of education that will permit them to ascend into the higher ranks of the cult. Acolytes constitute upwards of 25% of all servants of the cult.

(GM's Note: Magic is a tightly-reined art in Za'takhara, not forbidden but strongly controlled outside of the cult, due to the lack of access to arcane texts, and restrictions on the use of powerful artifacts for purposes outside the service of the Flame. Since Za'tak suppressed the tribal shamans [the 'Old Religion'] three centuries ago, those outside the cult who practice the arcane arts are either powerful and reclusive or relatively insignificant. The only exception to this seems to be Cleff, the Dark One, whose presence in Zal' Akhen has marked effect on life in the city.

Due to this fact, most mages in Za'takhara are priests; similarly, most priests are practitioners of magic. Rumor, and theorizing in dhar Ankhes, suggests that those who enter the inner circle [i.e., are elected to High Priesthood] undergo an ordeal called the Wheel of Fire; survival of this test of . . . faith, perhaps? . . . seems to benefit in game terms by having their TAL score increased by anywhere from 3 to 6 points.)

Major Members of the Cult

Each of the characters described below plays a major part in the ongoing life of the Temple at Zal' Akhen. The GM should feel free to 'fill in the gaps' in the organization of the Temple with NPCs of his/her own design.

Hrinah al-Casanu (#007, age 34) has been Archpriest of the Temple of Za'tak for four years, chosen nearly unanimously to replace Bal h'Urusah ('the Old One'), his willful and imperious predecessor who avoided identification with any of the factions of the cult by systemically offending each over the period of his 29 year reign. In his last years, Bal became a virtual recluse, seldom leaving his chambers and always moving in the company of his personal Flame Guard (a small group of trusted loyalists culled from the ranks of the Legion of Fiery Vengeance). Upon Bal's death, the inner circle sought to identify a candidate who could heal the divisiveness that Bal's policies and inconsistent leadership had wrought. Hrinah, though relatively

young in years, had already demonstrated that sort of diplomatic skill, coupled with a spiritual fervor that even the eldest of the Faith's interpreters found vibrant and infectious. During the first years of his tenure, Hrinah has made himself a highly visible leader, personally leading pilgrimages to Earthsheart, disbanding the Flame Guard (an act that greatly pleased the Legion rank-and-file, who disliked the special privileges and influence accorded these handpicked few), and generally making himself available to any group seeking an audience to air its particular cause or grievance. He has also proven to be flexible to the need for change, extending tacit recognition to the growing Brotherhood of the Pure Flame (see below) and aiding in the official acceptance of the work of Chalab'ra. It is safe to say that Hrinah's base of support is, with very few exceptions, even stronger now than when he took office.

Hrinah is resourceful, intelligent, and utterly devoted to his faith. He has been 'visited' over the past few years by a number of dreams, as well as interpreting the portents of other visions and omens, and has concluded that the second coming of Za'tak is imminent. His interpretations lead him to believe that the God-King will first appear in the guise of another, to test the faith of his chosen people and ensure that all are ready to aid in his final victory — he considers it possible that Kirill may be the God-King reborn. He has had one recurring dream in particular in which a warrior whose face is unlike the image of Za'tak wields the Sword of Samor in triumph against the hordes of the Samili; he



will thus be very interested in the manifestation of the sword seen in the Pilgrimage encounter. The accuracy of Hrinah's analyses are up to the individual GM; regardless of their truth, however, they have a definite effect on his policies, causing him to push for more aggressive action against the Samili and to attempt to keep as many of the disparate factions of the Faith within the fold of the Temple (under the assumption that Zaf'ak will make his Word and Will clear upon his return).

High Priest Taan Ha'myl (#008, age 38) has been a High Priest for twelve years, and has discovered her niche as Master of the Temple Treasury. Ha'myl was an ardent servant of Zaf'ak in her youth, and once served a year as a Probationary in the Legion of Fiery Vengeance. She decided, however, that the military life did not suit her. Instead she trained for the priesthood, learning the rare skills of accounting and bookkeeping from the then-treasurer, Ordil Hamal, who groomed Taan as his successor. Taan is generally honest, though her reputation as a skilled trader and entrepreneur is well-deserved, as she has amassed a tidy personal fortune as well as restocking the Temple Treasury which had been severely depleted by the excesses of Bal h'Urugah. Taan is comely and experienced in life; she once had a 'fling' with Hrinah when he was newly made High Priest, but found him too cold and devoted to the cult. Many observers believe that, because of this, Hrinah will ultimately replace her; in fact, this is not at all true — Hrinah has renewed the friendship in an attempt to communicate his belief in the imminence of Zaf'ak's return.

Morneya (#009, age...?) is a powerful mage of Tharcagan extraction, who came to the High Valley 20 years ago to escape persecution in his homeland. His appearance in Zal' Akhen — a trained, powerful mage, literate and dangerous — presented a serious peril to the cult. Archpriest Bol took the most logical action — he offered the mage a position in the Inner Circle of the Priesthood, which would permit Morneya to practice his Art for the benefit, and within the scrutiny, of the cult. The action was criticized, but not openly; and despite a dozen attempts on his life (mostly by the Company of Holy Wisdom, a secret society within the Legion) he remains a High Priest of Zaf'ak — in fact as well as name, as he performs regular ritual functions at the Zal' Akhen Temple.

Morneya is something of a mystery above and beyond the cultural barriers that exist between him and the Zaf'akhari; for instance, he is never seen without dark-tinted spectacles, even when encountered in his laboratory at night. Morneya is not unfriendly, but remains a distant, almost ominous presence in the Temple, the only High Priest to have been elected without passing through the Wheel of Fire.

Hasan-Ri of Eastmarch (#010, age 26), the youngest High Priest, is industrious, hard-working, utterly devoted to the faith, helpful, courteous... in short, utterly obnoxious. He is everything a priest should be, in excess. He is the 'Charlie Hustle' of the Zal' Akhen Temple.

His family connections, including a cousin whose brother's wife is blackmailing the lover of the chief wife of the younger brother of the Holder of Eastmarch, got him a position in the Zal' Akhen Temple as an acolyte and, ultimately, as a Priest; his constant references to

his family, his Hold, his belief in Zaf'ak, and so on, and so on, have 'endeared' him to his fellow Priests; at age 24 he had his first (and only) interview with Archpriest Bal h'Urusha, who reacted immediately by burying Hasan-Ri at the bottom of the heap in the Temple. Two years after Bal's death, Hrinah resolved to make Hasan-Ri a High Priest, taking advantage of his diligence and his proficiency with the arcane arts. For the past two years Hrinah has had to live with that decision.

Chalab-Ra of Zal' Akhen (#011, age 26), called the 'Light of Zaf'ak' (Zaf'akahlore'er), was discovered by Morneya during one of his infrequent visits to the Gauntlet a dozen years ago. Chalab-ra, a daughter of an impoverished squatter family, had apparently been seized with the impulse to go to the fire dedicated to Zaf'ak in the square just east of the Gauntlet and preach the Word of Zaf'ak. An exceptional speaker, beautiful even in the rags she wore, her address made an impact on those who heard her speak. Her knowledge of Zaf'ak's life and deeds was tremendous, despite her obvious lack of education. She was orthodox in every respect except one — she made constant reference to Zaf'ak as 'Healer of the World' (Zaf'ak ul Re Lirach). Only Morneya's intervention prevented an open clash between the girl and priestly authorities; believing her gifts to be directly bestowed by the God-King, the mage obtained her a position as Acolyte at the Temple. Less than a year later she was ordained Priest, and he is grooming her for a position as a member of the Inner Circle.

Her great gifts at healing have made Chalab-Ra popular in the Temple and the city; they have also helped to reinforce her belief in an aspect of Zaf'ak which has not yet been revealed — the Great Healer, Zaf'ak Lirach. Lirach has appeared to her as a man dressed in healer's robes, with a ball of light in the place of his head; he is the aspect of the God-King who will purify the world from the corruption that defaces it, just as fire burns away infection in a wound. As yet, she has elected to tell no one of her beliefs except for the mage Morneya, who means more to her than anyone aside from her parents. However, a file is kept on her by Waf'an, Grandmaster of the Legion of Fiery Vengeance, who also possesses an almost fanatical hatred of Morneya.

Zev'aan (#012, age 31), a gaunt man of 31 with close-cropped red hair and a countenance filled with great calm and serenity, is the founder and unofficial Senior of a strange new sect dedicated to Zaf'ak Absil, commonly referred to as the Brotherhood of the Pure Flame. This understandably small but growing splinter group holds as its central premise that Zaf'ak can not return to Earth until his followers have accepted the power of the Flame fully into their hearts and souls and burned out all disbelief. They contend that those whose faith is sufficiently strong can withstand any ordeal of fire without danger, and base their contention on the seemingly incontrovertible evidence of their founder. Zev'aan conceived of the need for 'cleansing' the faithful (allegedly through a series of dreams) during the period of his training as an acolyte of the cult. Without warning one day, he walked into the white-hot eternal flames of the High Temple's great Audience Chamber and stood, unprotected by any apparent aid but the strength of his faith, emerging unscathed except for the total (and seemingly permanent) loss of

all his bodily hair, save the crown of red hair atop his head. This act was witnessed by a dozen of his fellow acolytes (including Chalab-ra, who mysteriously ordered her fellows not to interfere, asserting that Zev'aan was 'safe, perfectly safe') and the High Priest Taan Ha'myl. Some of these witnesses became the first members of the Brotherhood when Zev'aan withdrew from the Temple's service a few days after his ordeal, quietly asserting that his cleansing had given him new insights into the Way of the Flame that required further reflection.

Zev'aan's self-inflicted ordeal occurred in the last years of the reign of Bal h'Urusah, and the aged Archpriest had no difficulty declaring from his insulated sanctuary that the act was pure 'heresy', and officially banned any cult contact with Zev'aan or his followers. Upon taking over the office, Hrinah summoned Zev'aan to the Temple; their interview left the new Archpriest pale and drawn, and resulted in a policy reversal wherein Zev'aan (who had since taken to a nomadic existence among his small cadre of followers) was granted the right to create a new order of worship within the cult. That decision swelled the ranks of the wanderer's followers, and displeased a number of the more conservative (or politically motivated) High Priests. Since the official sanctioning, three brothers have attempted to 'stand in the fire'; the first two died horribly in the all-consuming flames. The third seemed ready to suffer the same fate when Zev'aan entered the blaze and grasped him by the hands; whether the former in some way protected him or merely enabled him to conquer his inner fears is uncertain, but the result — the latter's survival with no serious lasting injury — is unquestioned. To date, Zev'aan's mystical serenity and silent undisclosed purpose have had no practical impact on the balance of power within the cult; some in the Inner Circles of the Temple (particularly the High Priests Harad-uul and Odron-iel), however, believe that it is only a matter of time before his fast-growing support thrusts Zev'aan into the political fires of the nation as well.

The Legion of Fiery Vengeance is a military brotherhood dedicated to "the prosecution of the will of Zaf'ak", founded in the time of the God-King Himself. Original Legionnaires helped to enchant and render the walls around Zal' Akhen fire-resistant, and its membership has always fought in the forefront of the battles carried out in Zaf'ak's name.

Membership in the Legion is limited to approximately five hundred men and women, and is strictly controlled: at least one member of the Council of Elders must sponsor a prospective Probationary for consideration, and two-thirds of the Order must confirm the choice before the candidate can be initiated into the Rites and Mysteries of the Order (which are both steeped in symbolic ceremony and liberally laced with practical teachings in all manner of subjects from the conduct of warfare to the identification of edible woodland plants and medicinal herbs). Once initiated, only an act of treason or severe blasphemy can strip a Legionary of his/her title. Though many Chieftains and Archpriests over the city's history have attempted to exert influence over the activities of the Legion, the latter has remained a largely autonomous entity, available to do the bidding of Lord or cult, but only under their own inviolable rules and codes of conduct.

The Legion maintains its own enclave in a stockaded area on the north side of the Lower City. Its

walls abut those of the Upper City, and its riverside wall is interrupted by a small wharf, where trading vessels whose masters have gained the confidence of the Legion may enter and do business duty-free. This concession (granted some 150 years ago by the reigning Chieftain in the wake of The Legion's stirring defense of Pelenn) may be given to a maximum of three mercantile interests who (needless to say) reap tremendous profits from this boon.

During periods of heavy conflict, the Legion is almost always called upon to secure the most critical strategic position or to lead the climactic assault. Therefore, despite their well-earned reputation as the army's best warriors, losses run high and replacements are often needed. There have been few souls in the nation's history who have shunned an invitation to enter the Legion's ranks, despite the dangers involved, for it is the crowning honor a fighter can receive and entitles him/her to the respect of virtually the entire native population (and quite a few free meals and services).

The central leader of the Legion is known by the ceremonial title of Grandmaster, and answers to no one in military affairs save the Chieftain himself. The current Grandmaster is Wat'an t'Sabah (#013), a well-muscled (and well-scarred) sun-bronzed savage whose movements are deceptively quick for such a large man. Wat'an has been a Legionary for 16 years and Grandmaster for the last seven, acceding to the title on the death of his rival Lebroca t'Pelenn. Wat'an had been cast into disfavor among his peers for his strenuous objections to Lebroca's plans to undertake an expedition into the Old Forest in pursuit of a band of Mordecaian Brothers who had fled there after being expelled for creating a major disturbance among the famine-ridden poor of Hold Urusah. Wat'an was, at that time, commander of one of the Legion's patrols (about 25 men), and refused to commit his troops to such an endeavor (fearing the reprisals of the guardians of taru'e'alena). He was placed under house arrest, to be 'dealt with' on Lebroca's return; as it turned out, the Master — and the 50 Legionnaires who accompanied him — never emerged from the forest, vanishing without a trace. Thus vindicated, the Council selected Wat'an as successor.

Wat'an is an excellent example of the average highly-born Zaf'akhari tribesman: strong, brave, stubborn, violent, arrogant, and boorish. He will fight for anything, or over nothing; he will staunchly defend the honor of the Legion with his fists or great-axe, even when it is not immediately apparent that any violation of that honor was done or intended. He is capable of great fits of pique and has the memory of an elephant when it comes to remembering old slights; nonetheless, he is reasonably prudent about committing the powers of the Legion in a tactically sound manner. Of late, the Grandmaster has recently come under the influence of a mystic, Bru'kan (#014), a wizened little (4'9") man of indeterminate old age who holds the sinecure of the Master's Chaplain. Bru'kan, for undisclosed personal reasons, has been attempting to maneuver Wat'an and the Legion into making a play to gain more power over the administration of the city of Zal' Akhen (since this would likely undermine the influence of the Temple in these affairs, it is possible that the mystic holds some grudge against the cult or one or more of its members). Whatever the reason for his efforts, Wat'an has eaten up Bru'kan's words of praise

like a cat laps cream, and begun to envision himself as the appropriate choice for Chieftain, and has had visions under the influence of Bru'kan's 'strengthening potions' which seem to suggest that the God-King himself wills this result. Wat'an's increased posturing at public ceremonies, and preoccupation with non-Legion city affairs, have hardly escaped the notice of the cult or Gubarin, but both parties have taken a 'wait and see' approach to the situation because of the Grandmaster's well-demonstrated military talents and proven bravery.

G'war Danh (#015), the 34 year old Captain of the Archpriest's Guard, is another long-time friend and confidant of Wat'an who is much dismayed by the changes in his comrade's personality. G'war is himself a rather unique personality, a Gamuran who at the age of fifteen had a vision of the Flame and came to Zal' Akhen to pledge himself to its service. Though not magically talented enough to pursue the Priesthood, the intensity of his belief was not lost on the now-retired Captain, Wil s'Mari, who paved his way into first the Chieftain's Guard and then the Legion. Danh has climbed slowly and steadily through the ranks to his present position of power, and is considered by some to be the likely heir to the Grandmaster's seat. Far from wishing Wat'an's downfall, however, he and s'Mari have been seeking a means of breaking the Grandmaster loose from Bru'kan's grasping influence (thus far without success, instead rousing Wat'an's ire and straining relations between the two friends).

The Arena of Zal' Akhen

The Ring of Champions

There are certain days in Zal' Akhen when the milling masses coursing through the Bazaar slow to a trickle, and other parts of the lower city seem like a ghost town — and even the flow of pilgrims and penitents venturing to the High Temple is reduced. These are the twice monthly days (set on the second day after the Temple rituals of the New and Full Moon) when the great gladiatorial games are staged in the circular open-air arena known as the Ring of Champions. These competitions are popular spectator events, complete with an abundance of friendly (and not-so-friendly) wagering. More importantly, the conflicts that take place on the silty clays of this well-stained battleground are often a microcosm of the struggles taking place within the city power structure, or between the tribes, as the participants often include army officers, members of the Legion of Fiery Vengeance, and local champions from the other five strongholds. An astute observer following the arena action over the course of several weeks can learn a great deal about what power groups are in and out of favor, and whose personal star is rising or falling among the city/provincial elite.

The activities of the Arena are organized by Jonpul Gheddi (#016), an appointed lay functionary of the Temple of Zat'ak. A beefy red-headed man missing the lobe of one ear, Jonpul, once a crafty and capable warrior in his own heyday, schedules the various competitions and ensures that there are sufficient entrants to contest them, provides judges for the games

and personally enforces the ever-changing rules regarding equipment, use of magical enhancements, etc., and sanctions (for a sizable cut) the bookmakers allowed to take bets on the games. In addition to these fees, Jonpul collects admissions (1 GP) and various seating charges from his spectators, and has been known to place a few judicious side bets (through outside agents) on the outcomes of the games. His authority over the Ring is purchased at a price — for Gheddi 'donates' 10-30% of his take to the Temple's coffers. Still, his power and influence in the city is considerable, and there are few who would dare to defame his integrity in anything above a whisper.

The Arena is built against the hill which runs along the eastern and northern walls of the lower city, and measures almost 125 yards in length and 75 yards in width. General seating (5 SP) consists of rough benches set into the northern hillside. Those who do not arrive soon enough to get splinters can watch from the eastern hillside itself, but visibility can become very poor here as the afternoon winds on and the sun begins to sink in the west. Wealthier patrons may purchase better seating (5 GP) along the southern side of the arena, free from splinters and glare, and built directly above the gladiators' entrance to the field. Above these areas stand the prime seats in the house, pavilioned boxes with individual cushioned seats, and tables for food and drink. Many of these seats are reserved for Priests of Zat'ak, high officers in the army, or prominent local leaders; the box directly beside the Judges Rostrum is reserved for the Chieftain of Zal' Akhen and his guests (and is frequently in use).

The gladiators prepare themselves in the partially sunken earth and stone building upon which the southern seats are erected. Here, armor is donned and weapons sharpened, and competitive banter is exchanged as the soon-to-be combatants look to gain any psychological advantage they can (on occasion, these comments lead to a premature start to hostilities, often bloodier than the real event). Here, too, acolytes of Zat'ak — and occasionally higher ranking Temple officials — circulate among the warriors, offering special benisons or prayers, 'sanctifying' weapons, or giving healing aid or last rites to the wounded.

As the various contests progress, the bookmakers circulate through the crowds, often bearing 'sandwich boards' or assistants with placards displaying the odds being offered on the various competitors. Each bookie has his own elaborate sigil which he uses to mark the wager tickets he hands out, which are constantly altered in an attempt to thwart potential forgers. Those who mistrust the bookmakers may choose to informally wager among themselves. Bets range from a copper piece to a veritable king's ransom.

With the often large amounts of money changing hands, the temptation to 'fix' the outcome of a contest is great, and schemes to do just that are not uncommon, although such attempts are only occasionally successful — Jonpul and the Temple authorities have ears in many places, and are quite vigilant in their efforts to keep the reputation of the games reasonably unsullied. On less frequent occasions, high-placed civil or Temple officials may exert their own influence to attempt to ensure the outcome of an upcoming event in favor of (or

opposition to) a particular competitor; this is particularly likely to occur during the games that accompany high feast days. These efforts, usually known to only a select few, almost always have their desired effect (Jonpul knows only too well upon which side his bread is buttered); those who come upon evidence of such influence being exerted can often make quite a betting coup (and perhaps draw a lot of pointed official curiosity). Rarest of all — and this has happened but 2-3 times in his eleven year tenure — Jonpul himself puts the fix in. His last such caper, involving the once hapless cavalryman Herelli Failles (see below), still is the subject of tavern arguments eighteen months after the event — and has made Gheddi an extremely wealthy man.

The Games of the Arena

Generally speaking, the competitions of the Arena are not fights to the death — although contestants can be and often are fatally wounded by a particularly well-placed blow (exceptions to this rule are the occasional combats involving prisoners — see **Last Chance** below — and mutually agreed grudge matches that occur when two fighters, often long-time combatants, become implacable foes). A typical day at the arena will include several events from among the following:

Mounted Combat — is usually the climax of the day's competition, a man-to-man duel in which skilled riders face off, each with the objective of dismounting the other. Unlike the medieval joust, the contest is conducted in the open field, to allow the competitors to use their horsemanship skills to maneuver for position; even striking from behind is permitted, if a contestant can manage to attain such an advantage. Competitors carry shields and wear leather or chain armor, and bear a horseman's flail or mace whose end is wrapped to somewhat blunt the force of its blow. These combats are crowd pleasers which receive heavy wagering; many of the competitors are regulars with established reputations, providing the bookmakers with a logical basis for oddsmaking. The three most highly regarded of the currently active fighters in this event are:

Conty Cristo (#017), a wily and grizzled veteran horsebreaker whose base of operations lies about 50 miles north of Zal' Akhen, and who participates in the games whenever he brings fresh stock in to the city's Horse Market;

Varren l'Grinn (#018), a long-time member of the Legion of Fiery Vengeance whose appearances in the Ring are rare, but whose relentless attacking style and great physical endurance are legend (and compensate admirably for his somewhat lesser talents as a rider); and

Goren s'Paar (#019), a young and exceedingly agile officer in the Chieftain's Guard whose prowess appears to be growing from week to week and whose crowd following is similarly expanding.

There is about a 60% chance that one of these three will win any given day's competition.

Of all the regular contestants in the mounted combat, however, there are none whose saga is more strange than that of Herelli Failles (#020). For years, this bowlegged cavalry veteran was a hapless also-ran, whose quick and often awkward exits from the competition were as predictable as clockwork.

Nonetheless, his dogged perseverance in pursuing the seemingly impossible dream of victory earned him the grudging admiration of many long-time spectators (along with a vast collection of broken bones). Twenty months ago, Herelli became the unwitting pawn in Jonpul's greatest scheme. Under the pretense of aiding the old vet in getting back into training after a bad leg injury, the arena's master (using a combination of hypnotism, sleep teaching and large doses of bodily stimulants) provided Herelli with the knowledge of the tactics required to defeat his most formidable foes, and the physical capacity to carry those tactics out. After six weeks of this regimen, Herelli shocked the entire feast day crowd (except Jonpul, whose intermediaries had placed substantial wagers on Failles at odds ranging from 100-500 to 1) by sweeping through the field, soundly defeating Conty Cristo in the championship fight. For a few months thereafter, Herelli remained a prime contender, riding on the residues of his training program, and attracted increasing betting action. Today, almost all of those force-fed talents have been lost, and Failles has fallen back into the lower echelons of the competition — but now, instead of admiration, his performances are often greeted by boos and thrown refuse. For some perverse reason, however, Herelli has not forgotten the secret to defeating Conty Cristo, and is the only man alive able to accomplish this feat regularly (75% chance).

Mounted Team Competitions — contested by teams of 3-8 horsemen, are similar in nature to the man-to-man combats above, except that the weapons used are primarily blunted swords. Each contest continues until all members of one team have been dismounted (the other team is declared the victor even if all but one of its riders has fallen). The rules permit a fallen rider to remount only from horseback; i.e., if a teammate picks him up and rides him to an available horse. A fallen rider may at his option continue to fight from the ground, but makes himself fair game by doing so (and a likely target for trampling).

Hand to Hand Combat — low down, teeth-gnashing, no holds barred fighting characterizes these bouts, which often attract large fields of competitors (four or five fights usually take place around the arena at one time to provide greater spectator appeal) and are the events most easily won by talented novices. Crowd favorites change quickly from month to month, and betting action tends to be moderate. These contests can take the form of true weaponless combat (a combination of wrestling, boxing, and assorted kicks, gouges and other dirty tactics), or may utilize quarterstaves or ybarri (a leather thong with wooden balls at both ends that is used in traditional ceremonial combat). Contests continue until submission or a KO occurs, or are judged by the referees if no one is able to obtain clear dominance after a specified time limit.

Fencing — the classic form of man-to-man confrontation in more civilized portions of the continent (like the Realm of the Ten Cities), is a relatively minor arena attraction (the tribesmen of the High Valley being by in large more accomplished with spear, axe and bow than with the cold steel of the blade). These matches are also contested by 3-5 pairs of opponents at once, using blunted swords; victory is attained when one fighter scores a specified number of points (referee awarded)

for cleanly landed blows, or when one combatant is unable to continue.

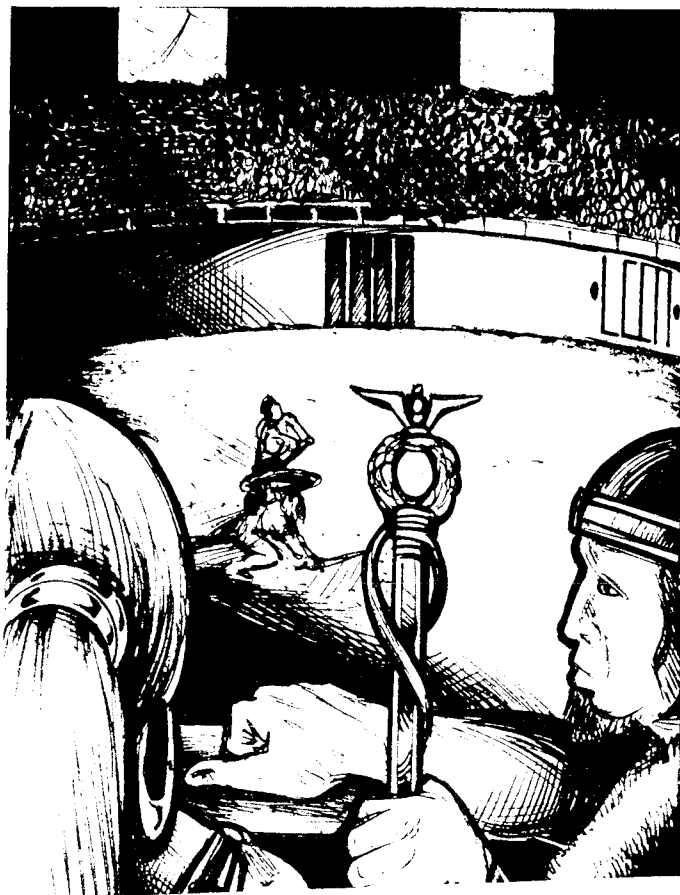
The long-time dominant figure of the fencing event has been Galax the Quick (#021), an excellent and ambidextrous bladesman who is a master of two weapons technique. He fights using two rapiers, and can either parry with both (-6 to opponent's hit probability), parry and swing (normal attack, -2 to OPP HP), or attack with both weapons (normal attack with one, -2 to HP with the other; reduces the effectiveness of a single weapon parry to -1). Galax has grown increasingly fond of drink and debauchery, and his expertise has slowly but perceptibly declined through complacency; he has remained on top the last year or two largely by reputation (with the fear and nervousness it creates in his opponents) and the close calls routinely awarded him by referees grown accustomed to his invincibility. It is said by some, however, that there is a young and hungry swordsman from Pelenn stronghold that may be Galax's match, and it is likely that a showdown between the two will occur at the next Midsummer's Day festival. Archery — competitions are the favorites of a small group of enthusiasts who follow the events very closely and wager very heavily on their outcomes — they are usually the first competitions (starting at about noon) on the Show Day schedule. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of these contests are won by tribesmen from the open lands of Zafakhara rather than the inhabitants of the city or Holds. Mounted archers attempt to hit moving targets, while foot archers aim at increasingly small targets placed at ranges of 150-250 feet. Occasionally, one of the archers will uncork an errant shaft into the cheap seats, adding an extra degree of excitement to the proceedings...

Last Chance — Occasionally, during periods of major offensives against Samili territories — or in times of inter-tribal conflict, where the Chieftain or the Temple priests must suppress heretical or treasonous opposition to their authority — the dungeons of the city may become filled with prisoners. At such times, prisoners may be offered an opportunity to fight for their freedom in the arena during one of the major Feast Day celebrations. Most of these contests pit prisoners (unarmored and armed with small axe and shield) against lions, bears or wolves, either one on one or in groups. These contests are often the source of spirited though small-scale betting. Less frequently, the prisoners are forced to fight each other, to the death, with the aforementioned ybarri; there are risks, however, when the two opponents are comrades in arms, for they may turn on the arena guards and attempt to make their escape, placing important civil and lay Temple officials in possible danger.

Finally, in cases where the powers that be do not want to give a prisoner much realistic chance at survival, he (along with as many as 3-6 fellow inmates) will be matched against the well-known gladiator Following (#022) in one of the more grotesque and bizarre spectacles of the games. The prisoners start off unarmed and unarmed, although there are a number of daggers and main-gauches scattered about the ring. Their opponent, Following, is a massive giant, 7-1/2 feet and 325 pounds of poorly contained fury, armed with a bastard sword he swings one-handed and a large spiked shield, and armored in +2 chainmail (which he

wears at no adjustment to CDN, REF or MA due to his great strength). Those knowledgeable with the Thieves Guild combat system will readily see that the only way Following can be seriously harmed by a blow is if a prisoner manages to land a critical hit or make a successful strike from behind using Silent Movement. To make matters worse, the weapons to be found on the arena floor are of very poor quality, and have a 15% chance of breaking on each blow struck. Following, who when not participating in these fights is an Arena Guard and a backstreet bully (he really is not that awesome a fighter, despite his massive bulk and raw physical power, due to his lack of quality training or experience), is well aware of his apparent invincibility, and in easy matches will often toy with his foes to the joy of many in the crowd. The bookmakers love betting on these battles with outsiders, to whom they will quote seemingly exorbitant odds (up to 5x the number of Following's opponents to 1). Locals do not bet on these matches (they know the real odds), but the more bloodthirsty spectators would not miss one of these 'contests' for anything short of near-fatal illness or 1,000,000 GP.

Jonpul is almost always (95%) in attendance at the games; while present, he is a bundle of nervous energy, moving constantly back and forth between the gladiators' room, the stables, his small personal office at the base of the east wall, the kitchens, and the dignitaries' boxes. Although Gheddi has several trustworthy employees, his philosophy remains "If you want a job done right, do it yourself!" — and things seldom go wrong at the Ring of Champions.



Becoming an Arena Combatant

In general, the contestants in the games are current or former warriors from the Zat'akhari army or out-of-work adventurers or mercenaries. Any player wishing to participate in these games to seek fame or modest fortune, however, will usually be welcomed regardless of his character class or experience level, because Jonpul is always anxious to find 'new blood'. Players may enter the games by contacting Jonpul directly at the arena office; if the character is an impressive enough specimen, Gheddi may even agree to see him at his home (#37). Jonpul will interview any legitimate candidate at some length in order to get a feel for his potential; asking for details of the latter's exploits, the type of fighting he has done and the nature of his experience — a few judicious tall tales or exaggerations may help in creating a proper impression, although GMs should note that Jonpul knows a great deal about the activities of the region's army and mercenary companies, and will likely see through any elaborate fictions involving such units.

To determine the Master's initial reaction to the applicant, the character should make a saving roll against MAG, adding 1 point to his rating for every point of STR, CDN, REF or STM over 12 he possesses and subtracting 1 point for any of these requisites below 8, and awarding appropriate bonuses or penalties for the skill with which the player has sold himself to Gheddi. If the saving roll is made, Jonpul will gladly schedule the character in the next upcoming show; if missed, Gheddi will still let the character participate, but only if he pays a sufficient monetary inducement (termed an 'entry fee', the amount of which may vary from 5 GP upwards depending on how badly the save was missed). If the saving roll result was less than 1/2 the necessary value, Jonpul may (65%) take a personal interest in the player's gladiatorial future, arranging for training from some of his loyal regulars and possibly even stacking the draw of the upcoming competition to give the newcomer a good chance for a high placing. Thereafter, Jonpul's opinion of a character will normally change only in response to actual events — improving if the latter becomes a popular crowd favorite, or does the Master some sort of favor, declining if he becomes a source of 'trouble', making special demands or missing scheduled appearances. Gheddi's reactions may also abruptly change, however, if the gladiator makes friends or enemies among the current power elites of the city.

Arena candidates may alternatively decide to begin their careers by seeking out one of the several individuals whose sole profession is the training, care and management of a stable of arena fighters. Such men are generally uninterested in talk, preferring to see what a candidate can do by placing him up against one of his current fighters. If the player can hold his own successfully, there is a 60% chance (plus 2% for each relevant attribute — STR, CDN, REF, STM — above 12, -2% if below 8) that the trainer will take him on. GMs should note that trainers, like fighters, can fall in or out of favor with the Temple or Chieftain — a smart player will listen to the grapevine before picking a trainer to approach.

The amount of attention the character will receive from his new trainer will depend on the number of equal or higher quality fighters in the stable — GMs may set up such groups by using the following procedure:

- 1) determine number of fighters by rolling 2D6;
- 2) roll up character stats for each fighter in normal fashion (3D6); sum STR, CDN, REF and STM and multiply the result by 2;
- 3) to this total, add the character's arena experience in number of combats as indicated below (roll D100):

01-20	Novice	(1D4 fights)
21-65	Bloodied	(2D6 fights)
66-95	Veteran	(5D10 fights)
96-00	Champion	(10D20 fights)

- 4) add on the following skill bonuses (numbers in parentheses indicate a NPC fighter's chance of possessing each skill):

Horsemanship	+10	(70%)
Expert Horsemanship	+20	(25% if basic)
Mace	+5	(50%)
Flail	+5	(30%)
Sword	+10	(35%)
Bow	+5	(60%)
Expertise in any above weapon	+5	(20% if basic)
Wrestling/Brawling	+5	(40% each)
Unarmed Combat*	+5	(20%)
Martial Arts*	+10	(5%)

- * These skills are not available as normal player character trainings in Thieves' Guild, but may be considered to have been acquired during the player's career experience — GM's discretion.

When completed, compare the player's total to that of the other fighters in the stable to determine his relative rank — the higher the rank, the more importance he will accorded. Note also that a similar approach can be used in creating Ring opponents for the characters, using the above rolls to determine the sorts of combat bonuses each should have.

Trainers will take care of getting their fighters entered, and obtain medical/healing attention when they are wounded; they may in some cases provide their charges with additional amenities like new weapons and armor or free lodging (often little more than a straw mat in the gym loft or a cheap rooming house cubby) — the more they do, of course, the higher a percentage they will take out of any purses the fighter later wins.

Speaking of purses, payoffs are always provided to the highest placed finishers in each arena event. Since the purses are based on a set fraction of total paid admissions and seating fees, prizes will vary from week to week based on the size of the crowd and the number of other events presented. As a general rule, however, first prizes in the various events usually fall in the following ranges:

Mounted Combat	150-300 GP
Mounted Teams	75-125 GP (team)
Hand-to-Hand	90-150 GP
Fencing	60-100 GP
Archery	40-80 GP

Second place finishers usually receive 1/3 to 1/2 the winner's share. If the field of entrants is large enough, small prizes may also be given to third and higher placed finishers. Of course, the additional amount a character (and his friends) can earn from wagers is (hypothetically, at least) unlimited.

The Bazaar

This open-air plaza near the center of town is, to the common citizen of Zal' Akhen, the nerve center of daily life. While the powerful leaders residing in the Castle or the Great Temple of Zat'ak may often seem remote, this marketplace teems with action every day. As much as 75% of the monetary commerce of Zal' Akhen takes place among these crowded aisles of tents, and donkey carts, and occasionally canopied pavilions. It is here that the traders, travelling the road from dhar Ankhes to the Casanu Pass, seek to diversify their stocks of wares or to turn a large profit at the expense of a largely unschooled buying public. And, because the first two groups of traders are present, it is here that the few merchant entrepreneurs of Zat'akhara have flocked, trying to make an honest (or dishonest) shilling for themselves by serving as middle-men in these transactions.

In general, the Bazaar operates between dawn and dusk, although a few negotiations may continue on well past nightfall. Many of the sellers (particularly the poorer ones) bed down for the evening right in their stalls, remaining close by their precious cargoes. Often, scattered fires will be set against the chill of night throughout the plaza, drawing those nearby — at these impromptu gatherings, rumors and tales may be swapped, or someone with a strong voice or musical instrument may provide a bit of entertainment. At the first light of morning, however, the hawkers resume their (for the most part) good-natured rivalries, defaming the talents of their neighbors while exalting the wondrous qualities of their own wares.

With few exceptions, the sellers at the Bazaar are transients, here for a few days and then just as suddenly gone, heading back to their villages or out on the road again. Thus, there are almost always spaces available for newly arrived traders. Newcomers may 'luck' into a prime selling location, but it's far more likely that they'll have to fight with other like-minded new arrivals over its possession, or make the proper overtures (a percentage of the take, bribe, etc.) to the agents of Cleff responsible for keeping matters in the Plaza under control. Once settled in, a player's success at making money here will depend on the uniqueness of his product, his bargaining abilities, and his basic rapport with the potential customers passing by.

Buying at the Bazaar

Players wandering through the Bazaar may wish to purchase some of the wares they see on display. In doing so, they will have the opportunity to engage in an activity that takes place in every open air flea market throughout our world — the fine art of haggling. The GM portrays the seller in these transactions, using the tables presented below. In case the chosen stall is not one which has been described as part of this book, the procedure detailed below should be used.

The following tables may be used to determine the merchandise available at any unspecified stall in the

Bazaar (they are a simplification of the ones included in Gamelords' city book Secrets of the Labyrinth).

- 1) Determine the size of the vendor's stall (roll D100):
 - 01-45 nothing more than a spot on the ground for the vendor to display his wares;
 - 46-65 a small pushcart or wagon;
 - 66-85 a tent or lean-to;
 - 86-95 a more substantial tent or, perhaps, even a pavilion (probably a fairly new one, as the few large vendors in the Bazaar are well-known figures which will be described below);
 - 96-00 an actual building made of adobe or wood (once again, the likelihood is that this vendor will be newly-established or ensconced in a newly-built building).
- 2) Determine the merchandise being offered, using the table below:

FOODS

01-03	Baker
04-06	Butcher
07-09	Fresh Fruit
10-12	Fresh Produce
13-14	Herbs & Spices
15-18	Ales & Wines, cold beverages
19-22	Dairy Products
23-25	Travel Rations
26-28	Sweetmeats
29-30	Other Foodstuffs

DURABLE GOODS

31-32	Soaps
33	Cosmetics
34-36	Oils, Candles, Lamps
37-40	Trinkets and Talismans
41-42	Linens, Cloth, Weaving, Ropes/Nets
43-44	Dyes, Paint
45-46	Ink and Writing Supplies
47-48	Wooden Goods
49-50	Stonework
51-53	Pottery
54-56	Jewelry
57-58	Silver-, Goldsmithy
59-62	Metalwork
63-66	Leatherwork
67-70	Animals (sacrifice/food)
71-73	Baskets or Coopers
74-75	Fletcher, Bowyer
76-78	Blacksmith/Armorer
79-80	Rugs and Carpets
81-83	Cobbler
84	Furniture
85-86	Junk

SERVICES

87-89	Barber/Leech/Dentist
90-91	Herbalist
92	Doctor/Healer
93	Scribe
94-95	Tinker
96-98	Tailor/Seamstress
99-00	Moneylender

- 3) Once size and contents of the stall have been determined, the GM should determine the following: the relative quality of the goods, the honesty and the origin of the vendor. The first two

may be determined by a simple percentage roll, high in each case indicating high quality and moral scruples, respectively; the third roll should be made with a d20, with 1-12 representing a local (Zal' Akheni) merchant, 13-17 a Zaf'akhari tribesman, and 18-20 a foreign merchant. The tables below should then be employed to determine the buyer's success at purchasing the item of his/her choice.

Separate tables are provided for each of the three classes of sellers found in the Bazaar — tribesmen, merchants of Zal' Akhen, and foreign traders. To begin, the GM determines the initial bargaining price given by the seller, by rolling one die, multiplying the result by 10%, and adding it to the following base: tribesmen 60%, Zal' Akheni merchants 90%, and foreign traders 140% of normal (book) value — thus, a tribesman will quote an initial price 70-120% of an item's normal value, a merchant of Zal' Akhen 100-150% of normal price, and a non-Zaf'akhari trader a price 150-200% of normal value. This value is doubled if the dealer is basically dishonest (those marked with an asterisk in the descriptions of Bazaar denizens). The player then makes an offer in response, and the GM determines the reaction of the seller, rolling D6 on the appropriate table below:

Seller is:		ZAT'AKHARI TRIBESMAN		
Buyer's offer is	<50% of price	50-75% of price	>75% of price	
1	Accepts	Accepts	Accepts	Accepts
2	Lowers 20%	Accepts	Accepts	Accepts
3	Lowers 10%	Lowers 20%	Accepts	Accepts
4	Insulted	Lowers 10%	Accepts	Accepts
5	Final Offer	Insulted	Lowers 10%	Accepts
6	Attack	Final Offer	Insulted	Accepts
Seller is:		MERCHANT OF ZAL'AKHEN		
Buyer's offer is	<50% of price	50-75% of price	>75% of price	
1	Lowers 20%	Accepts	Accepts	Accepts
2	Lowers 10%	Lowers 10%	Accepts	Accepts
3	Lowers 10%	Lowers 10%	Lowers 10%	Accepts
4	Insulted	Insulted	Lowers 5%	Accepts
5	Refusal	Insulted	Final Offer	Accepts
6	Refusal	Final Offer	Final Offer	Accepts
Seller is:		FOREIGN TRADER		
Buyer's offer is	<50% of price	50-75% of price	>75% of price	
1	Lowers 20%	Accepts	Accepts	Accepts
2	Lowers 10%	Lowers 10%	Accepts	Accepts
3	Lowers 10%	Lowers 5%	Lowers 5%	Accepts
4	Insulted	Lowers 5%	Lowers 5%	Accepts
5	Refusal	Insulted	Final Offer	Accepts
6	Refusal	Final Offer	Final Offer	Accepts

Explanation of results

Accepts — Get out your money, the item is yours.

Lowers 5, 10, 20% — Seller adjusts his last offer down by the indicated percentage amount (round to the nearest SP). If the indicated adjustment would drop the seller's price below the last offer by the buyer, treat as **Accepts**.

Insulted — Seller becomes agitated with the buyer's miserliness, making much verbal complaint (and no adjustment in his offer). If, in the course of negotiations, another **Insulted** result is obtained, treat as **Final Offer**.

Final Offer — Seller will not bargain further — Buyer may take or leave his last offer.

Refusal — Seller has been greatly affronted and will not sell to Buyer under any circumstances (unless, for example, the latter is willing to pay double the originally quoted price, or some equivalent penance). If seller is dishonest, treat result as **Insulted**.

Attack — Only possible when dealing with tribesmen, it reflects the latter's primitive (but occasionally effective) negotiating style. Once set in motion, however, this option is somewhat hard to stop . . .

If the seller's reaction is either to lower his price or become insulted, the buyer may either increase his offer or repeat the same one, whereupon a new reaction is made — the process is then repeated until the sale is resolved.

(GM's Note: To increase the enjoyment of these GM-player interactions, the GM should award die roll modifiers (or penalties where appropriate) reflecting the player's skill at role-playing the situation, particularly when the player acts in a manner consistent with his character. Examples might include sarcastic comparisons to other goods, claims that the item in question is defective, or pleas of personal poverty.)

Once an item has been purchased, the GM should check its quality by secretly rolling 3D6 — on a roll of 15 or greater, the item purchased is in some way defective (if the purchaser has a talent pertinent to the class of goods purchased, the roll must be 17 or greater). If the item is purchased from a tribesman, add 1 to the result (due to poorer artisanry), if from one of the dishonest dealers (those marked with an *), add 2.

Denizens of the Bazaar

The House of Cleff

This modest two-story residence on Stone Street houses the undisputed master of the Bazaar, the mysterious figure (#023) known as Cleff (as well as myriads of nicknames like the Unseen One, the Lord of Darkness, and the Shadowmaster). It is widely reputed that no one in the city — including his closest business associates — has ever seen Cleff's face, although it is said that he (or is it she?) has controlled the activities of the plaza for almost three hundred years — through a large cadre of informants and enforcers who mind his affairs and do his bidding.

Nearly everyone in the lower city has some tale to tell about Cleff, or some opinion about his true identity. Some say he is a master criminal who has somehow attained virtual immortality, while others contend he is a great wizard who has been arcanelly exiled within his small chamber (but otherwise retains his potent magical powers). Still others claim that there have been many who have borne the name of Cleff, asserting that the persona of the man of mystery is but a symbolic mantle passed on by each of its owners to his or her

handpicked successor. In fact, all of these conjectures have some element of truth to them.

Cleff is a master mage of almost 350 winters whose particular expertise lies in the casting of illusions and other spells of the mind. Cleff's fortunes brought the young but already highly talented spellcaster to Zal' Akhen in the first days of its construction. Observing the confusion and disorganization which prevailed, the illusionist brashly seized the moment and approached the God-King with a most interesting offer. Asserting that the native minions of Za'tak simply lacked the mind-set to instill order in the city's trade activities, Cleff offered himself as the means of developing this organization. Za'tak would have almost certainly rejected this proposal as a self-serving power grab — had Cleff not added the twist of making the organizer an unseen presence with no public profile or power, beholden to Za'tak's continued support. Za'tak accepted the offer but remained wary of his new associate, and might well have had Cleff eliminated had he returned triumphant from dhar Ankhes. Instead, Cleff found the only man fully aware of his true identity and powers dead, and his influence in the city's continuing affairs assured — a position he has tenaciously maintained, beside frequent opposition, ever since.

Today, through the efforts of various potent herbs and talismans and rejuvenation rituals, the Shade maintains the general vitality and appearance of a man in his late 40's. Despite appearances, however, Cleff's real base of operations now lies far beyond Stone Street, in a small and well hidden fastness deep in the Oakenthorn mountain range, along one of the small tributaries of the Daboh River. Cleff and his small order of apprentices live and conduct their researches here, connected to Zal' Akhen by a powerful teleportal. They employ a multitude of locals and ex-warriors to act as their eyes, ears, and hands, and can usually manage to get a piece of any major economic transaction which occurs in Zal' Akhen.

One does not have to take any interest in Cleff to become entwined in his labyrinthine machinations and plans; on the contrary, it is usually he (through his associates, of course) who comes looking for you. Enough people have been summoned to his lair that it would be possible to piece together a few details (often conflicting) of what to expect. In all cases, the 'visitor' is escorted to a small waiting room on the second floor of the house, on the north wall of which is a second door, and locked in. A few moments pass; an unseen bell rings, and the north door (heretofore locked and barred) swings open. The chamber within is totally dark, and light or fire spells or artifacts cannot penetrate the gloom. Once the visitor enters, the door slams behind him, and the interrogation begins.

At this point, the accounts given by various people begin to differ sharply. Some claim that at times, Cleff's voice seems to float ethereally above them, while at other moments he appears to be whispering directly into their ears; the voice itself ranges from deep bass to mezzo soprano. Others speak of muffled animal cries in the distance or the swish of blades cutting the air close upon them, or the sight of many hundreds of pairs of glowing eyes peering through the darkness. More urbane traders (those that will even speak of their

experiences at all!) tell of subtler nightmares, of facing disorienting illusions of sight and sound, or reliving painful memories from their pasts. The combination of Cleff's skill in crafting illusory menaces, and the use of his apprentices as surrogates, make each visit a unique experience to be remembered (and who could forget!).

If it seems clear from these narratives that Cleff's interrogation room is designed to strike fear into the hearts of its visitors, let it be said that it is most effective in achieving its purpose, for most of Cleff's visitors do indeed tell him almost anything he wishes to know. One should note, however, that the threats posed by this room are not entirely illusory — for there are some who have walked up the stairs in Cleff's house, and never returned. Those visitors who successfully fight off the illusions, and come too near the truth are usually dealt with quickly, as Cleff will utilize his abilities at hypnotism and mind control to enter their mind and remove their memories, turning them loose in the hills in an amnesiac state. Those that survive this second onslaught will have an excellent opportunity to bargain with Cleff on a fair price for keeping his secrets (a price he will pay readily, although he will also keep the character in question under close surveillance and unleash full wrath if the individual appears to be spreading his knowledge to others — even the rest of the party).

Cleff and his minions devote a good deal of effort to staying on the proper side of the city leaders; they regularly make large monetary contributions to the Temple of Za'tak, and donate heavily to the supply stores of the army. Nonetheless, there are yet occasions when a Chieftain or a High Priest does become suspicious of the Unseen One's intentions, and will initiate some investigation of the house on Stone Street and begin to harass Cleff's men. In such times of trouble, Cleff has been able to avoid long term problems by rewarding his continued supporters in high places with gifts of relatively powerful (albeit short-lived) artifacts. In sooth, all indications are that Cleff is content with the niche he has carved for himself, and is totally disinterested in the continuing struggles of the Valley. He will sell information to any interest willing to pay, including fringe types like his neighbor the arch-mage Cyldor Dune.

(GM's Note: Cleff has been set up in a truly open-ended manner [befitting mysterious origins], so that each GM can design the character to best fit in with the style of his own campaign universe. He should be capable of both gross magnitude illusions and subtle mind control spells [Telepathy, Telekinesis, Thought Alteration]. The interrogation room [and the secret panel behind it that leads to the teleportal] should be well guarded with those illusions and real traps and weaponry.)

The Minions of Cleff

The men and women in Cleff's employ supervise almost every aspect of the day-to-day operations of the Bazaar — they issue licenses, assign selling spaces, and settle disputes that break out between trader and customer, or trader and trader. Many of Cleff's minions are venal, corrupt, despicable individuals — but they are also powerful and tough enough to make any trader who does not cooperate with them **persona non grata** with the vast bulk of the merchant community in this

city. Several samples of the type of help employed by Cleff are described below, for the GM's use in setting up encounters and scenarios in the Bazaar and elsewhere around the city.

Watsitua (#024) is a husky, sullen blond, an enforcer, whose jobs are to break up fights in the Bazaar and to keep its tradesmen in line. He gladly gave up the warrior's life for this much easier, and more lucrative, enterprise. Though he is lazy and a bit of a bully, he is not an evil man, and will not go out of his way to cause trouble. When confronted with an altercation, he prefers to threaten rather than fight (if possible), and he does have a booming voice and an imposing physique, sufficient to command attention (if not always compliance). If set upon by more than one foe, he will use his one possession of value, a Blast ring (does 2D8 of damage to anyone in a 10' radius of the wielder, has 10 uses) to try to even the odds. Except for the night of his hiring, Watsitua has never been to the house on Stone Street, and he hopes to keep it that way; he is in the outermost circle of Cleff's associates, and seldom has much information of interest beyond his own current assignment. He has a great fondness for good food and better liquor, and can be fairly easily bribed with those commodities to 'look the other way' if a matter is of small enough consequence.

Odler Blank (#025) is the subject of a popular joke making the rounds of the Bazaar — it claims that Cleff must be a Lizard Man, since that's the only way he could put up with a snake like Odler Blank. Blank is a short, fat, oily-complexioned fellow in his thirties, with close-set eyes, an asthmatic wheeze, and a ring of unsightly warts around his neck (another jest says the warts mark the line for the headsman's axe). His personality — grasping, venal, always looking to make a profit from any situation — is as distasteful as his physical appearance. Odler always has a wealth of fresh rumors about the activities of the people of the Bazaar, including his fellow employees, and dutifully passes the information on to Cleff (visiting the house on Stone Street at least once each week). If two people are talking quietly together, it's an almost sure bet Odler's just around the corner, listening intently. If a secret shipment of goods is on the way, he'll be standing there when it arrives, with his hand out for a share.

When first encountered, Blank will grandiloquently proclaim that he can provide any service that a player needs, trying to collect his payment in advance if possible. Of course, his reach often exceeds his grasp, so that, at any given moment, many men may be looking for Blank with mayhem in their eyes. Odler, however, is a survivor, and has a tremendous ability to weasel his way out of tight spots. He has a remarkable facility (for a fat man) for disappearing into a crowd (~20% to normal tailing chances if in the Bazaar) and knows many places of concealment in that area. If cornered, he will snivel and whine, and try to satisfy his erst-while tormenters either with information (and he is likely to know rumors that could lead to money-making opportunities) or, as a last resort, cold cash. If these offers fail, he will threaten Cleff's vengeance if he is harmed (this may not be just an idle boast); if forced to fight, of course, he has a poisoned-tipped dagger (potency level 8; reduces character CDN, REF and MA by 1/2 for 30-STM minutes unless saving roll versus STM-4 is made).

Anndra 'Dragonflower' (#026) a tall, lithe young blond woman of 20 years, is known among Cleff's agents by the rather derogatory nickname of Dragonflower, referring to the acid tongue and fiery temper that lie behind her comely face. Anndra has her eye set on rising in the Unseen One's hierarchy, and takes her duties very seriously. In addition to the normal administrative tasks of the Bazaar, Anndra's job is to gather information from incoming traders and visitors to the Bazaar about events outside the city walls. If she believes that an individual has a tale worth hearing, she may use the promise of sexual favors to obtain the story — she does not often carry through with these promises, however, and then at her choice, not his. Anndra can handle herself adequately in a fight with either cutlass or bare hands; nonetheless, of late she has attracted the unwanted attentions of one of Cleff's youngest hirelings, Derek z'Alaar (#027), who has taken it upon himself to protect her honor. There is a 40% chance that the latter is shadowing her movements at any given time.

Several months ago, Anndra made the near-fatal mistake of claiming (while in a rather besotted state) that she had actually seen the face of Cleff — under intimate circumstances! She does not take kindly to anyone inquiring or reminding her about this incident, which resulted in a summons and painful interrogation session at Stone Street, and a month's demotion to menial duty.

Rillias (#028) is an old and balding, stoop-shouldered man of nearly sixty, almost deaf and half-blind in one eye; however, the man called 'the Treasurer' is still a vital cog in Cleff's smooth running machine. Time has not dulled Rillias' photographic memory in the slightest, and he remains a walking encyclopedia about his 40+ years of experience in Bazaar affairs. Rillias knows which merchants have aided Cleff most and least in the past, and keeps many lists of favors owed, and markers to be paid. He is often called upon to settle disputes between traders over payments of fees, ownership of goods, or territorial rights ("Just ask the Treasurer — he'll tell you... I'm paid up/that's my personal brand/this has always been my stall", etc.) — his word is taken as the final authority in such disputes. Though a mediocre fighter at best, even in his prime, Rillias' skills are so prized that he was once kidnapped by an outside criminal 'boss' seeking to take over Cleff's operations. Legend has it that Cleff congratulated the kidnapper for his perspicacity just prior to hurling him into oblivion.

Rillias' most prized possessions are a pair of magnifying lenses given to him by Cleff as a reward for his loyal service. These aids enable him to still enjoy his second love, the substantial library of books and scrolls (estimated value 15,000 GP) he has accumulated over the years; these volumes fill almost every corner and cranny of his small two room flat on Stone Street (#33). Many of these books have been purchased from foreign dealers, and it is said that some are banned texts dealing with the necromantic arts (even though no one has ever seen Rillias use magic, this rumor is true; his consuming interest is in the rituals of demonological summoning — the old man has all the knowledge necessary to Summon a fairly substantial Demon, but has always been too afraid of failure to attempt it; if pushed to the brink of death by an attacker, however, the

latter might receive quite a vicious surprise). Portions of Rillias' collections are guarded by various traps (see TG7 for suggested variations), but his most reliable protection lies in his proximity to Cleff's abode, and the constant presence of a number of the Shade's minions in the area.

Micah h'Raald (#029), a quiet man of roughly forty years, with a statesman's presence and demeanor, is the individual in Cleff's organization chiefly responsible for greasing the palms of local Guard and Temple personnel, in order to keep the noses of those officials out of Bazaar affairs. A member of one of the hereditary ruling families who suffered the misfortune of having a kinsman receive the mantle of leadership just three years before he himself came of age, Micah was a successful member of the Zat'akan priesthood for nearly twelve years, eventually rising to the position of Fire-Thrall of the casanu tribe. During this period, Micah learned the spells he retains today. h'Raald found his way to the High Temple at Zal' Akhen blocked, however, by the machinations of the recently deceased Archpriest, apparently as the result of a petty difference of theological opinion over the proper interpretation of a minor cult legend. His faith soured by this blatant display of personal politics, h'Raald received permission to leave the Cult's service; soon, after a brief fling as a trader in fire-jewels, he discovered Cleff's wide-ranging operations, a proper showcase for his considerable talents at conciliation and negotiation.

As previously noted, Cleff (through Micah and other lesser agents) makes regular, sizable contributions to the upkeep of both the High Temple and the Chieftain's Guard. Micah is given considerable discretion in deciding when these donations need to be specially supplemented, or temporarily cut, to demonstrate his master's pique over a given policy decision. He has proven quite adept at reading shifts in the official mood (60% chance of anticipating a crackdown against their operations or a change in policy before it occurs). h'Raald does not overstep his authority and seems quite content with his present position, having proven deaf to a number of enticements to take advantage of his power over Cleff's pursestrings. He has a wife (recently taken) and infant son; the three live modestly but well in a small house along Eastern Avenue (#34).

Hallem Wotts (#030), a well-muscled, dark-skinned ex-gladiator, is another of Cleff's enforcers. Hallem is a hard case, who seems to take malicious pleasure in watching his victims squirm, and often appears to be spoiling for a fight from the outset of an encounter. Though at times Wotts can be reasonable, once he gets the urge to "put some hurtin'" on somebody, nothing (not apologies, bribes, or even his stated mission) seems capable of stopping him. He has a very low opinion of his fellow enforcers ('weak and soft'), and often just stands and laughs when one of them gets caught in a tight spot.

Wotts has been in Cleff's employ less than three months, and indeed has never been to the Stone Street house. The other enforcers are hopeful that Cleff will soon punish Wotts for his insubordinations and either frighten him into line or fire him; to date, none have been willing to risk the big man's wrath by being the one to accuse him (of course, Cleff knows all about Wotts'

uncontrolled nature, and has decided to let things be in order to keep the rest of his men on their toes.)

Wotts lives in one of the many cheap rooming houses scattered about the city. The place has not been marked, since Hallem's not too likely to invite anyone there, and what thief in his right mind would want to take the chance of finding him at home?

Seng-hil Holt (#031), a small, eternally smiling, green-eyed man whom many swear has the softest tread in all Zal' Akhen, has been the housekeeper at Cleff's residence for the past seven years. Holt was saved from the hangman's noose by Cleff's intervention, and offered the reasonably lucrative sinecure of household manager, provided that he would not pry into the matter of his master's true identity, or beyond the locked door of the second floor waiting room. Seng-hil, as Cleff's preliminary researches had concluded, is well satisfied with this arrangement, and has hewn to the letter of the agreement. Nonetheless, several of Cleff's men believe that Holt is being inscrutable rather than ignorant, and have concocted elaborate schemes to make him reveal what he knows (all unsuccessful, of course).

Holt is a kleptomaniac (the cause of his original legal troubles); Cleff has provided him with a specially designed leather cap that dampens these aberrant impulses when the housekeeper ventures out in public — at home, however, Seng-hil is permitted to indulge these urges whenever he can arrange it.

Merchants of Zal' Akhen

There are many more merchants frequenting the Bazaar than could be presented in a volume five times the size of this one. A representative sample is given below.

Selig the Money-Changer

Selig (#032) wanders through the Bazaar, offering most villagers (and the occasional foreign adventurer) a chance to exchange the currencies they've been paid for their goods by some foreign trader into 'good Zat'akhari coin'. What's that? — You say you don't know the exchange rate? — Well, that's what Selig is counting on! He will shortchange his patrons anywhere from 25% to 50%, depending on the later's size and apparent intelligence (smart is higher on the list as a criterion than husky, but each is important; each victim gets a saving roll against DSC to figure out that he's being cheated).

By the way, there's a small stone building (#11) on the Avenue of Urath near the Bazaar, that provides the same service (honestly) for a 5% fee — that's why Selig comes looking for you, instead of letting you come to him.

WE GOT IT! (Ibbed Mazzek, Prop.)

Ibbed (#033) commandeers a large area on the western edge of the Bazaar; it is roofed but open-aired on all four sides. He offers an ever-changing line of products, acting as middle-man for a large number of craftsmen. He wanders the Bazaar each day looking for eye-catching new wares, and tries to persuade their makers to authorize him to be their sales representative. He demands a 20% cut for displaying goods in his booth, but it is usually well worth the

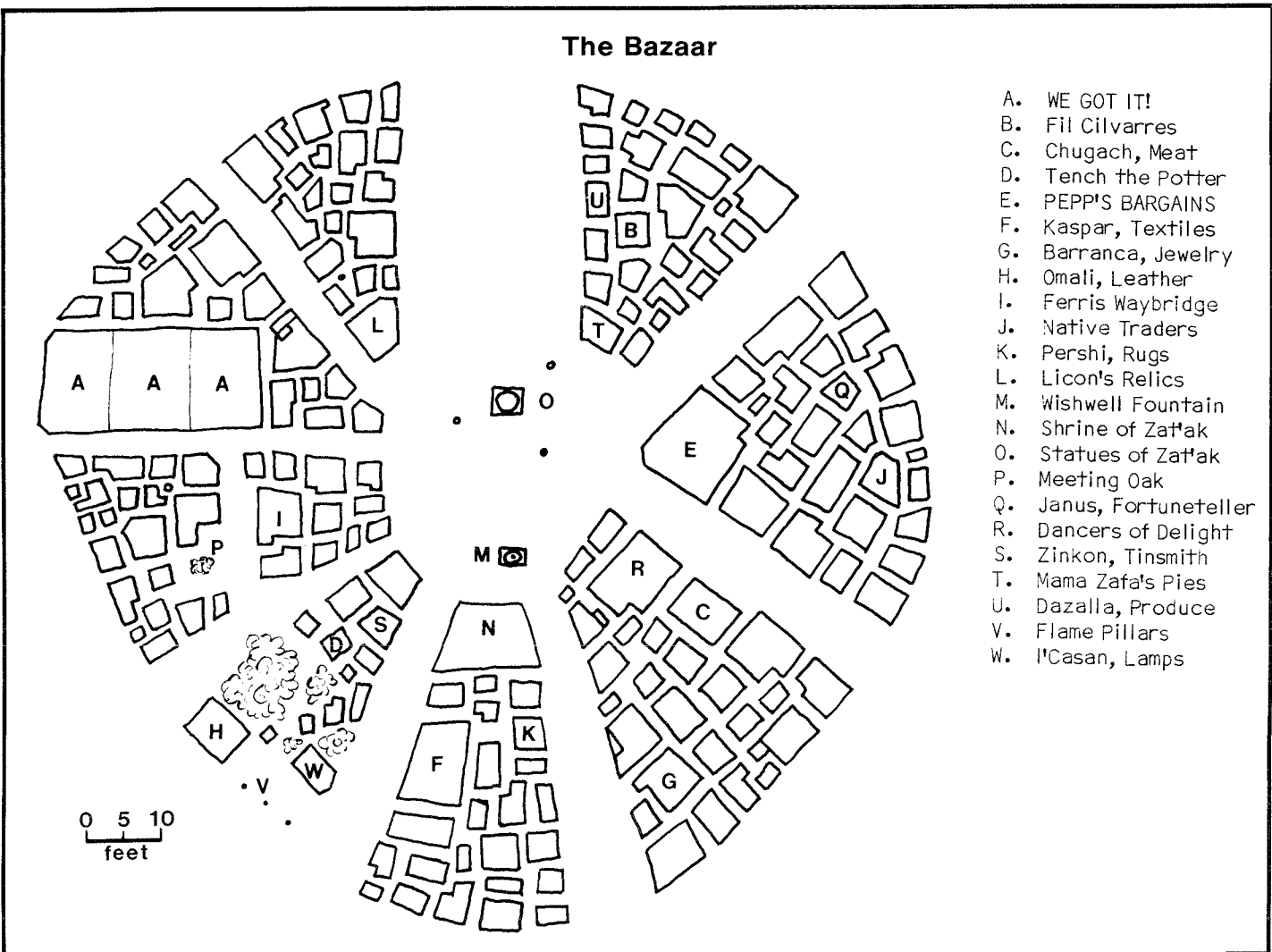
charge, since he can bargain with the skill of a foreign trader (see Buying at the Bazaar for details of this ability). Although Ibbed is not particularly popular with his neighbors in the Bazaar (he is a quintessential fast-sell artist, a loud and insincere fellow with darting eyes and a thick moustache), their complaints often fall on deaf ears, for he has a good word-of-mouth reputation for quality, and makes the bribes necessary to ensure cooperation from the agents of Cleff.

Ibbed has two pets, both of some interest. The bird Durgan has been trained to cry out "Stop thief!" if it notices anyone attempting to steal an item on the premises (50% chance it will notice such an attempt while it is taking place); the rest of the time, the parrot gaily spouts more than a dozen bits of salty bandinage to entertain (and sometimes shock or insult) passing customers. The monkey, Lurk (#034), is always in his master's company by day, tethered on a leather leash. By night, however, he is set free to prowl the Bazaar, often engaging in a bit of petty larceny (roll 2D6 - on 7, 9 or 12, he successfully makes off with a small treasure owned by one of the nearby vendors; on 8 or 11, Lurk is witnessed in the act and pursued by the victim, causing a general uproar in this part of the Bazaar lasting for 5-15 minutes). If Lurk is caught, Ibbed will make restitution to the victim (something he can well afford to do from the spoils of the slinker's successful thefts).

Fil Cilvarres, Merchant of Venous

Dom Cilvarres (#035), according to his translator, Master Willem Koh (#036), is a justly famed dealer in rugs from Tharcage, making a rare sojourn through the exotic territories of the Valley. His craftsmen have perfected the art of weaving 'shimmer silk', producing carpets which shimmer and glow, and are even able to change pattern in the dim lamplight of their small pavilion. Master Willem, after conferring with Fil in an utterly incomprehensible tongue, will offer to sell these works of art for only 250% of the cost of a normal rug.

In reality, the shimmer silk carpets are just an elaborate scam. The two lamps in the tent are equipped with elaborate filters which, when activated by Fil, create the illusions of movement described above; the rugs themselves are completely normal (and of rather mediocre quality at that). Fil and Willem are natives of the Valley, but well practiced in their gibberish spiel; they take this act from town to town, never staying longer than 24-48 hours in one place. They have been to Zal' Akhen twice before, so there is a 1 in 6 chance that a lone, extremely irate former customer will come storming toward the tent while the players are in its vicinity. Oddly enough, the two do keep a sizable amount of money with them in their tent, in a small wooden box.



Pense (Wandering Minstrel)

Pense (#037) is a frequent sight at the Bazaar, playing impromptu concerts on his flute wherever he finds a crowd gathered. He is also often be seen at the fringes of some ongoing activity, looking on in what appears to be a highly suspicious manner. If the party encounters Pense, roll D6:

- 1-3 he will be performing; if approached at the end of his concert, he will be open, friendly (especially if his palm has been greased), and inquisitive about the players' business;
- 4-5 he will appear to be following some individual in the crowd just ahead of the party;
- 6 he will seem to be tailing some member of the players' party.

In the latter two cases, Pense will try to slip away into the crowd if hailed or challenged by the players from afar; if accused face-to-face or attacked, he will reveal his true identity — as a 'house detective', paid by Cleff's men to keep an eye out for potential pickpockets or thieves. He sees much in his wanderings, and may sell or give information to those he believes to be honest. He seldom carries much cash money with him.

Chugach, the Meat Vendor

One of virtually dozens of nondescript local food vendors in the Bazaar, Chugach's (#038) singular claim to fame is that he frequently gets his meat animals for butchering at cut rates from rather shoddy dealers. On 14+ on 3D6, his current wares will be tainted by disease, making any who consume them extremely sick for the next 4D6 + 10 hours (saving roll against STM to avoid illness; otherwise, -4 to REF and CDN, 1/2 MA for duration of illness, and suffer 1D6 of damage). Chugach does keep a little cash around, to make change for those foolish enough to buy from him.

Tench, Potter

Tench the Potter (#039) is an elderly man, one of the few who live and work at the Bazaar year-round. He always commandeers the same shady corner (#D), day after day, frequently stopping his work to tell a story or listen to some fresh gossip or tales of abroad. He can be sharp-tongued, especially with 'young whipper-

snappers' who fail to show him respect. There is a 2 in 6 chance that he has recently heard a rumor that would be of interest to the party; however, they will have to wait through 1D6 long-winded reminiscences in order to hear it). Although Cleff's men leave 'the old man' alone (for he makes little money, and provides entertainment to the browsers), he has nothing but ill to say about that mysterious eminence, claiming that the Dark One is in league with the Samili. Nearly all of Tench's pots are unnotable but serviceable works, thoroughly indistinguishable from those of any half-talented, ham-handed villager; his personal treasure hoard at any moment is quite small.

PEPP'S FESTIVAL OF BARGAINS

The brothers Mannimo (#040) and Anjak (#041) Pepp run this fairly large canopied stall (#E) near the Bazaar's center during the summer months. The brothers are as different as night and day. Mannimo is a conniver and a sneak who likes nothing better than suckering a hayseed from the villages into buying a useless or defective gadget; he tries to keep his strong-shouldered, somewhat slow-witted brother occupied unloading crates and running errands, but is not always successful. Anjak has none of Manni's trading acumen, nor any desire to learn such clever trickery — he is a big soft-hearted bear of a man eager to help anyone who appears to be in trouble or down on their luck. Mannimo keeps the palms of Cleff's men well-oiled; Anjak throws them out of the stall without hesitation. The Pepps' schizoid approach to life leads to frequent arguments between the two, which occasionally fall to physical blows. Mannimo often devises elaborate promotions to lure customers into the booth (treasure Hunts, wandering jugglers, ruffled dancing girls) — he constantly disparages Anjak for the latter's one attempt at self-promotion, in which he purchased a thousand small tinder boxes engraved with the brother's likenesses to hand out as free gifts (95% of the boxes still lay in crates stacked in the rear of the stall, a testament to the pair's one common trait — a surpassing homeliness beloved only in bulldogs). The brothers have managed, with difficulty, to squirrel away something for their old age (although Anjak keeps trying to 'loan' it to various down-on-their-luck sobbers).



Foreign Traders

The following are a smattering of foreign merchant groups that a party might encounter on a visit to the Bazaar. These groups are also used to simulate the Caravan encounter listed in the Random Encounters descriptions provided later in this book.

Kaspar

Kaspar (#042) is a textile merchant, carrying silks and cotton goods east to sell. He plans to purchase wool from the local sellers on the return trip, but will buy now if he can strike a good bargain. His caravan consists of two mule-driven wagons, and five fairly green guards (#043 to #044); two of the latter will accompany him on his visits to the Bazaar. He is staying at the Flying Falcon (#1).

Barranca Castamilla

Barranca (#045) is a quite attractive Za'takhari woman of early middle age, a jewel merchant by trade. She is journeying south to the Khuz mountains, to trade with the dwarven enclave there, and has stopped in Zal' Akhen primarily to seek information about the current state of trade with Darnaiga, and the level of orc raiding activity in that area. Barranca is carrying a substantial sum of money with her on this trip, kept in a strongbox protected by two Lock spells. She is traveling on horseback, accompanied by three kinsmen (#046, loyal to the death). One of her childhood companions, Harad-uul (#047), is now a High Priest of Za'tak. She will frequently be seen with him while here, creating quite a stir in the local rumor mill.

Omali

Omali (#048) is a burly, tremendously good-natured Gamuran leather goods maker. He has obtained selling space in the Bazaar, and intends to hawk his wares for a time before heading back home. While in town, he is always on the lookout for drinking companions — he is a prolific carouser, and given to wild spur-of-the-moment pranks that often lead to trouble and encounters with the city Guard (and though his amulet keeps his reactions from being dulled, it does not protect his new-found friends, who often wind up spending a few days in a jail cell). Omali traveled to Zal' Akhen in the company of several experienced mercenaries, now discharged — he is interested in finding some greener guards willing to work for lower pay on the return trip. Omali's personal treasure will be modest on his arrival (30D6 GP), but will be tripled by the time of his departure.

Ferris Waybridge*

Ferris (#049) is a travelling weapons seller, who claims to be from Haven. He has a wide selection of swords, axes and knives. His wares have double the normal chance of being defective (12 or more on 3D6), for he is an extremely shady dealer. In some cases (2 in 5), the defects in the weapon will be evident to any trained fighter who picks it up (poorly balanced, dull edge, etc.); the remainder of the defective weapons will seem normal when wielded, but are poorly tempered and highly breakable (break on any fumble test). Ferris will replace a defective weapon with a good one, if the buyer is still alive and can catch up with him. He jealously guards his small cache of fine weapons, and will try to charge a price 50% to 150% above normal. He

travels with two bravos (#050) who are fully aware of their employer's dishonesty, and have no qualms about it; all will surrender quickly if things look bad.

Other Faces and Places of Zal' Akhen

The Horse Market

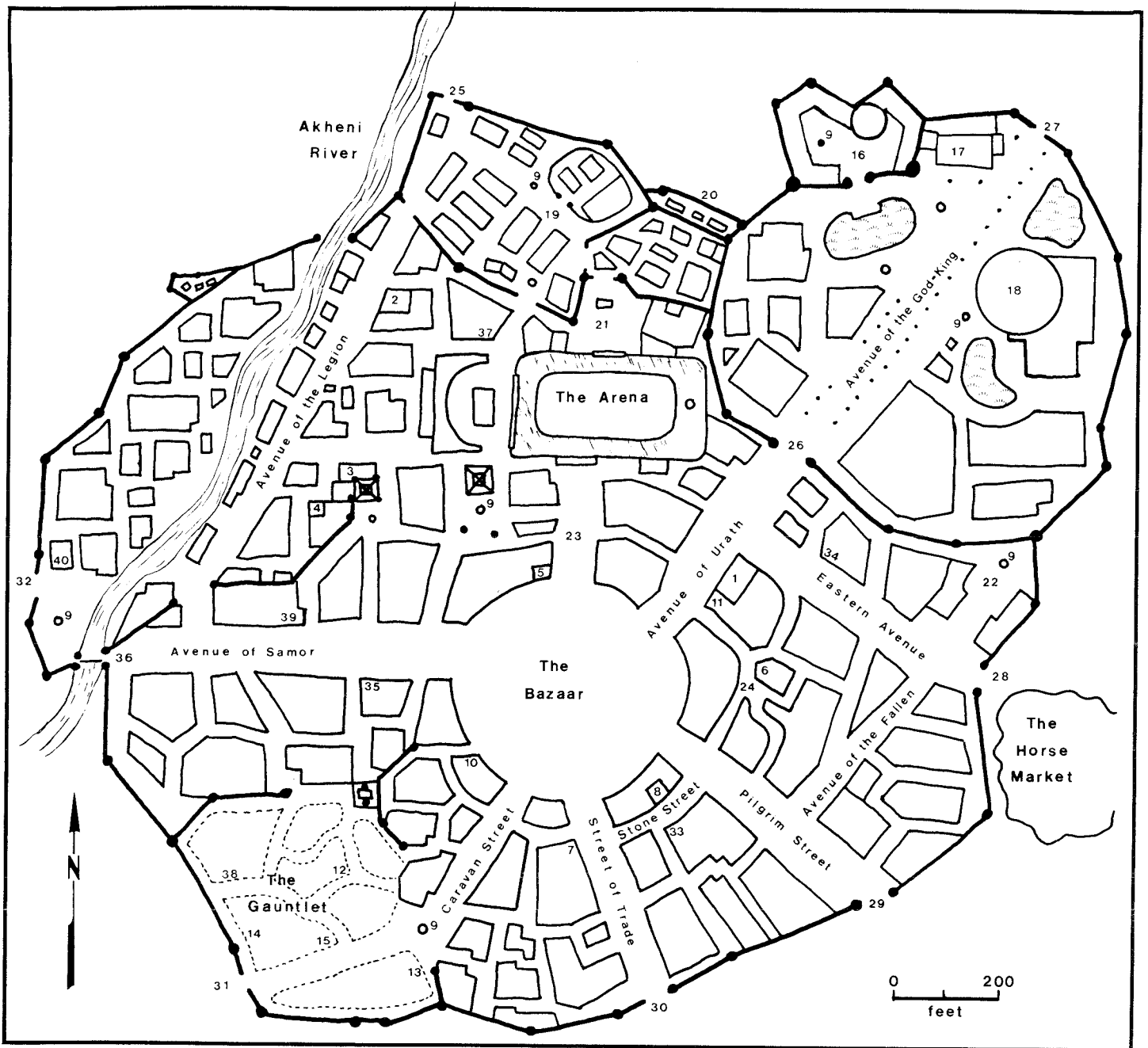
This sprawling complex of corrals and barns lies just east of the city's outer walls, and is open for business from dawn to dusk. The complex normally houses 300–500 beasts, and about 306 independent traders, all under the iron-handed jurisdiction of Keesuf (#051) the Horse-Master. Most of the stock caught on the Gamuran and Sabahi plains and sold here will make suitable common mounts or draft animals; about 20% possess the physical qualities of a good riding horse, and another 306–10 beasts possess the qualities necessary for a true Warhorse. Many of the beasts have not yet been broken, and will require the attentions of an Expert Horseman before they can be rendered serviceable for use.

Although any independent trader at the Market can attempt to sell his own stock if he wishes, the Horse Master customarily bargains for the group as a whole, to ensure that each trader receives a fair share of the sales and profits. Keesuf is a tall, sullen-looking man who speaks sparingly and conveys an image of unswerving truthfulness through his quiet, reserved demeanor. In fact, Keesuf is far from honest; he is a good judge of the knowledgeability of his customers (40% chance of determining whether the latter have Horsemanship or Husbandry). He will attempt to take advantage of unschooled buyers (either by unloading damaged goods, or by greatly overrating a horse's abilities); if, however, he perceives the customer to be an experienced horseman, he will bargain quite scrupulously (he will also bargain fairly if he should fail his judgment roll above, preferring to take no unnecessary chances). He expects the traders using his services to keep their mouths closed, and will be vengeful if the latter contradict their claims and blow a prospective deal (it is rumored that Keesuf killed two traders six months ago for wagging their tongues around town about his trading practices — the rumor is totally correct, and he would not hesitate to do the same again if he feels his reputation is threatened).

By night the corrals are guarded by a dozen men (#052 to #054 — all armed with spear, lasso or bola, and knife). The terrain surrounding the shelter is clear, offering little cover to any person attempting approach and providing a good vantage to those on guard. Keesuf frequently (50%) will not be present, spending his evening drinking and gaming at the Flying Falcon or the Golden Flame. He is a sore loser, with a well-earned reputation as an expert knife fighter (+2 to HP in hand to hand combat, due to his unusual degree of experience in this form of fighting).

The Flying Falcon (#1)

The closest thing to a first class inn in the land, the Falcon has hot bathing facilities, relatively clean good-sized rooms, and passable food — but it is still a far cry from the type of facility an urbane Havener



The City of Zal' Akhen

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. The Flying Falcon | 15. Brothers of Mordecai | 28. Horse Gate |
| 2. The Golden Flame | 16. Chieftain's Castle | 29. Pilgrim's Gate |
| 3. Mercenaries' Guild | 17. Chieftain's Guard | 30. Tradesmen Gate |
| 4. Malthor's Weaponry | 18. Temple of Zattak | 31. Lower Gate |
| 5. Wolgur's Fire Stones | 19. Legion Compound | 32. New Gate |
| 6. The Shattered Sword | 20. Tower of Urath | 33. House of Rillias |
| 7. Tendal, Bowyer | 21. Plaza of Sen-Kumar | 34. House of h'Raald |
| 8. House of Cleff | 22. Plaza of the Fallen | 35. House of Gurtel |
| 9. Flames of Zattak (7) | 23. Avenue of Champions | 36. Bridge of Victory |
| 10. Apothecary Shop | 24. The Serpentine | 37. Jonpul Gheddi's House |
| 11. The Coin Exchange | 25. River Gate | 38. Karlin's House |
| 12. Verrill's Shanty | 26. Great Gate | 39. Seventh Son Tavern |
| 13. Madame Zorka's | 27. Chieftain's Gate | 40. Thalien Road inn |
| 14. Omar Janus' Hut | | |

might expect in a provincial capital. The place will sleep about 80, and is usually packed; so that those seeking accommodations for the night had best arrive early in the day. The Falcon also has two large public common rooms, a quieter dining area, and several private side rooms used for gaming or business discussions. Most of the foreign traders passing through Shaylle can be encountered within these walls sometime during their stay in the city.

Brittum Degan (#055), the proprietor of the Falcon, is a rather dour potbellied man of forty. Far from the perfect host, he tends to blame all his problems on his hapless, poorly trained subordinates. Unlike most innkeepers, he is absolutely useless as a source of information about goings-on in the city, and has no idea where one should go to purchase a given item or who one should see to accomplish a given task. By the same token, however, Brittum takes little to no interest in the activities of his guests, provided that they leave the inn standing.

Bombo Strump (#056) is one of the Falcon's several lackeys, all of whom appear to be virtually interchangeable bumbler. Bombo's personal specialty is a talent for losing luggage — a traveler making the mistake of accepting Bombo's offer to help carry his pack, chest, etc., up to the room is likely to not see the item again for several days. Conversely, sometimes the gear that winds up mistakenly placed in a character's room by Bombo offers an interesting surprise or two to its opener (containing anything from a ransom in jewels to a dead body).

The Golden Flame (#2)

The Flame is a rather rowdy bar located on the Avenue of the Legion, not more than a stone's throw from the compound of the Legion of Fiery Vengeance. The establishment is often crammed to overflowing with soldiers celebrating their return from the front, but also has its share of foreign traders, local merchants and an occasional High Priest of Zaf'ak among its patrons. The entertainments here are more coarse than at the Falcon, consisting of dancing girls in various stages of undress, bawdy troubadours, and impromptu dice games and arm wrestling contests in the corners of the Common Room. Brawls are not uncommon, and often require the intervention of on-duty army guardsmen to separate the combatants.

Ansel s'Thallen (#057), the owner of the Flame, is a bastard cousin of one of the great families, who is at times is an insider to the councils of the mighty. Ansel is an immense, ham-fisted man who always seems to be smiling. He loves to hear a good story — and is very likely to relay it to ten others within the course of an hour. His barmaids are all pert and saucy wenches, who know how to open a man's purse with flirtatious come-ons; it is said (but not confirmed) that all of Ansel's female employees have at one time or another shared his bed.

Mercenaries Guild Hall (#3)

This stark three-story stone edifice stands at the end of one of the quieter streets of the city. It provides all the services normally associated with the organization — free temporary lodging for mercenaries passing through town or between jobs, medical aid, and room, board and retraining for retired or disabled fighters. There are about a dozen permanent residents, and 10-60 temporary occupants (though, at the upper limit, one will find warriors sleeping on every floor and hallway in the building). It is said that the Guild Hall is fortified better than the Castle itself, and it is rumored that there are secret passages beneath the building that lead to several key points of the city (including the Arena, the prison, and the Legion enclosure). If one is a mercenary, he will be welcomed here with open arms, and the Hall is an excellent place to gather information about available job opportunities in the area, or just to catch up on local gossip. If one is not a mercenary, the Hall's inhabitants are likely to be quite closemouthed, unless their questioner reveals a willingness to pay (and pay well) for aid or information.

Auldric One-Eye (#058) is Master of the Zal' Akhen Guild Hall, a veteran whose fighting career ended seven years ago when he triggered a trap which released a shower of burning oil (costing him the sight of one eye and leaving one side of his face severely scarred). He still exercises extensively and remains in fighting trim. He is a natural leader, well respected by his fellow residents of the Hall, and friendly with several of the officers of the Household Guard. Though he has been very successful in rehabilitating other disabled mercenaries into new lives, Auldric has never come to grips with his own injuries — he shuns the company of all women out of shame for his disfigurement, and becomes



angry and defensive if he believes others are pitying him.

Daniel Gideon (#059), the Guild's surgeon, is an unlikely fellow to encounter in a backwater like Zal' Akhen, an educated urbanite of Mandalaian descent who seems totally alien to the warrior mentality that seems to characterize most of his mercenary comrades. His small room at the Guild Hall is filled with scrolls and learned tomes; his clothing (obtained at great expense from foreign traders) and bearing give him a most aristocratic appearance. He is reckoned to be the best Healer in the city, and has been summoned on more than one occasion to administer to the ruling family, but he seems to take little pride in his reknown. His newlywed wife, Nancy Magill, died five years ago when their wagon was beset by thieves on the road from dhar Ankhes; since that day, Gideon has served the mercenaries who came upon him and avenged her death by bringing the bandits down. Occasionally, Gideon has been overheard talking to foreign merchants passing through the city, inquiring about news of a warrior named Raki; during such moments he appears extremely tense, and gazes about as if looking for someone.

Malthor's Weaponry (#4)

This weapons shop is a tiny one-story structure next to the Mercenaries Guild Hall; its proprietor and sole employee is Malthor 'Challa (#060), once an up and coming officer destined for a place at the Chieftain's side, who was felled by a sword stroke that left him paralyzed from the waist down. Though his legs are now withered pulp, he has found a new life through Auldric's efforts. Malthor has learned his adopted trade well, using the great manual dexterity he still possesses, and makes fine weapons (primarily axes and spears of +1 HP). His shop is well known among local fighting men, and his backlog is great. Malthor is still a simple country lad at heart when it comes to hard-nosed business, and is no match for the likes of a slick foreign trader; he is quick to learn from his mistakes, however, and will not be fooled by the same trick twice.

Barracks of the Chieftain's Guard (#17)

The elite of the army are housed in this complex of buildings set at the base of the castle's west wall. There are two underground passages leading from this area into the sub-basements of the castle itself; under normal conditions, however, both of these passages are elaborately locked and can only be accessed from the castle side (i.e., those within the castle can open them to let forces in, but those in the barracks cannot force their way into the castle). The Guard's complex includes a combat and physical training area, a large stable, mess hall, and well stocked storerooms filled with arms, common supplies, and foodstuffs. Few non-army residents or visitors to Zal' Akhen will ever see its interior, for invited or uninvited guests are rare. During the fertile seasons, when fighting is heaviest, only a smattering of the Guard remain in the city, acting as a peacekeeping "police" force similar to the Lord's Men of other Holds.

Caerwyn d'Arnek (#061), the current patriarch of one of the most important families of the urusah clan, is a rangy, rock-hard career fighting man of 37 who has only recently been appointed to the post of Warlord of the Chieftain's Guard. A gifted tactician and warrior,

Caerwyn has accepted this appointment under a considerable amount of duress. He has no love of cities or of administrative detail, and fears (falsely, as it turns out) that this 'promotion' is the first step toward putting him out to pasture after a very successful career as commanding officer of one of Zal' Akhen's Border Guard units. He has taken out his frustrations by driving his men hard, and despite their grumblings has honed the Guard to a razor's edge (which is of course exactly what Gubarin expected when he recommended Caerwyn for the job). A fine horseman, he is often seen at the Horse Market, and keeps company at times with Keesuf, the Horse Master.

Caerwyn bears several magical tokens of his family's inheritance, including a ring of invisibility and a small axe with a +2 to HP. He has been keeping an eye on one of the family's younger cousins, Ankor, as a potential heir, and has used his considerable influence to aid the rise of the latter in the ranks of the urusah company.

Shalla v'Ron (#062), a tall, lithe girl of 24, with close-cropped dark hair and almond eyes, is one of about 20 women in the Chieftain's Guard. She moves with the balance and grace of a dancer, wielding her two-handed sword like it were a much lighter thrusting weapon. Though she has the mouth of a dockworker and can be very aggressive physically (in a back-slapping manner) with both friends and strangers, Shalla is quite tender-hearted and easily bruised in affairs of the heart. A number of the male Guardsmen keep a clandestine eye on her, and may quietly step in if anyone they mistrust seems to be making a play for her affections. Shalla has been much decorated for bravery, and will not hesitate to get involved if she observes trouble in the streets of the city.

Wolgur's Fire Stones (#5)

Wolgur arn Habli (#063), a rather fat, middle-aged dwarf from Darnaiga in the Ten Cities region, is one of only a handful of non-human inhabitants of Zal' Akhen. Wolgur deals primarily in 'firestones', bright red, orange and yellow pieces of topaz, opal, or quartz much prized by the more devout followers of Zaf'ak as personal adornments for cult ceremonies. The dwarf carries everything from uncut to fine polished stones, sold separately or set into necklaces, rings or bracelets. Most of his business (and hence his stock at any given time) falls in the high volume low-cost end of this spectrum, small uncut stones ranging from 5-50 GP in value. Though not a particularly inventive craftsman when it comes to jewelry-making, Wolgur has an excellent eye for quality stones and will seldom have a low grade or flawed gem for sale.

Wolgur employs four assistants in his efforts, one dwarf (his uncle Angli — #064) and three humans; these employees are typical journeyman, and Angli in particular has a bad habit of speaking as if he has decision-making authority (he doesn't) when Wolgur is out of the shop. Wolgur has heard that the Temple is planning to offer a commission to one of the city's jewelers (there are about a half-dozen qualified craftsmen in all) to produce a number of ornate bejewelled medallions to be given to the five priests scheduled to be inducted into the High Priesthood on the next Midsummer's Eve. The dwarf desperately wants this lucrative contract, and is seeking to make contact

with anyone asserting he has an 'in' with Taan Ha'myl, the Temple's treasurer and decision maker in such matters.

The Shattered Sword (#6)

This small tavern lies along the Serpentine and is a favorite among the in-town mercenaries. Prices are cheap, and you get what you pay for — service is sporadic (often serve yourself, with an honor code for payment), and the house ale is of a quality best appreciated by those who have had little but battle rations for a month. The Sword's proprietor, Olias Pathfinder (#065), is a veteran ex-mercenary who purchased the tavern with the savings from his adventuring days; he now often holds sway before the room's great crackling fireplace, recounting long-winded war stories extolling his heroic deeds. Though his retirement has added 15 pounds to his frame and a slight paunch around his middle, Olias still works out regularly and has lost none of his prodigious skill with spear or axe. He will take extreme umbrage with anyone (save the members of his former company) who questions the truth of his stories, and challenge the latter to a duel; anyone who accepts this challenge rather than apologizing had better be quite a fighter, or he is likely to wind up skewered like a pig.

The Sword is, unsurprisingly, an excellent place for anyone seeking employment as a mercenary or looking to hire a group. Olias isn't much on information himself (he's usually too busy talking to hear much), but he has good contacts and can often put characters on the right track toward information they seek.

Apothecary/Alchemist (#10)

The shop of Pavia d'Urbin (#066) contains a modest collection of alchemical potions, medicinal herbs and powders, and assorted small miscellany, most of which he prepares himself in his backroom laboratory. There is only a moderate chance (35%) that the shop will have any particular alchemical formulation or curative in stock; if not, it will take d'Urbin three times the amount of days normally required to obtain/manufacture the item. D'Urbin also has a secret panel in the floor of his lab (hidden beneath a straw mat) that leads down into a small earthen crawlway. Here he occasionally caches more powerful magical items which have been illicitly obtained from foreign traders (violating cult laws requiring all such items to be analyzed and officially authorized for use — at the cost of a small tithe and, more importantly, about a 10% chance that the artifact will be declared improper and confiscated). d'Urbin will only offer these items to regular customers, and will charge a price for these goods commensurate with the risks he takes (i.e., about 5x the prices charged in the Ten Cities region). Without Temple connections or a fortuitous encounter with a foreign artificer, however, Pavia is one of the few sources of magical artifacts available to the common Zaf'akhari. His house/shop are protected from intruders by two large mastiffs who are always present, and obey his (and only his) voice commands. The trapdoor itself is cleverly rigged so that if it is not removed properly, it will lower an earth-covered false wall that will make the crawlspace appear to be empty (1/2 normal Spot/Hidden chances to notice).

Tendal, Bowyer (#7)

Tendal (#067) makes and repairs bows, arrows and quarrels of all types, and is a fair-to-good practitioner of his art. His goods are almost always reliable, provided that the buyer does not try to press the pugnacious blond lad beyond the limits of his talent. Tendal will never admit that a task is beyond his abilities, however, and this happens more frequently than one might think. The young fellow is a crack shot himself, and often takes part in the archery competitions at the Arena, compiling an impressive record of victories — his successes have been very good for business, and have made him a hit with the ladies as well. The bowyer is growing bored with his surroundings, however, and could be tempted to join up with an adventuring party if their objective sounds lucrative — and dangerous — enough.

The Gauntlet

Beyond the southwestern walls of the city lies a rat's-nest of ramshackle shanties and burnt out snells of similar structures commonly referred to as 'the Gauntlet'. Originally, this area was levelled to serve as a parade and training ground for the Zaf'akhari military, and occasionally the area is razed and reclaimed for this stated purpose. Normally, however, it houses the dregs of Zal' Akhen — the lame, the infirm, and the kinless elderly — who eke out a meager existence here, far removed from the primitive splendors of the Flame's favored ones. The men and women of the Gauntlet are shunned by most of their fellow citizens, and few enter this realm unless they too are penniless or without hope. Yet there is life here of a sort out among the ashes, amid as odd an assortment of characters as one would care to find, and even some adventure for those brave enough to seek it out.

The average denizen of the Gauntlet is best encountered upwind; many have physical or mental deficiencies of one sort or another, and no means of obtaining care. Some few have been lucky enough to obtain menial employment in the city proper; most of these will soon be on their way out of here. Many others beg for their meager suppers along the edges of the Bazaar (occasionally drawing the wrath of Cleff's bully boys), or slowly starve. Anyone entering this area with the slightest look of prosperity about them will soon attract a grasping crowd of admirers (not all of whom are non-violent). The characters described below are among the more unique residents of the area.

Barlow Tong (#068) is a so-called 'upright man', an ex-warrior who has chosen begging over honest employment after being dismissed from the army company of Zal' Akhen for repeated insubordination. A natural bully, Tong is in his element here, as he and 3-4 of his old buddies (#069) have found it easy to force the inhabitants of the area to support and cater to them, in exchange for their dubious promises of protection from the city Guard. Tong is very anxious to discourage any other outsiders from horning in on his territory, and has a high degree of curiosity about any newcomers to the area. If encountered in the city proper, he will

approach passersby with a story that is half whining supplication (describing his horrible war wounds, and loyal service) and half angry demand. There is nothing wrong with Tong's physical condition or fighting prowess, however, save the bully's tendency to give up easily if the going gets rough; thus far no one in the Gauntlet has put the courage of his little band to the test.

Tong and his mates have taken up residence in the cramped little shanty house of Verrill (#12), an ex-colleague from the local company whose left side was severely crippled in battle. Verrill (#070), though greatly slowed by his injuries, still holds a modest job, doing occasional tasks for Karlin the Bricklayer (#38); he bears no love for the invaders to his home, but sees no way to remove them and lacks the heart to seek help from his neighbors.

Madame Zorka (#071, residence #13), diviner and fortune teller extraordinaire, was once a popular fixture of the Bazaar. When both of her children were born with hideous defects, however, rumors of her involvement with the forces of black magic (totally false) became rampant, and finally drove her to retreat to the Gauntlet fearing for her children's lives. Here, she still practices her occult artistry, reading cards and/or herbal leaves for any of her neighbors with a rare copper to spare. Her predictions remain amazingly accurate — and at times the rumors of her skill still draw an occasional customer from the city proper. Zorka's prized possession is a fully functioning crystal ball, which leaves its buried earthen compartment only in the most dire emergencies. Her husband long perished, the Madame is now washed out and aging rapidly, like her once colorful shawls; her children, now adults, still have the wits of four year olds, and seldom are allowed out of Zorka's sight.

Zorka's one-room hut is immaculately clean, a startling contrast to her neighbors. No sign of her trade marks the door, yet those in true need of otherworldly communication seem instinctively to know where to come. Zorka will not under any circumstance be beneath the same roof as Omar Janus (see below), because of the latter's 'evil vibrations'; most of her neighbors think the old woman is talking nonsense.

Omar Janus (#072) is a frail, white-haired fellow of indeterminate old age, with a cavernously wrinkled face and pale complexion. Almost alone among the inhabitants of this neighborhood, the old man appears to be in permanent high spirits, and will always take time to comfort those whose burdens have become too oppressive to cope with. Many consider Janus to be like a father to them, and his sparsely set table (#14) is often spread among several guests.

All is not in fact as it seems with this kindly old gent, however. Janus is a strange crossbreed of the traditional creature of the night, a psychic vampire who feeds not on blood but on the emotions of despair and fear. The Gauntlet has proven a most lucrative milieu for Omar to fulfill his needs, and he has dwelt here for several years in a state approaching contentment (a difficult feat for a thousand year old man with no rest in sight). Janus has most of the powers and weaknesses

identified with normal vampires: he may levitate himself for up to an hour or fly for a short period of time (2D6 mp); by night his STR is twice normal, and increases by an additional +6 for each victim he has fed from within the last 2 hours. If encountered during daylight hours, Janus suffers a -4 to STR and -2 to CDN; he can only be wounded by silver weapons or Cleansing spell.

The Brothers of Mordecai (described in the Random Encounters section) maintain a fairly regular presence in the Gauntlet (Guard and cult persecution willing), offering their own kind of succor to the downtrodden. At present, several of the Brothers operate a combination teaching/worship-center-and-soup kitchen here (#15); their business at the latter booms, though converts are slow and hard to come by. The leader of this contingent, Sister Turil'ya (#073), is a matronly woman with a cherubic gaze and a heart totally absent of malice toward anyone. She believes the Brotherhood's pacific doctrine deeply, but lacks the verbal facility or personal charisma to capture the hearts of others. She prays nightly for a new follower who can bring such a spark to the sect's preachings, and claims to have an omen that this prayer will soon be answered.

Ogrin l'Armak (#074), once a handsome and dashing young High Priest of Zaf'ak, now is a hideously disfigured grotesque of a man with massive burn scars across his face, arms, and upper torso. These injuries were sustained when a mass enchantment Fireball spell backfired (literally) in his face. That Ogrin survived such a direct hit is a miracle, though not a blessing, for the disaster and his disfigurement have greatly unhinged his mind. Once healed to the extent that the cult's modest knowledge of the medicinal arts could effect (the vision in both his eyes remains badly blurred, and he has no sensation in the first three fingers of his right hand), Ogrin went home to his family lands in Casanu, but could not bear the pity of his former friends. After his unannounced departure from home, both cult and family lost his trail, which finally led him here to the shadows of his former prominence.

The former High Priest now operates from the shell of a burned-out building, shunning the company of all others. He moves about by night, wearing a cowled robe to conceal his scars as much as possible from curious eyes. His entire life has now been concentrated upon a zealous devotion to a single task — the maintainance of a fire to Zaf'ak Urath, the aspect of the God-King representing vengeance. This fire, which seems somehow fed by Ogrin's helpless fury at his condition, burns hot and sulfurous night and day, posing a substantial threat to the other shanty dwellers in times of heavy winds. The local authorities, who would like nothing better than to see the Gauntlet and everyone in it consumed by flames, have decided not to interfere, choosing only to double the fire watch on that portion of the city wall. Meanwhile, Ogrin's still potent powers have kept his neighbors (including Tong and his bullies) at bay. Ironically, if the Brethern of Mordecai could only make contact with l'Armak, they might well be able to help restore him to physical and mental health, and bring an end to this threat.

Adventures in the High Valley

The Renegade Priest

Background

Boren t'Razell (#075) is one of the youngest of the Priesthood of Zaf'ak, selected but nine months ago to the service of Zal' Akhen Temple. A slender, bookish sort possessed of intense fervor for the cult's cause, he has spent many hours poring through the Temple's archives. Recently, he stumbled upon a little-used tome detailing the history of the cult's former temple of Elbram, a now-ruined stronghold located in the northern borderlands in the upper Sabahi river valley. Boren's readings of this text have uncovered several clues to the location of an artifact of great power, an enormous dark gemstone known in legend as the Heart of Mijart. Boren believes that, if recovered, and taken to Earthsheart, the Heart can be used to summon a great demon, Mijart, into the service of Zaf'ak. Armed with his self-righteousness, he ripped out the pages of the book containing the needed references, and set out on his own to find the gem.

Boren's absence was discovered the very next morning, but two full days more elapsed before his fellow priests found the subject of his researches, and reconstituted the contents of the missing page by arcane means. It was then, with horror, that they learned of his intent, for by their reckoning Boren is but half-right in his beliefs. He is likely indeed to summon Mijart, should the Heart come into his hands, but equally unlikely to control the demon once it manifests itself on this earthly sphere. Thus three other High Priests (Odron-iel (#076), Tazel-Ri (#077), and Agron-u'lur (#078)) were dispatched to find Boren and stop him from completing his mission — at any cost!

Once outside of the temple grounds, Boren is likely to seek assistance in his quest — preferably, several characters with strong backs and little inquisitiveness. In attempting to acquire such aid, he will take full advantage of his position of influence in the cult. He is likely to promise prospective employees rewards for their services that he cannot fulfill, and will surely imply that the mission has the cult's complete blessing. The remainder of this section details the situations that will be encountered if the players should join up with Boren.

The Ruins of Elbram:

The journey from Zal' Akhen to Elbram should take about 14 days, under normal travel conditions. During this period, the GM should make normal random encounter rolls for the party. During the first seven days of the journey, any encounters with adherents of Zaf'ak, officials of the local Hold (Lord's Men, etc.), or the military will always result in the most favorable outcome indicated (at the least, deference and freedom of passage; in other cases, the result may include offers of information or actual physical assistance). After the fifth day, there is an increasing chance that any such

group encountered will have been alerted to Boren's mission by the pursuing High Priests as given in the small table to the right (roll 2D6). After day 5, the party must also make similar saving rolls to avoid detection whenever they pass through a village or settlement; on a 6 on 1D6 (4-6 if within 30 miles of Elbram), some of the area's inhabitants have been warned of Boren's group's nefarious activities.

Day	Alerted
6	12
7	11+
8	10+
9	9+
10	8+
11	7+
12+	6+

If the encountered group has been warned to be on the lookout, they will, at the minimum, approach the party suspiciously, asking a number of very pointed questions about its destination and purpose; some groups may, at the GM's discretion, attempt to seize the party forcibly, or to detain it long enough to send word to the nearest cult members seeking aid of further instructions. Boren should receive a saving roll against DSC to perceive a party's intent at the outset of any encounter (alternatively, he may cast a Detect Enemies spell to achieve the same purpose).

If Boren discovers that his purpose has been revealed, he will attempt to lie his way out of difficulty; if this fails, he will order the party to undertake evasive actions or even try to fight their way past trouble. He will resolutely attempt to pass off any who oppose the party as Samili spies; if the other members of the party refuse to believe this and threaten Boren with force, however, he will break down and tell them the true story (complete with many embellishments and pleadings as he attempts to retain or regain their cooperation).

Although a general floor plan of the ruined temple has been provided, descriptions of the individual rooms are not given, since almost all of the articles of value that once resided within these walls were either carried off by the fleeing priests who managed to escape through the secret underground passage (room 8), or pillaged by unbelievers. Rooms 1, 2, 3, and 6 are all heavily scarred by fire and smoke damage; rooms 2, 5, and 7 each bear the remains of several bodies. Room 5 contains a large, badly defaced statue of Zaf'ak rising in flames, shattered and well smeared with dried excrement. A few of the library's books escaped complete destruction in the bonfire set there; the GM can use his discretion in deciding the condition, contents, and value of these remaining tomes. The three copies of the Codex are all completely intact, due to two factors:

- 1) each of these books has been Fireproofed, and
- 2) the well-known (and quite true) rumor that four curses have been known to befall those who deface the Zaf'akhari Holy Book.

The outer walls of the temple are weathered and beginning to crack and crumble in spots, but are still generally sound. The planking of the upper floor, however, was greatly weakened in a number of areas by the fires set during the ransacking, and may not withstand an overabundance of traffic (GMs may want to begin making REF saving rolls if the party continually crosses back and forth over a given area, or tests the floor's limits with a lot of violent movements).

If the party successfully arrives at Elbram, they may begin to unravel the clues describing the location of the Heart of Mijart. The temple history makes three references to the artifact:

- 1) the Heart is to be sought "in the room without windows, the place beyond tears";
- 2) to keep the Heart safe from enemy marauders, its presence was concealed by "sacred Book and golden key";
- 3) once in possession of the proper implements, the seeker of the Heart is told to "Knock twice and enter".

The "room without windows, place beyond tears" refers to the small crypt that lies beyond the south wall of the private meditation chambers (rooms 4 and 4a on the floor plan). The gem can only be found by entering the sealed crypt.

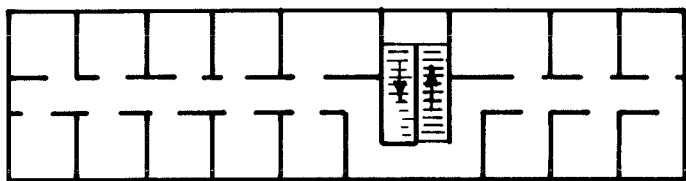
Perhaps unsurprisingly, there are many books (mostly ransacked, some intact) on the temple premises, including the remains of a small library (room 6). A

search of all rooms will conversely reveal no obviously apparent gold key. The secret to both parts of this clue lies in the use of the capitalized form of Book, and the reference to the volume as sacred, clearly identifying the book to be sought as the Zat'takan Codex, composed shortly after the immolation of the God-King, and based on his words and deeds. There are three copies of the Codex on the premises, all seemingly identical, one located in each of the Main Worship Room (room 2), the Private Meditation Chambers (room 4), and the chambers of the High Priest (room 8). Careful inspection may reveal, however, that the volume in room 4 has a small secret compartment in its spine (make a Spot Hidden roll at -4; Spot Hidden is basically equal to the character's DSC, +1 point for each point of IQ over 12, and -2 points for each IQ point below 8; GMs may award bonuses for Experience, eyesight, race, and various training fields; Thieves' Guild 4 may be consulted for further details). Sliding open the compartment will reveal a small golden key. The key is a Portal-Key, and represents the only means by which the players can utilize the Portal located within the crypt. The key is also engraved with the numbers "139/152"; the numbers refer to appropriate pages in the Codex that contain the spell Dispel Illusions.

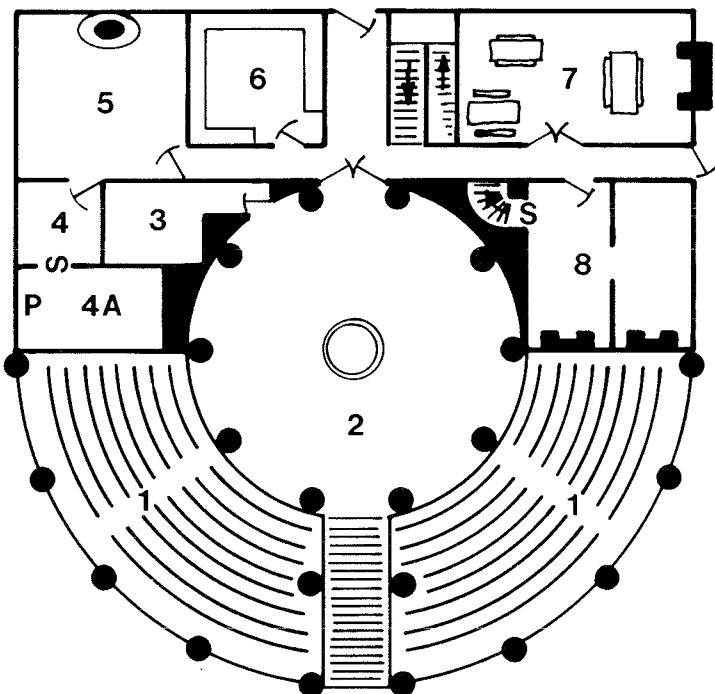
The reference "Knock twice and enter" indicates the best way to open the sealed door to the crypt. The crypt door has a Complexity 3 lock, plus two more enchantments placed in it, adding +1 Complexity per spell, unless a Dispel Magic or Anti-Magic Shield is cast to counteract them.

Once the crypt door has been opened, it will reveal a small, windowless stone room, filled with the moldering tombs of about a dozen priests. Any search of the room by the person holding the Portal Key should almost certainly reveal the location of the Portal (P). Upon passing through the Portal, one will find himself in a stone chamber similar in size to the crypt. In the center of the western wall where the crypt door would be, the Heart of Mijart sits on a jet black pedestal, surrounded by a roaring fire; around the pedestal blaze twelve fire elementals. The fire elementals are all illusory; they will only attack if the player(s) attempt to move toward the gem. Although it might be possible to defeat these creatures in physical combat, reading the Dispel Illusion spell will eliminate the menace without further damage to the party.

The High Priests in pursuit of Boren will be busily spreading the word about their 'renegade' member to those they encounter on the road. They will arrive at the Temple of Elbram at about midday on the 14th day after Boren's departure from Zal' Akhen. Thus, if Boren and his companions arrive on schedule, they will have approximately 36 hours to solve the mystery of the Heart before the other priests appear on the scene and attempt to intervene. If such a confrontation does occur, the High Priests will first call for the party's surrender; should this fail, however, they will not hesitate to use every bit of magical power in their arsenals to subdue their foes. If the tide of battle runs against them, they will flee if their collective HTK dips below 1/2 their normal total, and seek to shadow the party from afar while one of their number attempts to raise some reinforcements.



Second Floor



The Portal Room

The Temple of Elbram

Properties of the Heart

Besides its capacity for summoning the demon Mijart from the spirit plane, the Heart can convey several magical abilities (demonic in nature) to its wielder. These powers are:

- 1) Teleportation — the wielder of the Heart can Teleport himself to any location which he can accurately visualize, at a cost of 1 Tau points per 10 yards (while in melee combat) or 2 Tau points per mile (for overland teleportation).
- 2) Fireball — the Heart's wielder can hurl Fireballs of any potency, at half normal Tau cost (rounded up) at an effective HACO of 2.
- 3) Fireproofing — The Heart's wielder is immune to all damage from physical or magical fire attacks at no Tau cost.
- 4) Flight — The Heart's wielder may use the Heart's powers to Fly, at the normal Tau cost associated with the use of any artifact containing this type of spell.

In addition to these tangible powers, the Heart's overwhelming aura will, after a very short time, begin to exert a heavy psychological influence upon its wielder. Possession of the Heart will heighten the aggressions of its owner, making him increasingly violent and bloodthirsty. It is likely that these personality changes will become noticeable within 72 hours, given Boren's normally mild-mannered nature. By the later stages of the second leg of the quest (to Earthsheart), Boren will be anxious to attack randomly encountered groups (or even members of his own party) at the slightest provocation — a saving roll will be required on each occasion for Boren to prevail over these urges (DSC -2 on days 3-5, DSC -4 thereafter).



The Summoning

The resonant link between gemstone and demon is incredibly strong. Consequently, the Heart could be used to summon Mijart at any time. Boren's plans, however, call for taking the stone to Earthsheart before putting it into action, for he plans to perform the summoning before the Throne of Zaf'ak.

(GM's Note: What is not immediately apparent to either Boren or his pursuers is the significance of the summoning of the demon Mijart. Mijart is in fact the demon whom Zaf'ak discovered, and awoke, three centuries ago. Literally, in exchange for his soul, Zaf'ak was transformed from a mage into a divinity.)

Ultimately, one who raises Mijart can choose to succumb to the urge for the immense power the demon can grant. If the character does so, there is a chance that this power may be too much for him or her to sustain. Use the following table:

Level (MAG/PRM)	Chance of Success*	Time Limit of Control**
7 or less	0%	5 min
8	5%	1 hr
9	15%	3D4 hrs
10	25%	1D12 days
11	35%	2D20 days
12	45%	1D6 mths
13	55%	2D6 mths
14	65%	1D3 yrs
15	75%	1D6 yrs
16	85%	2D6 yrs

* Failure to make this roll results in the total immolation of the subject. In such case, the Heart remains totally unharmed.

** This time limit expresses the length of time the subject can expect to remain in control of his/her sanity. The effects listed above for possession of the Heart are dozens of times more acute nonetheless, and the subject also will exhibit marked paranoia and megalomania.

Modifiers should be applied to the character's level for the rolls above — +1 if the subject is a Priest of Zaf'ak, -6 if the subject is neither mage nor priest.

Zaf'ak himself was a 16th level mage, slowly being consumed by the fire he served. However, as the legends say, he chose to permit the power of Mijart to engulf and possess him, deciding to "burn brightly" for a few shining moments rather than maintain his seemingly plodding pursuit of knowledge and power. Zaf'ak decided to transform himself thus, and he does indeed live on, as a fragment of the consciousness of the demon Mijart.

Most important! GMs should note — Mijart, even if summoned, is absolutely powerless to possess characters who oppose him (he can defend himself more than adequately, and will, if not restrained, make every effort to banish invaders from his presence). He cannot incarnate another would-be Zaf'ak, however, without that person's consent. He is not beyond enticing that person to attempt it, and will most likely fail to explain the dangers inherent in that act.

Boren's High Priest pursuers, of course, have no inkling of their fellow priest's secondary destination at the outset of this scenario. It is therefore quite possible that, if the pursuers lose the party's trail for an extended period (15% chance per day if the party has more than a 12 hour head start in leaving the ruins of Elbram) or are killed in a showdown at the temple, no cult members aware of Boren's purpose will be present in the Earthsheart area when he arrives. Conversely, Boren will almost certainly have openly discussed the path of the quest with his hirelings. If the party has spoken of its route to NPCs encountered along the way, there is a 30% chance per incident that this information has been passed along to the High Priests. Should the destination be known to the cult, 1D6+2 High Priests, 3D6 lower priests and 5D6 soldiers will be present at the Earthsheart cave complex awaiting the party's approach. By far the most probable outcome is that the High Priests will remain in pursuit of their quarry, and will be able to guess the party's destination as it nears Earthsheart; once discovered, they will send for reinforcements as above, but only half of the indicated forces will be able to arrive in time.

In addition to any Cult forces mounted as defense force, there is an 85% chance that 1 or 2 groups of pilgrims will also be in the vicinity of Earthsheart at the time of Boren's arrival. The High Priests will try to discourage these groups from coming too near the caves, but will not discuss the reason behind these attempts to limit access. Consequently, the GM may at his discretion wish to insert some of these innocent bystanders into the midst of any budding confrontation.

If the cult has defenders in the area, it is very unlikely that the players' party will be able to make their way to the throne room undetected. The defenders will attempt to convince the party to surrender the Heart, believing (rightly) that Boren cannot control the demon within once it has been summoned. In order to completely control Mijart, the demon must be summoned within a pentagram that has been created by wizards with a combined level of 45, equal to half that of Mijart. Otherwise, the demon will receive an IQ saving roll each combat round to break its constraints: 14+ if its summoners have a combined level of 15 or less, 18+ if 16-30, and 20+ if their total level is between 31 and 44. If released from control, the demon will try to gain control of the Heart. Should it be successful in this effort, it will no longer be governed by the usual 12 turn limit on a summoning, but will be able to remain on this plane indefinitely, regenerating spent HTK on the basis of 1 HTK for every 20 HTK points of damage inflicted on others (drawing power from destruction and chaos). If successful, Mijart will almost certainly go in search of mortals who might be willing to serve his destructive will.

After realizing the size of the defending force present, the player members of the party may very well decide that discretion is the better part of valor, and not do battle. Boren, however, must make his DSC saving roll, or he will be compelled by the Heart to battle to the death to complete the summoning himself. If the priest does offer resistance, he will forego offensive magic, and use a combination of protective (Avert, Reverse Missiles) and defensive (Dazzle) spells or the

Flight and Teleportation powers of the Heart to make his way toward the Throne Room cave; this area lies three chambers deep into the mountain.

A note on banishment — Mijart, like most fire-based demons, is in extreme pain in open air, and will be in more and more pain the longer he stays out of the fire-pits of the cavern. He will stay 1D20 x 1D20 minutes (1-400 minutes) voluntarily, but will depart at the end of the last round of that minute, his physical form retreating within the molten rock. Mijart may also be banished in the meanwhile, with a probability equal to 2% x the sum of the levels of all the mages and priests successful in casting the spell Banish.

(GM's Note: The origin of the Heart of Mijart is beyond the ken of the men of the Valley, even of Zaf'ak; He knew of his master's heart, and suspected (even as he sank into madness) that through its use he could somehow regain control of the forces which drove him toward destruction; but he was unable to seek the relic before he met his end.)

The Revenge of t'Barr

Some eighty years ago, the hold of Pelenn was gravely shaken when members of the traditional ruling family, the t'Barr, were accused, tried by the Council of Elders, and condemned of consorting treasonously with the Samili. The disgraced Holders were stripped of their special privileges and possessions, which were then awarded to the family m'Raald, a family young in political circles but rich in military tradition. Over the years, the descendants of the family t'Barr have perversely come to look upon the m'Raald as the cause of the family's misfortunes, betrayers of their liege lord, who may have (to the minds of the t'Barr, though no evidence exists to support this) trumped up the charges that brought the t'Barr down. Nowhere does this hatred fester more deeply than in young Soltar t'Barr (#079), one of the Chieftain's Guard, who has concocted an elaborate plot both to avenge his name and to bring about an end to the dominion of the m'Raald forever.

Lord Birolen m'Raald (#080), current holder of Pelenn, has a lovely young daughter named Ramona (#081), a lithe, willowy blonde of 16 summers. Ramona is the fourth-born of his children and the only girl, the last child born by his long-dead wife; Birolen has always doted on her, seeing a reflection of his lost love in her flashing eyes and sweet smile. All three of the Lord's sons have died in combat over the last ten years, and most of the remaining family members are aged, infirm, or young children. Thus, Ramona's future betrothed will stand an excellent chance of being appointed administrator of Pelenn and its allied holdings upon her father's death. Birolen has sought to encourage his daughter toward a suitable match, but she has shown no wish to marry (and Birolen does not seem to have the heart to impose his will upon her). He would also slaughter (quite happily, we might add) anyone who tried to do her harm. Lady Ramona frequently comes to Zal' Akhen to visit with Shallayne (#082), a childhood friend and daughter of Gurtel, a highly-placed member of the city bureaucracy; during one of these prior visits, the young Lady first attracted Soltar's eye, and set the wheels of his elaborate plot in motion.

Soltar has conceived a suitably clever and underhanded scheme which will, he hopes, not only provide suitable vengeance upon Lord m'Raald himself, but will win back for his family most of what was lost in his ancestor's debacle. Soltar is looking for a group of adventurers, 3 to 6 in number, who do not object to a little "dirty work". He will pay them well to abduct Ramona, and hold her incommunicado, while he bargains (through some other intermediaries, of course) for the terms of her release — ostensibly, a major portion of the personal fortune of the family m'Raald.

Unfortunately for the kidnapers, Soltar will not tell them the remainder of his plan. Even should Lord Pelenn pay the ransom for his daughter's safe return, sly Soltar wants more. He intends, one way or another, on taking charge of any rescue attempt, during which he will make sure that none of the kidnapers who know him will survive, to flap loose tongues about his part in the conspiracy. He is confident that this endeavor will endear him to both the Lord and Ramona; he thinks to use this gratitude to be able to woo and, eventually, to wed the girl, thus regaining his family's honor, and gaining a fine chance to recover the lost holding of t'Barr in one hawk-swift foray. This act, however, is only the first phase of his revenge. Ultimately, on the very night of their wedding, he plans to "discover" Ramona passing information to a soldier of the hated Samili — revealing secrets of the Hold, as well as various parts of her anatomy. His loyalty to Zat'akhara and the Flame will oblige him to reveal their treason (and adultery) to the world; his honor will require that he put them to an immediate death. Thus will be the m'Raald be humbled, reasons Soltar, in a manner befitting their own acts.

There are a number of ways in which the player characters may be introduced into this situation:

- 1) Word of a planned abduction attempt will reach the ears of Lord Pelenn, who will then hire extra guards for Ramona's protection. In such an event, Birolen will prefer to hire experienced adventurers of foreign extraction, since they are unlikely to have connections with anyone in Zat'akhara, and would thus be less likely to be involved in local politics (and feuds).
- 2) Soltar is, of course, looking for his kidnapers; he too would prefer non-resident adventurers for many varied reasons, not the least of which being the facts that foreigners will be less readily missed and mourned than local people, and also less likely to talk to local inhabitants about what they are doing.
- 3) If Ramona has been successfully snatched (either as part of a scenario, or prior to its starting point), it is a virtual certainty that there will be a need for searchers/rescuers. The GM may allow the players to hire on as would-be "searchers", or present them with a fait accompli (e.g., seeing — or hearing a rumor of — the escape and recapture of a young girl somewhere high in the Daboh foothills, southeast of the city) which would cause them to seek out Lord Pelenn with their information, and involve them in the rescue effort.

Suggestions for running each of these options are provided below.

The Guards

There is a 30% chance (15 or better on a D20) that word of the proposed abduction attempt (although not the name of the perpetrator) will leak out sometime in the days before the kidnapping is attempted. In this case, Lord Pelenn will be looking to secure the services of 6 to 9 experienced adventurers with a variety of fighting skills and talents suitable to stand as protect daughter from harm and to apprehend the criminals responsible for the attempt. Players may form all or part of the guard group; other guards may be drawn from among the group of warriors led by Alex of Burningtree (NPCs #084 to #087). Guards will be divided into three equal shifts, and will be expected to spend most of their on-duty time (8 hours a day) with the girl, and to assist in guarding Gurtel's residence (#35 on the city map) whenever Ramona is there.

At night, one guard will be stationed at each end of the corridor which leads past the guest chamber at Gurtel's residence, when the Lord's daughter is within (if a third guard is present, he will patrol the downstairs portion of the house). If the Lady decides to travel, at least two of her special guards will accompany her while she is outside Gurtel's house.

Soltar t'Barr has obtained the loyalty of one of Gurtel's young serving girls, Yshalla (#083). The latter believes she is deeply in love with him — thanks to a strong and very effective love philtre he slipped her at their original meeting some weeks before; he uses her to keep track of comings and goings in Gurtel's household — Soltar plans to eliminate her as well, once she has outlived her usefulness to the plot. She is probably the weakest strand in Soltar's web of intrigue, for of all of his "employees", only Yshalla knows his name. If she is advised that the kidnapers will attempt to abduct Ramona from Gurtel's house, she will try to distract one of the player guards at a critical moment (the GM should have the girl play up to all the newly hired guards — the males, that is — from the moment they arrive at the house; this will hopefully lull suspicion regarding her seductive attempts on the night of the kidnapping). If she learns that Ramona is planning a picnic outing with Shallayne, she will report all that she knows to Soltar at once.

The attempt to abduct Ramona will be made by the thugs hired by Soltar (Dokli and his companions — #088 to #090) sometime after midnight on the 1D4th night of her visit. The plan is for the miscreants to be admitted to the house by Yshalla (through the garden gate) carrying ropes, drugs (to quiet the girl), and a number of silent missile weapons (blowpipes with poisoned darts, etc.) to deal with the guards. The guards will, of course, have the opportunity to detect the approach of the thieves through successful Sense Ambush rolls. If one of the guards has been acting "paranoid", he may add 20% to his chances of detection, but will feel compelled to check out any positive result (see Thieves Guild 4 for further details on this ability). Should a few such reactions turn out to be false alarms, the guard's mates may (60% — 12 x 1st guard's MAGI) choose to disbelieve his next alarm.

If no initial alarm is given, Yshalla will seek to ply her wiles on the least suspicious of the male guards on duty that night (as noted, this should be a repeated

action, with the serving maid apparently becoming more and more involved with the given guard each night, as she obviously finds excuses to visit him in the corridor). If the girl does succeed in seducing the player guard the abductors should be able to sneak up on him quite easily (talents operate at 1/4 normal value) and incapacitate or kill him.

The thugs have to sneak into Ramona's chamber, past any remaining guards. There is a 20% chance that the door to the Lady's quarters will squeak when it is opened; guards hearing this noise (use normal Hearing chances) will almost certainly come to investigate, weapons ready. If the kidnappers are able to overcome the girl before she is able to alert her protectors, they must choose an avenue of escape, either back downstairs and through the rear door or by somehow lowering the party and the girl over the balcony outside her room into the garden area below.

If the guards manage to foil the initial kidnapping attempt, but do not capture the thugs (and the latter will flee to a man at the first indication of discovery), a second attempt will be made (on the 10th night following, or during the outing to the hills planned by Shallowayne and Ramona on day 6 of her current visit). Players are responsible for choosing their own reaction to the first assault; if they over-commit their resources too heavily in the days immediately following the initial incident on doubled vigilance, they may be quite tired and ineffective by the time the second attack is made.

The Kidnappers

Should the players themselves accept the job as the kidnappers, the situation will proceed in a similar fashion. Soltar will not reveal his name to his hirelings and will have somewhat disguised his features for their meeting (still leaving a 70% chance of recognition if seen again). The players will, of course, be allowed to select the precise time and venue (house or wilderness) for their attack. Should an abortive attack be made, Ramona's guards will double their shifts for a period of 48 hours, then return to normal strength. At the GM's discretion, some of Alex's men (if they have gotten a good look at one or more of the party members) may actively try to find the kidnappers before they can strike again.

Should the players decide to make the snatch attempt during the girls' planned outing, they will (from Yshalla, about 24 hours in advance of the plan) that Ramona and Shallowayne plan to go riding in the Daboh foothills, about 15 miles from Zal' Akhen; two guards will accompany them, also on horseback (though neither will be an exceptional rider). If the players can successfully trail the riding party without being spotted — and this will not be that simple a task, since portions of the route will pass over fairly open ground; the GM's discretion should prevail as to whether sufficient care has been taken — an ambush should be fairly easy to set up in the vicinity of the spot where the girls stop to picnic.

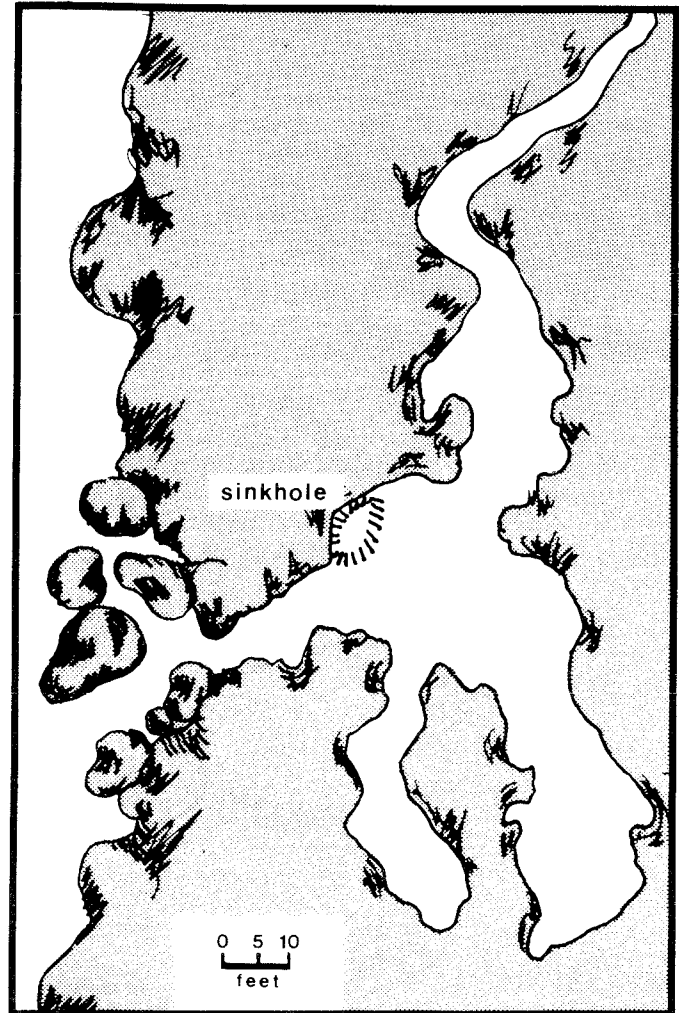
The players may find a surprising added complication to their plans, however, in the fact that Ramona and Shallowayne (though hardly twins) have the same general coloring and build (tall, slender, blonde

with blue eyes) and may not be readily distinguishable from Soltar's description (this is long before photographs, after all). The girls are both quick-witted, and likely to recognize this problem if the kidnappers appear confused; if asked which girl is Ramona, Shallowayne (an impetuous lass to be sure) will speak up instantly — and there is a 30% chance (young companions being as they are about freely sharing each others things) that Shallowayne may be wearing one of Ramona's garments, replete with the m'Raaid insigne. Under such circumstances, it is quite possible that the player kidnappers may snatch the wrong girl, or be forced to take both.

Once the capture has been made from either location, the kidnappers will (presumably) repair to their preset hiding place, as described (or possibly even shown to them) by Soltar, a small cave complex located in another segment of these same foothills, about 20 miles north of Pelenn.

The Cave Complex

The mouth of the cave is large, and set in the side of a rocky slope. Several boulders mask the entrance and provide cover for defenders. Within, there is a large central chamber, with passages leading to three smaller caverns; in the central chamber is located the mouth of a sinkhole, bottomless as far as anyone can tell — the thugs use it to dispose of refuse. A second opening in the left-hand chamber leads back and round



a bend, descending in height until it apparently ends in a crawlspace barely sufficient to fit a man of medium build. If anyone perseveres and investigates the crawlway farther, they will find that it widens again after about 100', finally emerging among the roots of a huge old eucalyptus tree growing at the foot of the slope; this tree is screened from the mouth of the cave by another rock spur. Any horses the group may have can be tethered in another, fairly large cave about 1/4 mile down the valley from the cave entrance tree — it can be reached most easily, if under attack, from the secret passage, if the latter's location is known. Soltar will cache a week's worth of supplies (food, torches, ropes, etc.) in the cave to keep his hirelings where he wants them. He will not tell the kidnapers (and lie if they ask) about the existence of the rear passage (which figures prominently in his own plans).

Once settled in, the kidnapers will proceed to the second phase of the plan — sending one of their party to deliver (third hand, if possible) the ransom note to Birolen. At some seemingly opportune moment during her captivity, Ramona (or Shallayne, if both girls have been taken) will make a break for freedom (having wriggled loose of her bonds if kept tied). It is exceedingly unlikely that the young, unarmed girl will get far before being recaptured; however, her cries for help may be observed by a young huntsman traveling in the area (or, if the GM prefers, the players themselves, heretofore uninvolved in the scenario, may be the witnesses). If NPC kidnapers are being used, the girl will be retaken about 100 yards down the slope from the cave entrance, and dragged, kicking and screaming, back inside, where she will be more securely bound (if not beaten — such an embarrassment may cause the kidnapers to forget Soltar's admonition not to harm the merchandise). Player and NPC kidnapers alike may make a Perceptiveness roll to notice the witnesses, if the latter come closer to investigate, and may give pursuit. The young woodsman, Waril, will always investigate, but will depart to seek aid when he sees the odds against him. If the players are the witnesses, they may, of course, choose instead to engage the thugs immediately. The GM can handle this combat straightforwardly, remembering that the rocks fronting the entrance provide excellent cover for the bowmen in the thug party. As a last resort, if trapped, one of the thugs will grab the girl and threaten to kill her if the gang is not allowed to escape; response to this threat is up to the players, but the NPC thugs are capable of applying enough pressure that their captive(s) at least will believe their threat, and entreat the would-be rescuers to desist. If the players should succeed in their assault, and capture one of the thugs alive, it is possible (though not certain) that Soltar's part in the crime will be revealed (he will deny all, of course), resulting in a tribunal before the Council and an almost certain sentence of death if he is convicted, and a very vengeful enemy against all concerned if he is not.

If the hunter or the players go to seek aid, they may decide either to go directly to Pelenn Hold (the nearest castle/major population center) or make contact with one of the smaller tribal settlements. In the Hold, there is a 30% chance that any person asked will know of the kidnapping, and an additional 20% chance that the girl will be identified as Ramona from her description

(among outlying natives, the chances are halved, 15% and 10% respectively); these chances increase by 10% per day thereafter.

Once the news is brought to Birolen, the Holder will organize an expedition of 15–20 men to achieve Ramona's rescue. Soltar has arranged to be in Pelenn during the period after the kidnapping, and will use his official stature as a Guardsman to obtain a place on the rescue party, eloquently explaining his motives are a desire to make amends for the former bad blood between the two great families. It is likely that Birolen will be suspicious of this seemingly abrupt change of heart, but he will have little option other than to request that one of the rescue party's members keep an eye on t'Barr. It is also likely that Ramona's guards, having since returned to report their failure, will be numbered among the rescuers, operating under the knowledge that a second failure will most probably result in their deaths.

Once fighting begins at the cave entrance, t'Barr will slip away, alone if possible, later claiming he had a sudden hunch that the cave must have some sort of back entrance. Moving as quickly as possible through the crawlway, Soltar will hopefully 'save the day' by slaughtering his former hirelings and freeing Ramona. There are, of course, numerous ways in which t'Barr's plans can go awry — the thugs may be waiting at the back entrance (though Soltar can identify himself as their employer), the group may have left the area after being sighted, moving to another hideout, or they might surrender before Soltar gets a chance to make his dramatic entrance.

Random Encounters

The following section presents a number of potential quick or long-term adventure situations in which player characters may become involved while travelling around Zal'Akhen. To utilize these materials, roll a D10 and consult the table below to identify the encounter indicated. Many of these situations contain a number of widely varying options, enabling the GM to use them (with slight modifications of names and/or locations) more than once. Resolution of these situations can take anywhere from several minutes to several full nights of gaming.

Encounter Table for the City of Zal' Akhen

Die Roll	Encounter	
	ID	Situation
1	A	Arena Trainer
2	B	Fire
3	C	Lozemaster
4	D	Agents of Cleff
5	E	Lords of Merrinca
6	F	Brothers of Mordecai
7	G	Lost Tribesman
8	H	Stallion for Sale
9	I	Horsebreakers
10	J	Pilgrimage Processional

The Encounters

A) Arena Trainer —

A smallish, well-scarred man in a worn chain shirt approaches the party and addresses its most muscular (highest STR + STM rating) member. The man, Goran h'Lal (#091) by name, tells the latter that he has great potential as an arena fighter — 'the look of a champion' — and will offer to train him in gladiatorial combat. If the player accepts, the encounter will unfold as follows (roll D6):

1) h'Lal is primarily looking for a sparring partner for his current star performer, a hulking giant named Pellakos (#092) who is a well-regarded veteran of both hand-to-hand and fencing competition with over 50 bouts to his credit. The player selected will collect a modicum of gladiatorial training and a vast assortment of bruises, aches and pains (or if he is unlucky enough, broken bones) from his tenure and little more — unless he has the fortuity or skill to actually beat Pellakos (a relatively unlikely prospect).

2-3) h'Lal will train the player well; he will prove a wily tactician with many tricks up his sleeve (not all of them legal). However, it will not take the player long to discover that Goran and his small stable of D6 other fighters are out of favor with the High Temple of Zaf'ak. The player will become the target of periodic sabotage, both inside and outside the Arena, until he either leaves h'Lal's tutelage or finds a way to make peace with the cult authorities.

4-5) h'Lal and the player will prove to be a match apparently made in heaven. The player will reel off a succession of victories, several over seemingly more skilled opponents, and gain considerable public renown, culminating in a match with the reigning city champion. Betting action surrounding the fight will be furious; the outcome of the climactic combat is up to the GM and the player.

6) Same circumstances as in 4-5 above, except that on the eve of the fight, the player and h'Lal will be visited by three members of the High Priesthood, and offered a considerable sum of money to 'throw' the fight. It will be suggested in no uncertain terms that refusal of this offer will bring the full wrath of the cult to bear against them. The player, of course, may freely choose his response to this threat.

B) Fire!! —

The players come upon a great commotion ahead of them in the street, near a small row of residences. If they come closer, they will see that the lower floor of one of these structures is ablaze. Members of the city fire watch are busily organizing a bucket brigade to fight the blaze. The players will almost certainly be enlisted in this effort if they remain in the area for more than a moment.

GM's can simulate the outcome of the firefighting effort using the following rules. The fire is assumed to be generating 5D6 of damage/minute at the point the players become involved; the building can withstand 500 points of damage before being completely consumed. The bucket brigade gets 1D6 of extinguishing power for every 10 people present in its ranks (magical water creation spells may add to this power — see below). It is assumed that 8D6 people are already fighting the fire

when the players arrive; the fire watch will recruit 1D10 more people per minute — if any player elects to aid in this recruiting effort, rather than haul buckets, he will add 1 to this die roll result per turn (2 if s/he possesses a MAG>12, 3 if MAG>16). If the damage roll for the fire exceeds the die roll for the bucket brigade, the fire is assumed to increase in intensity by 1D; if the bucket brigade roll exceeds the damage generated by the fire, the blaze decreases 1D in intensity. When fire intensity falls to 0 Dice per minute, it is considered completely extinguished; should it rise to 10D or more per minute, it will spread to the next building in the row, starting at 2D intensity and adding 1D per minute (this 2nd fire would then have to be separately fought by splitting up bucket brigade resources). If the fire continues burning more than 3D6 minutes, a High Priest of Zaf'ak with water creation spellcasting abilities will arrive on the scene, and will be able to add 3D6 additional points of extinguishing power per minute for up to 10 minutes.

While the blaze continues, there may be opportunities for the players to perform heroic deeds. On a 4 or 5 (D6), there will be people inside the building needing rescue. Anyone entering a burning building to perform such a rescue must make a STM saving roll at -2 (-6 if fire is at 8D or greater intensity) or take 1D6 of smoke inhalation damage, in addition to any burn damage sustained from entering fire hexes. On a 6, the shopkeeper/owner of the burning building will be looking for someone to recover some sort of particularly valuable artifact (GM's choice). Beyond these specific opportunities, the players through their actions may be able to ingratiate themselves to the members of the fire watch, the victims of the blaze, or follow members of the bucket brigade. Other than these possibilities, however, there is no particular reward for getting involved, other than keeping a fair portion of the city from burning down.

C) Loremaster —

The players come upon a youngish-looking man with a wild unkempt mane of hair, dressed in a gray robe with a red sash, sitting perched on the edge of a fountain in the Bazaar making various notations and simple sketches on the parchment pad on his lap. He appears to be deep in thought, and will not notice the players' approach until they are very near. Characters familiar with the High Valley area have a 50% chance of recognizing the man's garb as that of a tribal loremaster. If the players hail the loremaster, the encounter will proceed as follows (roll D6):

1-2) The character is an apprentice, making his first trip to Zal' Akhen in the company of his mentor, Galar of Meldrin (#093). The latter is a stern taskmaster who has kept his charge hard at his studies during their entire stay (and indeed will appear on the scene after a few moments); the apprentice would love to break loose for a little fun and excitement. The players may choose to help him find a 'good time', which will require liberating him from his room in one of Zal' Akhen's lesser inns. If pulled off successfully, the evening's efforts will supply the players with a friend for life who will someday hold considerable influence; if, on the other hand, the apprentice is caught and the players' role in his escape exposed, they will have made an enemy of Galar, a man of great power among the urusah.

3-4) The loremaster is a journeyman, who is a keen student of languages and dialects; he is using his sketching as a ruse to listen to the patois of the city's residents. There is a 25% chance that he has overheard a rumor or piece of information that may be of potential interest to the players (news of a major Samili offensive in the south, rumors of a vision of Za'tak or a 'fix' of an upcoming arena event, the arrival of a recent war hero in the city). Like most loremasters, he will not seek a cash payment for his information, but rather some kind of unspecified service ("... one commensurate with the value you receive from my humble tale.").

5) The loremaster is an exceedingly ambitious young scholar, seeking to obtain some illicit fruits of knowledge. He is awaiting the arrival of a confederate, Filius Ney (#094), a foreign trader in rare books who has arranged to sell him a tome (containing information normally not available to those outside the Priesthood) on magical artificing for the surprisingly low price of 1000 GP. The scholar has had to sell a number of healing talismans and some of his personal possessions to come up with the cash for this deal and is quite anxious to complete the exchange. He will likely (30% + 3 x MAG of party leader) believe the approaching players to be his contacts, resulting in quite a strange encounter — as he will first ask for and then demand 'the goods' from the party, only to suddenly (whenever he finally realizes his mistake — given an INT saving roll every minute, with appropriate bonuses or penalties for the party's reaction to the situation) pretend that the whole thing is a harmless misunderstanding. The whole situation is virtually certain to pique the party's interest, especially if they are still nearby when Ney's real agent arrives with the book in hand about ten minutes later, and the transaction is completed. What neither the players nor the loremaster know is that the book has been pinched from the Temple library itself, and is extremely hot (its actual value is about 10,000 GP); Ney himself is well aware that anyone caught with the book is likely to be doing several years of hard labor.

6) From close up, the notations on the so-called loremaster's pad will appear total gibberish, and he will ignore any attempts at conversation like a man possessed. The man is no loremaster, but rather a member of the Elite Guard of the Legion of Fiery Vengeance, on a mission to seek out an 'enemy' of the Temple. At any given moment (roll periodically on 2D6; a 10-12 result should do it), he will shriek some unutterable nonsense, rip off his robe (under which he is wearing nothing but a breechclout and two-handed sword), and charge after someone in the crowd (15% chance it is a member of the player's party). He will be absolutely certain that his chosen target is the enemy he seeks, and is extremely hard to convince otherwise — he may even be correct.

(GM's Note: In cases 1-5, the man encountered will be Purnie (#095), a loremaster of the urusah. The GM can treat him in any fashion he pleases — from bumbling rube to sophisticated thinker. Regardless, he will be well-trained in unarmed combat techniques, and have at least passing knowledge of many sorts of natural lore. In case 6, the Legionary is Falagh (#096), an arrogant and cocksure warrior whose vicious temper and berserker rages make him an even more dangerous foe.

D) Agents of Cleff —

The players encounter one or more of the employees of the notorious Lord of the Shadows, the unquestioned behind-the-scenes master of the city's Bazaar (roll D6):

1) Three of Cleff's agents (including either Watsitua or Hallem Watts) approach a young peasant bearing a small hand cart laden with ceramic goods, and begin to berate him about his lack of proper licenses. It will become obvious to the players that the peasant does not have the money to pay the fee demanded, and will have to forfeit a portion of his cargo (the best part, of course) into the hands of Cleff's agents, unless someone intervenes on his behalf. If the players do get involved in this fashion, they are likely to make enemies of Cleff's agents.

If the players are themselves looking to sell something at the Bazaar, the GM may alternatively choose to make them the targets of this encounter. Cleff's men will use the same tactics if the party does not have the necessary capital to comply with their demands (i.e., attempting to seize 10-20% of the cargo as the license fee; on a roll of 5 or 6 on a D6, a benefactor will appear and offer to pay the players' fee (this benefactor will have his own demands to make on the players' services, as guards, information gatherers, couriers, or possibly even as burglars — in all cases, the man will be a long-time foe of Cleff).

2) The party member who appears to be of the highest social status (by dress, jewelry, or noble insignia) will be approached by Micah h'Raald, and asked to deliver a sealed box to the High Priest at the Temple to Za'tak; h'Raald will volunteer no information about the contents of the box, save that the package is expected and poses no risk to the players' safety. The delivery is in fact exactly as advertised, a straightforward, perfectly safe exchange (Taan Ha'myl simply prefers to have 'gifts' from Cleff laundered through anonymous sources, to avoid idle talk about the latter's influence in Temple affairs). The gift is a large, stoppered flask, filled with a grayish, semi-liquid substance; this material will work as an 'enhancer' to any sort of enchantment involving weapons or armor. There are 20 uses of the compound in the flask; each will permit the enchanter to double the effect of any damage, hit probability or damage absorption bonuses placed in the enchanted objects. These enhanced effects will last for a period of one year, unless a new dosage of the same material is applied to the object (a fact that only Cleff knows).

If properly delivered, this encounter will offer the player chosen the opportunity to meet Taan Ha'mayl and h'Raald in circumstances that might engender future good will. If on the other hand, the group should attempt to make off with the flask, they will wind up with two of the most potent forces in the High Valley relentlessly dogging their trail, an uninviting prospect with little chance of permanent escape. If, however, one of the members of the party has a sufficient background in magical research (4th level or higher if character is an Enchanter; 7th level or higher if any other type of wizard /mage), that character may attempt to analyze the nature of the material in their possession. If the character makes a successful INT saving roll at a -3, he will be able to identify the material's purpose. He will also have a 20 + LVL% chance

of identifying a non-reactive substance that can be safely added to the otherwise highly volatile mixture so that some portion of the flask's contents can be siphoned off and replaced (the percentage to which the remaining contents are diluted will represent the percentage chance that each dose will produce its expected effect); and a 5 + 1/2 LVL% chance/day of determining how to duplicate the formula (although the players would still have to assemble the necessary spell components, not a trivial task in itself). A roll of 96 or above on any of these rolls represents a fumble, resulting in the ruin of part or all of the flask's contents; any attempt to refill the bottle with an untested substance has a 70% chance of causing a further destructive reaction. (GM's Note: If characters do not themselves possess magical skills, they may — if they know him — choose instead to approach Pavia d'Urbin, who will agree to help them for 50% of any magic recovered).

3) The players are approached by Odler Blank, Cleff's scrofulous rumormonger. Blank will have, either through his own snooping or other means, learned what business the party is pursuing in the city, and will offer his assistance (for a sizable up-front fee) in bringing about their objective (if, conversely, the party has no current business in the city, Blank will offer to let them in on a lucrative business opportunity). There is an even 50-50 chance that Blank is lying, and hoping to take the money and run (or waddle, as the case may be). Depending on the circumstances, the encounter will either involve

a) getting out of the situation Blank has lured them into, and then locating the fat man to recover their money, or

b) following the legitimate lead provided.

GMs should note, however, that even when Blank's offer of help is real, there should almost always be some sort of string attached to make the situation less simple than it would first appear.

4) Two of Cleff's men approach the party and inquire whether the latter are interested in taking a little job involving some fighting. The men are looking for a little extra muscle to back them up in a display of force directed against a foreign merchant combine that has refused to comply with Cleff's rules. Cleff has ordered an example made of these traders, and their goods and wagon sacked. The raiding party will consist of 4-5 of Cleff's regular men (mixed INT and VET Fighters bearing axes and clubs), the players, and another party of 1D4 temporary hirelings of similar background (GR or INT); they will outnumber the merchants by almost 3 to 1, but the latter will fight desperately to defend their goods. A key element of the battle will revolve around the efforts of Cleff's men to keep the damage confined to their targets; any indiscriminate use of fire, explosives, or destructive spells will be severely frowned upon and possibly punished. There is a 50% chance that members of the Household Guard may come upon the scene; they will not get involved unless directly attacked, or the situation spreads out of hand.

5) The players will be tailed and observed for a period of several days by one of Cleff's agents, a young, attractive female named Coral (#097). She will be attempting to determine whether the players are good potential recruits for the enterprise outlined below; the party should receive an average group IQ saving roll

twice per day to observe that they are being followed. The woman is part of a group of 4 + 1D6 agents who have decided to begin skimming payments from the boss; they are looking for additional confederates. This scheme is foredoomed to a rather violent failure, and almost everyone involved with it is likely to be captured and 'disappeared' permanently from the face of Zal' Akhen. The players can take advantage of the encounter, however, by reporting the scheme to those who remain loyal to the Unseen One; this act may even result in the players being given a reward of some kind of small magical artifact.

6) One of the members of the players' party (roll 3D, low man 'wins') is summoned to appear at Cleff's house; this is a summons that none may ignore, and remain safely within the city's walls for long. Cleff seeks information concerning a street incident that the players observed peripherally; his memory of the event can only be jogged by use of a potent drug that affects the subconscious portions of the mind. The drug also has the painful side-effect of causing the recipient to periodically recall other casually observed encounters in the form of nightmares for a period of 1D6 months (STM saving roll -3 to reduce this period by 1/2). On a roll of 5 or 6 (D6), one of the memories will become a recurring dream, and will bear within it the seed of a potentially lucrative discovery (e.g., the observation of a man concealing an object in a drainpipe just before being killed in a street riot or fire), that can be followed up from the dreamer's description (which will grow more vivid with each repetition of the nightmare).

E) The Lords of Merriment —

The Lords of Merriment are a small traveling troupe of entertainers who frequent both the High Valley and the Realm of the Ten Cities. The group consists of Keri the Fat (#098), a large full-bearded blond; Mikal the Silent (#099), a tall quiet dark-haired man; Jha'nette (#100), a merry wench with a ready smile and a frequent infectious laugh; and Rikar Ravenhair (#101), a small giant of a man with a fondness for bending iron bars into circles (as well as people who annoy him). They generally travel by themselves, in the company of a very hairy little grey man (#102) who drives the large wagon that houses the group, and a huge brown dog named Barnabas (#103), but on occasion there will be D6 other entertainers traveling with them.

Whenever this group pulls into Zal' Akhen (roughly 3 times a year, with visits lasting 1-2 weeks), they will pull their wagon up to the outskirts of the Bazaar and hang out their large gold and scarlet banner that promises wonderment and mirth for all. The troupe will perform varied shows hourly, with Mikal juggling, miming and performing trick shots with a variety of thrown weapons, Keri weaving long involved tales of faraway lands, beautiful princesses and heroic deeds, and Ravenhair concluding the festivities with various feats of strength, like bending iron bars (and people!) into circles. All will circulate through the crowd afterwards, passing the hat and chatting amiably about local and faroff events (any one of the group can be a very good source of information on a variety of subjects). During all this, Jha'nette will set up a display of her work on the side of the wagon, and will accept commissions for portraits (good work cheap — usually less than half-an-hour of posing, for a 10-20 GP fee) or sell whatever completed work seizes a customer's fancy.

By night, the party's campfire is often packed with merchants from the Bazaar, as Jha'nette and Ravenhair play their musical instruments, and Keri spins horrifying stories of blood and vengeance. Ravenhair and Keri are both flirtatious and open to potential liaisons, while Mikal hangs back from the festivities, drinking massive quantities of liquor without apparent effect while keeping one eye on the cashbox. They are seldom successfully robbed, due to the watchfulness of Mikal and the wild dog Barnabas, and the extraordinary hearing of Murphy, the little wizened driver.

The Lords, while a very popular attraction, are not liked by all within the city. In particular, the troupe has been a long-standing thorn in the side of Cleff and his minions, whose rules and fees they largely disdain. It is said that Cleff has been denied vengeance against the troupe by the Council itself (while other rumors assert that the Lords have earned their immunity by doing a considerable amount of spying against the Samili during their travels). Nonetheless, Cleff's agents can usually be found loitering in the vicinity of the troupe's wagon, hoping to find some evidence of indiscretion that will give them a hold over these mysterious outsiders, or causing trouble by heckling or causing some other disturbance while a performance is in progress. Anyone seen too frequently in their company will risk trouble from the Lord of Darkness and his aides.

The troupe's activities can prove of interest to players in a number of ways. For the proper amount of monetary inducement, a group can probably (base 50%, + 5% for each 10 GP offered) coax Keri into providing details about some long lost treasure sufficient to set them on its trail (albeit not complete enough information to lead them to its resting place without further investigation). Ravenhair is an inveterate gambler, given to unusually strong hot and cold streaks; players may be able to ride along with one of these streaks and make a large profit. Finally, all the Lords are inordinately fond of puzzles and challenges of all types, and will often take people up on seemingly impossible bets (e.g., "I bet you can't steal the clapper off the bell in the turret off the north wall") — it is dangerous to bet against them in such circumstances.

F) Brothers of Mordecai —

The players hear shouts and sounds of a struggle emanating from a small unadorned building located on a nearby sidestreet. Further investigation will reveal 4 High Priests of Zatak sacking a crude ceremonial chamber over the feeble protective efforts of several brown-robed individuals, two of whom appear to be rather badly injured.

The brown-robed men and women are members of the Brotherhood of Mordecai, an outlawed sect opposed to violence and dedicated to healing and service. The sect has a modest following, particularly among the inhabitants of the Gauntlet and the poorer tribes of the Zaf'akhari, but suffers substantial persecution, operating out of makeshift centers of worship like this one and lacking any permanent temples. Any area natives in the players' party will likely (60%) be able to identify members of the Brotherhood by their robes. Anyone seen giving assistance to the Brotherhood will risk the enmity of the followers of the Flame. Nonetheless, there are two potential reasons why the

players might want to offer such aid, either during or after the assault of the Priests:

- 1) The Brothers of Mordecai possess the most extensive knowledge of the healing craft in the province and will teach their secrets to any who will renounce war and vow never again to shed blood except in self-defense. (GM's Note: It is likely that this knowledge has been obtained through contact with the few surviving loremasters of the Old Forest.)
- 2) Legends abound that, in times of great need (flood, famine, or other disaster), the Brothers of Mordecai are 'miraculously' able to provide food, clothing and supplies, and otherwise succor the afflicted. Many believe that these relief efforts are funded by some sort of large secretly-held treasury and have sought (thus far unsuccessfully) to locate it.

Alternatively, of course, the players may attempt to curry favor with the cult by joining in the desecration of the shrine. Given the arrogance of the priests and the undistinguished threat posed by their targets, this is unlikely to prove a successful gambit (10% base chance of a positive reaction; add 5% to die roll result for each point of MAG>12 possessed by the player party's leader).

G) Lost Tribesman — The players are approached by a young lad of about 15, dressed in the coarse bright-colored homespun of the northern natives. The boy, Senri (#104) will proclaim himself lost, and entreat the players (with a promise of a free meal, a small reward or a useful contact) to help him locate the trading party he is traveling with. The latter group will be set up in the Bazaar (#J), providing an opportunity for the GM to enmesh the players with the exotic inhabitants of this locale. Conversely, this encounter may have its own interesting repercussions (roll D6):

- 1-3) Nothing unusual happens while the players are escorting the boy home.
- 4) En route to the bazaar, the group's young charge will manage to insult a member of the Guard who is hastily pushing his way through the crowd. The latter will demand apology or seek retribution against one and all involved. Regardless of the outcome of this encounter, the Guard will bear a grudge against the players.
- 5) Upon reaching the party of natives, the players will find that the most experienced bargainer from that group has taken ill with food poisoning. Players with appropriate trading skills may take the latter's place, and demand a 10-20% cut of the profits; others in the party may decide to take it upon themselves to locate the source of the food poisoning (possibly the pushcart of Chugach the Vendor).
- 6) Upon reaching the party of natives, the players will find them embroiled in an argument with a small group of colorfully robed foreigners (#105 to #108) over territorial rights to the particular stall both seek to occupy in the Bazaar. After a few moments, this argument is sure to catch the attention of one or more of Cleff's agents. If the players act on behalf of the villagers by greasing the appropriate palms, such that the foreign interlopers are driven off, the latter will attempt to make an attack on the party sometime during the next 24 hours. If the GM prefers, these foreigners may have some item in their possession (a ring with a message cached in a hidden compartment, a treasure map, etc.) that has brought them to Zal' Akhen, and can

make the encounter profitable to the player characters. In such an event, an elderly man bearing further information relating to this lead will appear at the contested stall during the evening following the altercation looking for 'Abdor', the leader of the foreigners' party.

(GM's Note: In a more extreme version of the initial encounter, the young peasant may have been mugged and robbed while wandering the city, and returned to the Bazaar to find that his fellow tribesmen have already left for home. Totally untrained but eager, the lad will offer to do almost anything for the players in exchange for eventual safe passage home.

H) Stallion for Sale —

The players encounter a shill from the Horse Market, who will approach the players, offering them a 'special deal' on a black stallion 'fast as the wind'. If the players go to the Market, they will discover that the shill's claims are no exaggeration; unfortunately, the beast is also the most foul-tempered, violent mount anyone can remember encountering. Keesuf and his assistants have barely been able to keep the stallion (a monstrous beast of over 20 hands in height) under control with drugs and restraints, and want nothing more than to get the beast off their hands at a price sufficient to cover the costs of the damage he has already caused. If any among the party are Expert Horsemen, however, they may (50 + 2 x INT %) see the spark of a warhorse's intelligence in the animal's wild eyes.

If the players purchase this beast, they will find that breaking him is no easy chore. Only an Expert Horseman may even attempt to such an effort, and only one such character may attempt the task in a given time period. To break this beast, one must successfully roll 18 or more on 3D four times, making the following adjustments to each roll:

- +1 for each point of CDN or REF above 15
- +2 for each point of STR above 16
- +1 for each 4 weeks of consecutive effort
- 1 for each consecutive week of inactivity between training efforts

Players may choose to make either one or two die rolls per week. If an adjusted die roll result of 9 or less is obtained, the player sustains minor damage (1D4) from a fall or bite; on a 5 or less, major damage (2D6, REF saving roll to avoid a broken arm/leg) is sustained. GMs can readily see that it might be unwise for a player to announce that he is "going to break this horse or die trying!" — he just might. While unbroken, the animal is also likely to cause considerable damage to any stall or corral in which he is kept, and may escape if the area is not appropriately watched.

Should a trainer successfully persevere, however, he should find the effort and risk well worth the while. The stallion has a STR of 38, STM of 30, Agility of 21, and has an exceptional SPD rating for a horse of his size — 23. Once trained, he will bear no other rider or handler, and can be taught to obey almost any simple one-word command (attack, come, charge, etc.). Anyone other than the breaker attempting to handle the beast will probably run afoul of the full range of his vicious temperament (rating of 4). The stallion will always retain vestiges of his former wildness, and will perform

best if allowed to run free at least a portion of the time. The beast will always return within 4–24 hours, unless it has been mistreated.

I) Horsebreakers —

In the Horse Market, the Bazaar, or one of the city's taverns, the players encounter a small group of several independent horsebreakers, apparently fresh from selling their stock and seeking to hire additional trail riders for their return to the northern plains. To be hired, at least 2/3 of the players' party should have either Expert Horsemanship or Woodsman skills (Exception: see situation 4 and 6 below). If the players decide to hire on, they will discover that their new employers are (roll D6):

1–3) Very competent practitioners of their trade, with a highly skilled trail boss, Rhau d'Ahetz (#107). The group includes a skilled veterinarian, 2 expert trackers, and 5 Expert Horsemen.

4) An essentially competent group who, through a run of bad fortune, have had their financial resources severely depleted, and who as a result are planning an exceedingly risky venture into the Northern plains. The course of this adventure will depend on the mood of the GM and the cash resources of the players, and can range from the group's straightforward admission that it needs up-front funds, to the mounting of a dangerously undersupplied expedition. GMs should note that this group can probably be convinced to hire on the rawest of tenderfeet if the party has enough cold cash to contribute.

5) An excellent group comprised entirely of Expert Horsemen, under the leadership of Kohl J'Unggar (#108) and his two younger brothers, Tamal and Rayal (#109 and #110, respectively). The group is very well bankrolled and will carry on in high style (including the players in their revels) during their last 2–3 days in the city; it will also spring for any additional equipment (save horses) that their new employees require (they will likely hire on 2D4 additional men beside the player's party). The players may believe that they have found a virtual paradise of a job; they will not learn the group's problem and the source of its decision to hire new men until their return to the plains. Thereafter, it will soon become apparent that the J'Unggars are engaged in a full-scale range war with their ex-partners, a group of 4D6 less experienced horsemen (many of whom are former soldiers) led by a hot-tempered ex-cavalryman named Franklin J'Hessii (#111). The players will be treated as fair game in an escalating series of poaching, sabotage, and bushwhacking incidents that will continue until a truce is worked out, or one side is decimated beyond functional limits.

6) A moderately successful group of bandits, seeking the greater firepower of larger numbers. The group is more likely to be interested in the players' Silent Movement and weapons skills than their horsebreaking talents, which may arouse the suspicions of their new hirelings. The group will of, course, remain on the move extensively, never stopping in any location for more than a few days. The bandits are not cold-blooded murderers, but their leader, Bobif the Stick (#112), bears a hefty price on his head in the area around Faldrin Castle, as a result of importune comments made within the hearing of the Warden of that Keep.

J) Pilgrimage Processional —

A large group of 300-400 faithful fill the street ahead, as their processional begins to wind its way toward the Chieftain's Gate, heading in the direction of Earthsheart. More people are joining the procession as it passes; the players may do so as well if they wish. The procession will be accompanied by substantial amount of sacrificial livestock, and the pilgrims will include several hooded members of the Legion of Fiery Vengeance and 4-6 (3 + 1D3 High Priests of Za'tak. There is a 40% chance that the Archpriest Hrinah al'Casoom will be among the pilgrims, signifying a ritual of great importance. Roll D6 to determine the results of this journey:

1-3) Nothing extraordinary will happen on the 10 day trip to Earthsheart, and the ceremonial rites will proceed without a hitch. GMs should design a number of small vignettes between pilgrimage participants — a fugitive or thief hiding out in the processional, an argument between two of the High Priests, a birth (a fortuitous omen, or a very bad one if something goes wrong), a murder attempt, etc. — to keep the party entertained during the trip. Native Za'takhari can use the pilgrimage as a means of demonstrating their devotion to the God-King, and all may use the journey as a way to make valuable contacts with characters of many different stripes.

4) In addition to the aforementioned general encounters, the pilgrimage will be visited by a manifestation of Za'tak on the D6th night of travel. One or more players may witness this vision, or indeed be

the primary source of the visitation. The vision will show the God-King wreathed in fire, wielding the Sworc of Samor against a multitude of shimmering, dark-visaged foes, on a craggy hillside with a tall but unrecognizable mountain peak.

The vision — and its interpretation — will be a matter of great controversy among those assembled, particularly between those who did and did not see it; this conflict will be particularly acute — and potentially dangerous to the seers — if none of the High Priests accept the manifestation as real, there will likely be one or more expeditions formed upon the pilgrimage's return the Zal' Akhen charged with seeking out the spot witnessed in the dream.

(GM's Note: As previously discussed, we believe it would be extremely undesirable to introduce a gross order artifact like the Sword of Samor into the High Valley at this juncture; we suggest alternatively that the site depicted contain some lesser artifact of value to the cult's magic, or a further lead to the Sword's true location. To add to the effect, the area should be guarded by a number of undead similar in description to Za'tak's foemen in the dream.)

5) The procession will be attacked as it nears Earthsheart by a small band of elite Samili raiders and highly skilled mercenaries, who have made the arduous, circuitous journey overland across the Hills of Obrahi precisely for the purpose of blocking the timely completion of the planned ceremonies. For the purposes of this encounter, this pilgrimage should be considered to be tied to a major cult ritual (20% chance it may even be the ceremonies commemorating the opening of Earthsheart or the First Passing of Za'tak). Failure to complete the ceremony would be regarded as an extraordinarily ill omen, said to surely lead to famine, pestilence, or other tragedy (and quite possibly doing just that, depending on the credence given by the individual GM to Za'tak's actual active power). At the very least, the crisis caused by this incident would seriously undermine confidence in the current cult/state leadership, and might even precipitate an immediate challenge. Conversely, if the Samili forces are repulsed, those who distinguish themselves with heroic acts during this battle will have the way cleared for them to make substantial leaps in the Temple city's military hierarchy.

6) The procession will encounter advance elements of the army of Eastmarch, investigating rumors of a raiding party similar to the one mentioned above. Several of these scouts will accompany the processional for the balance of the day. If Hrinah is accompanying the pilgrims, one will leave the camp shortly after dusk in the company of two of these soldiers. Anyone brazen enough to follow the Archpriest and careful enough to escape detection will discover his desination to be a modest campsite inhabited by the Holder of Eastmarch, and a small contingent of his personal guard. Anyone witnessing the evening's tete-a-tete will have ample reason to suspect hanky-panky between the two; nothing, however, could be further from the truth. As a result, any indiscriminate inquiries about this matter, or an attempt to directly confront one party or the other, is likely to give the teller of such tales an excellent opportunity to observe Following's fighting skills first-hand.



An Explanation of Character Statistics

Characters described in the following pages are presented in a format consistent with Gamelords' Thieves Guild rules. The TG system specifies ten racially adjusted requisite characteristics, rolled on 3D6 - **strength** (STR), **coordination** (CDN), **reflexes** (REF), **stamina** (STM), **discretion** (DSC; common sense - not wisdom), **intelligence** (IQ, adaptiveness), **talent** (TAL, representing a character's innate magical ability), **magic resistance** (MGR, used for saving throws versus most arcane spells and devices), **magnetism** (MAG, leadership ability), and **appearance** (APP). These characteristics are refinements or expansions of those used in most other fantasy role-playing systems, and can be easily adapted as needed. Character advancement in TG occurs by levels; in these modules, characters are assigned to one of five general experience levels for easy reference - **Green** (GR, 1st-2nd Level); **Intermediate** (INT, 3rd-5th); **Veteran** (VET, 6th-8th); **Elite** (EL, 9th-12th); and **Superelite** (SUP, 13th level up).

A list of the more common abbreviations used in TG's rules system are given on the inside front cover. A number of others which may be useful cover Character Classes, Armor Types, and Weapons.

Classes (marked * tend to be NPC classes)

FTR - Fighter	ALC - Alchemist*
ARC - Archer	PRT - Priest
CAV - Cavalryman	PRM - Priestly mage
FOR - Forester	BRD - Bard
THF - Thief	TRD - Trader
HLR - Healer*	MER - Merchant*
MAG - Mage, magician	CSN - Courtesan*
SCH - Scholar, sage*	NON - Non-combatant*

Armor (Class, Absorption)

NON - None, unarmored (0,0)	S&S - Scale, shield (9,3)
CLO - Cloth (2,0)	PLT - Plate armor (10,4)
LTH - Leather (4,1)	P&S - Plate, shield (11,4)
CHN - Chain (6,2)	SKN - Animal skin (varies)
C&S - Chain, shield (7,2)	FUR - Animal fur (varies)
SCA - Scale armor (8,3)	

Weapons

1BBAX - single-bit axe	HXBOW - heavy crossbow
2BBAX - double-bit axe	JAVLN - javelin
BDSWD - broadsword	LBOW - long bow
BLWGN - blowgun	LGAX - large axe
BOWKN - bowie knife	LXBOW - light crossbow
CPBOW - compound bow	MNGCH - main gauch
CTLSS - cutlass	QSTF - quarterstaff
DGR - dagger	RPR - rapier
GRAX - two-handed axe	SBOW - short bow
GRSWD - two-handed sword	SHSWD - shortsword
HBOW - horse bow	SMAX - small axe
HFSWD - bastard sword	THRAX - throwing axe
HLBRD - halberd	THRKN - throwing knife
2HMR - 2-hand hammer	THROW - weapon, thrown
HMR - hammer	WDSAX - woodsmant's axe

Where saving rolls against requisite characteristics are indicated in the text, these rolls are made on 2D12 (player must roll less than or equal to the characteristic used); where pluses or minuses are specified, these modifiers are applied to the characteristic rating before the roll is made (thus a minus reduces the chance for a successful save while a plus helps). Combat rolls are made on a D20; for each

weapon known, characters are assigned a HACØ rating representing the die roll required (= or >) to successfully hit an unarmored (AC Ø) foe (armor ratings are then added as modifiers to this base value).

Characters with arcane abilities are not given detailed lists of known spells, but are instead rated numerically on a scale of from Very Weak to Excellent (VW - Very Weak, WK - Weak, AV - Average, ST - Strong, VS - Very Strong, EX - Excellent) regarding their skills in various spellcasting categories, which include:

Missile; Weather; Elemental Control; Healing; Repair (including material strengthening); Control (persons, both mental/emotional); Plant/Animal; Protective; Fire/Energy; Detection; Communication; Transformation; Transportation; Spirit/Undead; Dimension Affecting (including summoning spells); Illusion; Artificing; Sight and Invisibility; Prophetic (including all forms of divining).

Using these indicators, each GM can define these characters in a way that best utilizes the spell descriptions and rules employed in his/her own campaign. The following notes indicate the level of expertise that each of the mages described in **City of the Sacred Flame** possess with various categories of arcane enchantments. Only those categories for which a wizard has a rating of Strong (ST), Very Strong (VS), or Excellent (EX) are listed.

Hrinah: Fire/Energy - EX; Protective - ST; Transformation - VS; Dimension Affecting - VS; Repair - ST

Taan Ha'myl: Fire/Energy - ST; Missile - ST; Artificing - ST; Detection - ST

Morneya: Fire/Energy - ST; Missile - EX; Control - EX; Transformation - VS; Weather - ST; Dimension Affecting - VS; Detection - ST; Artificing - VS

Hasan-Ri: Fire/Energy - VS; Protective - ST; Plant and Animal - ST; Missile - ST

Chalab-Ra: Healing - EX; Plant/Animal - ST; Repair - ST

Wat'an: None (Protective - AV; Communication - AV)

Zev'aan: Fire/Energy - EX; Communication - ST; Healing - ST; Control - VS (an instinctive ability, as yet untapped)

Bru'kan: Weather - ST; Protective - VS; Dimension Affecting - VS; Spirit/Undead - ST; Control - VS

Boren t'Razell: Fire/Energy - ST; Detection - ST; Transportation - ST

Odron-iel: Fire/Energy - VS; Control - ST; Weather - VS; Artificing - ST; Illusion - ST

Tazal-ri: Fire/Energy - EX; Missile - EX; Protective - ST

Agron-u'lur: Control - VS; Spirit/Undead - ST; Repair - VS; Healing - ST

Cleff: Illusion - EX; Control - EX; Transportation - VS; Communication - VS

Micah h'Raald: Control - ST; Sight and invisibility - ST

Rillias: Dimension Affecting - ST (untapped)

Daniel Gideon: Healing - VS; Plant/Animal - ST

Pavia d'Urbis: Artificing - ST; Repair - ST

Harad-uul: Fire/Energy - ST; Prophetic - ST; Control Elemental - ST

Pense: Weather - ST; Dimension Affecting - VS; Detection - ST

Keri the Fat: Illusion - ST; Protective - VS

Jha'nette: Transformation - ST; Repair - ST

Madame Zorka: Detection - VS; Spirit/Undead - EX

Omar Janus: Control - EX; Transportation - VS

Ogrin l'Armak: Fire/Energy - VS; Missile - ST; Sight and Invisibility - ST

Character Descriptions for CITY OF THE SACRED FLAME

ID#	Name	Character		Requisites												Combat			Armor	
		Notes	Class	Purse	ST	CO	RF	SM	DN	IQ	TL	MR	MG	AP	Weapon	HACO	Damage	Class	HTK	
001	Kirill al-Thallen		VET HU FTR	4D12GP	17	12	14	16	14	08	10	14	15	15	GRSWDe	3	3D8	CHN	7	37
														SMAXe	7	6D3				
														THRAX	4/9/13	1D6				
														SPEAR	5/8	2D5				
002	Gubarin il-Thal		EL HU FTR	5D12GP	11	14	15	12	15	16	12	09	11	12	2BBAXe	4	3D5	LTH	7	44
														BDSWDe	4	3D4				
003	Talassar h'Arren		VET HU NON	2D10GP	07	10	11	07	15	14	06	10	08	09				NON	0	12
004	Jarez		INT HU NON	3D10GP	08	15	12	10	11	14	08	09	04	06	MNGCH	10	1D6	CLO	2	16
005	Bodyguard 1		VET HU FTR	1D6GP	14	12	12	15	09	12	07	12	09	10	THRKNe	2/6/11	1D5	LTH	5	30
														HMRe	4	1D6				
006	Bodyguard 2		INT HU FTR	1D6GP	13	15	14	16	10	11	11	05	11	13	SMAXe	6	4D3	LTH	5	23
														THRAX	3/8/12	1D6				
007	Hrinah al-Casanu		SUP HU PRM	4D6GP	16	15	15	13	13	15	19	19	16	12	SPELLS			CLO	6	38
008	Taan Ha'myl	*	EL HU PRM	5D6GP	11	16	12	09	17	15	16	14	15	09	SPELLS			CLO	4	28
009	Morneya		SUP HU MAG	4D10GP	09	17	14	16	16	17	18	12	10	07	SPELLS			LTH	7	44
010	Hasan-Ri		VET HU PRM	3D10GP	14	14	13	14	09	14	17	07	13	11	SPELLS			LTH	5	27
														WRHMR	7	2D6				
011	Chalab-Ra	*	VET HU HLR	2D6GP	12	17	14	10	14	13	16	22	16	15	SPELLS			NON	1	20
012	Zev'aan		INT HU PRM	1D8GP	10	13	12	08	12	15	15	14	08	12	SPELLS			NON	0	17
013	Wat'an t'Sabah		EL HU FTR	5D12GP	16	15	15	13	08	11	14	12	14	05	2BBAXe	4	4D5	LTH	6	34
														LBOWe	0/4/7	1D6				
														SPELLS						
014	Bru'kan	t	VET HU MAG	2D6GP	05	13	10	11	16	17	16	04	04	07	SPELLS			MAG10		21
015	G'war Danh	s	VET HU FTR	2D8GP	14	17	16	11	14	12	10	13	12	13	SPEARE	3/6	4D5	CHN	6	28
														THROW	1/6/11	1D10				
016	Jonpul Gheddi		VET HU FTR	2D10GP	14	11	14	12	17	13	10	08	12	09	SPEARE	4/7	4D5	CLO	3	29
														FLAIL	5	2D5				
017	Conty Cristo		EL HU FOR	5D20GP	15	17	13	12	12	09	07	15	11	10	FLAILe	4	4D5	LTH	6	32
														SPEAR	3/6	3D5				
														LASSOe	3	TANGLE				
018	Varren l'Grinn		EL HU FTR	3D10GP	16	11	14	19	11	08	13	15	13	06	MACEe	6	5D4	CHN	8	41
														1BBAX	4	3D5				
019	Goren s'Paar		VET HU CAV	5D6GP	12	19	16	11	13	12	10	12	10	13	SPEARE	2/5	3D5	LTH	6	24
														FLAIL	4	2D5				
														HBOW	1/4/9	1D6				
020	Herelli Failles		VET HU CAV	2D8GP	11	12	09	06	06	10	05	16	06	07	SPEARE	4/7	3D5	CHN	7	21
														MACE	7	3D4				
														HBOW	4/7/12	1D6				
021	Galax the Quick		VET HU FTR	1D100GP	08	16	19	13	08	13	11	11	15	13	RPRe	2	1D12	CLO	7	22
														THRKNe	2/6/11	1D5				
022	Following		INT HU FTR	1D10GP	23	10	09	15	05	07	07	07	12	07	HFSWD	5	5D6	C&S	7	38
														SMAX	7	5D3				
023	Cleff	t	SUP HU ILL		08	16	12	14	10	15	17	13	06	09	SPELLS			MGC12		36
024	Watsitua		INT HU FTR	2D6GP	16	12	13	11	07	08	03	11	08	10	MACEe	6	5D4	LTH	5	29
025	Odler Blank		VET HU THF	2D20GP	11	08	10	16	15	09	09	12	06	04	SMAXe	6	3D3	CLO	3	24
026	Ann'dra Dragonflower	*	INT HU FTR	3D6GP	10	15	14	12	10	13	12	08	08	14	CTLSS	5	3D3	LTH	5	22
														THRAXe	4/9/13	1D8				
027	Derek z'Aiaar		GR HU FTR	1D6GP	13	11	13	09	07	11	09	17	09	12	MACE	8	3D4	CLO	2	15
028	Rillias		VET HU TDR	2D10GP	07	12	06	13	07	16	14	12	10	05	DGRe	9	1D6	NON	1	17
029	Micah h'Raald	ta3	INT HU TDR	5D20GP	09	15	12	13	11	15	17	13	16	09	SMAX	7	2D3	CLO	5	17
														SPELLS						
030	Hallem Wotts		VET HU FTR	1D10GP	19	15	13	17	03	10	07	10	08	06	LGAXe	3	4D6	LTH	6	48
														MAULe	6	6D4				
031	Seng-hil Holt	*	INT HU THF	1D8GP	05	13	17	10	12	11	10	07	11	10	DGR	9	1D4	NON	3	16
														SLING	2/7/12	1D4				
032	Selig		INT HU TDR	8D20GP	10	14	08	11	14	11	09	15	12	08				NON	0	22
033	Ibbed Mazzek		VET HU MER	3D12GP	09	12	10	12	14	09	06	08	11	10				NON	1	16
034	Lurk		MONKEY		05	14	16	06	02	02	00	11	11	13	BITE	7	1D3	SKN	3	15
035	Fil Cilvarnes		INT HU THF	2D10GP	07	15	11	09	11	10	08	12	08	09	KNIFE	8	1D4	CLO	3	16
036	Willem Koh		INT HU THF	3D12GP	06	13	13	08	12	09	10	08	11	07	MNGCH	7	1D6	CLO	3	13
037	Pense		VET HU BRD	1D10GP	11	16	11	12	13	14	10	09	14	12	SMAX	7	2D3	LTH	5	19
														KNIFE	8	1D4				

Character Descriptions for CITY OF THE SACRED FLAME

ID#	Name	Character		Requisites												Combat			Armor	
		Notes	Class	Purse	ST	CO	RF	SM	DN	IQ	TL	MR	MG	AP	Weapon	HACO	Damage	Class	HTK	
038	Chugach	p2	INT HU MER	3D12GP	15	08	10	11	07	08	06	05	06	07	SPELLS CLEVR	8	1D5	NON 2	18	
039	Tench		INT HU NON	1D6GP	08	12	09	10	09	13	14	10	12	07				NON 0	12	
040	Mannimo Pepp		INT HU MER	4D10GP	09	15	13	09	15	15	08	14	06	04				NON 0	11	
041	Anjak Pepp		GR HU MER	2D10GP	16	09	11	15	04	09	07	07	09	04	LGAX	8	2D6	LTH 4	23	
042	Kaspar		VET HU TDR	5D10GP	11	12	12	11	15	12	08	11	10	09	SHSWD	8	2D3	LTH 4	20	
043	Guard 1		INT HU FTR	1D8GP	15	12	14	13	10	09	06	09	12	09	SPEAR	5/8	3D5	CHN 6	22	
044	Guards 2-5		GR HU FTR	1D4GP	13	11	13	12	08	07	06	09	10	09	SMAX 1BBAX LBOW	7 7 4/8/11	4D3 2D5 1D6	CLO 2	18	
045	Barranca Castomilla *		GR HU MER	1D12GP	06	14	13	12	14	13	11	12	13	16	KNIFE	13	1D4	CLO 2	10	
046	Kinsmen 1-3		GR HU FTR	1D8GP	13	12	08	15	10	08	06	12	10	09	MACE	8	3D4	LTH 4	19	
047	High Priest Harad-uul		INT HU PRM	2D20GP	11	12	11	15	08	13	15	11	10	14	SPELLS			CLO 2	17	
048	Omali s		VET HU MER	4D12GP	15	08	09	11	12	11	10	11	15	10	WRHMRe	7	3D6	CHN 4	21	
049	Ferris Waybridge		INT HU TDR	2D10GP	10	11	16	09	13	09	06	15	10	08	BDSWD	8	2D4	LTH 5	11	
050	Bravos 1-2		INT HU FTR	1D12GP	12	10	07	12	12	10	08	10	06	13	SPEARE	4/7	3D5	LTH 4	20	
051	Keesuf		EL HU TDR	5D8GP	12	15	18	09	12	10	10	10	07	12	KNIFE THRKN LASSO	8 4/8/13 6	1D4 1D4 TANGLE	LTH 8	27	
052	Horse Mkt Guards 1-4		INT HU FTR	1D10GP	10	14	16	11	08	12	11	09	10	08	SPEAR LASSO	4/7 5	2D5 TANGLE	CLO 4	22	
053	Horse Mkt Guards 5-8 b		INT HU FTR	1D10GP	09	15	13	12	13	09	07	11	06	11	SPEAR BOLO	4/7 1/6/11	2D5 1D5	LTH 5	19	
054	Horse Mkt Guards 9-12		GR HU FTR	1D6GP	12	12	10	11	09	11	08	14	12	09	SPEAR LASSO	6/9 6	2D5 TANGLE	CLO 2	17	
055	Brittum Degan		VET HU MER	2D20GP	06	16	07	12	12	07	13	06	09	07	SAP	9	2D2	NON 1	17	
056	Bombo Strump		GR HU MER	1D4GP	05	07	14	14	07	05	08	17	06	15				NON 0	13	
057	Ansel s'Thallen		INT HU FTR	3D20GP	16	16	11	09	05	09	05	11	14	14	SMAX	5	4D3	NON 1	21	
058	Auldric One-Eye		VET HU FTR	2D12GP	15	12	13	07	10	14	08	10	12	07	2BBAXe	5	3D5	LTH 5	26	
059	Daniel Gideon		VET HU HLR	2D6GP	07	16	10	15	13	15	14	09	13	08				NON 0	23	
060	Malthor t'Challa		INT HU MER	1D20GP	16	09	08	11	12	08	12	09	09	13				NON 0	21	
061	Caerwyn d'Arrek		EL HU CAV	2D12GP	12	14	11	16	14	12	07	13	11	12	SPEARE SMAXe	3/6 5	3D5 4D3	LTH 6	33	
062	Shalla v'Ron *		INT HU FTR	1D8GP	14	17	15	09	06	10	10	11	09	16	HFSWDe LBOW	6 2/6/9	4D4 1D6	CLO 4	22	
063	Wolgur ann Habli		VET DW TDR	5D20GP	12	15	10	13	12	13	12	10	08	06	WRHMRe	6	2D6	LTH 5	23	
064	Angli ann Balbur		INT DW TDR	1D20GP	09	12	15	17	05	10	05	13	05	08	MACE	9	2D4	CLO 3	18	
065	Olias Pathfinder		VET HU FTR	5D10GP	14	14	11	10	07	09	11	19	12	14	SPEARE LGAXe	4/7 4	4D5 3D6	CLO 4	25	
066	Pavia d'Urbin		INT HU ALC	2D10GP	13	15	08	14	09	13	16	08	10	15	DGR	12	1D4	NON 0	24	
067	Tendal		INT HU MER	1D10GP	10	16	17	10	12	08	06	12	13	12	LBOW	4/8/11	1D6	CLO 3	14	
068	Barlow Tong	s	INT HU FTR	1D8GP	15	11	09	12	07	09	11	10	10	07	WRHMRe	6	3D6	LTH 3	23	
069	Bullies 1-4		GR HU FTR	1D6GP	11	10	14	10	10	06	08	14	08	09	CLUB	8	2D4	CLO 2	16	
070	Verrill		INT HU FTR	1D10SP	10	08	07	10	09	11	12	13	11	04				NON 1	22	
071	Madame Zorka *		VET HU SEE	1D4GP	04	12	11	10	12	14	19	07	13	08	DGR	11	1D4	NON 2	11	
072	Omar Janus d,v		SUP HU VAM	1D4GP	23	12	13	13	17	10	17	12	15	14	BITE FISTS	6 7	1D6 1D10+1	NON 4	59	
073	Sister Turliya *		VET HU PRT	1D6GP	07	09	12	08	13	13	09	13	06	10				NON 1	15	
074	Ogrin t'Armak		INT HU PRM	1D10SP	14	11	06	12	07	10	16	08	05	02	SPELLS			NON 0	17	
075	Boren t'Razell		INT HU PRM	1D6GP	11	10	10	13	08	15	16	14	10	12	SPELLS			CLO 2	18	
076	High Priest Odron-iel		EL HU PRM	2D10GP	07	13	12	16	13	12	17	11	07	08	SPELLS LBOW		2/6/9 1D6	CLO 3	26	
077	High Priest Tazel-Ri		VET HU PRM	2D8GP	13	10	10	14	10	11	19	09	12	09	LBOW SPELLS	3/7/10	1D6	LTH 5	26	
078	High Priest Agron-u'lur		VET HU PRM	2D8GP	08	17	17	08	12	14	16	18	08	14	SPELLS			CLO 4	16	
079	Soltar t'Barr		VET HU CAV	6D20GP	14	15	12	13	07	10	12	08	13	12	1BBAXe SPEARE	4 4/7	3D5 3D5	LTH 6	26	
080	Eiroten m'Raald		VET HU FTR	5D100GP	13	11	12	09	12	07	15	06	10	11	HLBRDe LBOW	2/6 1/5/8	3D6 1D6	CLO 4	27	
081	Ramona *		GR HU NON	1D10GP	09	12	08	09	13	11	10	07	11	16				NON 0	11	
082	Shallayne *		GR HU NON	1D4GP	08	09	13	12	12	10	14	15	13	16	DGR	13	1D4	NON 0	14	

Character Descriptions for CITY OF THE SACRED FLAME

ID#	Name	Character		Requisites												Combat			Armor	
		Notes	Class	Purse	ST	CO	RF	SM	DN	IQ	TL	MR	MG	AP	Weapon	HACO	Damage	Class	HTK	
083	Yshalla	*	GR HU CSN	1D6GP	08	13	11	11	08	10	10	07	14	17	DGR	13	1D4	NON 0	14	
084	Alex of Burningtree		VET HU FTR	6D12GP	17	15	11	13	12	10	06	06	15	12	2BBAXe	3	4D5	LTH 6	43	
085	Guards 1-2		VET HU FTR	1D10GP	12	12	10	14	12	08	12	08	12	08	1BBAXe	4	3D5	CLO 3	29	
086	Guards 3-5		INT HU FTR	1D10GP	13	11	12	10	15	10	07	09	08	11	1BBAX	5	2D5	LTH 5	22	
087	Guards 6-8		GR HU FTR	1D6GP	15	09	16	13	06	11	10	14	09	10	1BBAX	7	2D5	CLO 3	19	
088	Dokli (Kidnapper 1)		VET HU FTR	2D6GP	14	14	08	12	09	13	12	09	09	12	HMRe	6	3D6	CLO 3	27	
089	Kidnappers 2-3		VET HU FTR	1D6GP	10	11	10	14	11	07	09	16	08	11	SPEARE	4/7	3D5	LTH 5	24	
090	Kidnappers 4-5		INT HU FTR	1D4GP	15	10	11	11	08	09	05	12	13	12	CLUB	8	3D4	NON 1	21	
091	Goran h'Lal		VET HU FTR	1D20GP	09	14	15	12	09	12	08	15	10	06	MACEe	6	3D4	CHN 7	25	
092	Pellakos		VET HU FTR	3D4GP	16	10	12	12	07	10	11	09	06	13	DGR	8	1D4	CHN 7	31	
															BDSWDe	5	4D4			
															FISTS	7	1D4			
093	Galar of Meldrin		VET HU SCH	2D10GP	10	10	16	08	11	17	11	04	14	08	LBOW	3/7/10	1D6	LTH 6	16	
094	Filius Ney		EL HU TDR	3D100GP	06	11	10	12	14	11	10	11	13	10	DGR	9	1D4	CLO 4	22	
095	Purnie		INT HU SCH	1D6GP	13	08	12	09	12	05	07	10	11	16	SMAX	9	3D3	NON 0	16	
096	Falagh		VET HU FTR	1D8GP	18	08	10	15	03	06	13	06	08	12	GRSWDe	3	3D8	NON 2	36	
097	Coral	*	INT HU THF	2D12GP	06	13	15	08	10	11	09	10	07	13	SAP	8	2D2	LTH 5	14	
098	Keri the Fat	x	EL HU BRD	2D6GP	16	12	11	11	08	14	14	08	14	08	SLING	1/6/11	1D4	CLO 4	32	
															2BBAXe	4	4D4			
099	Mikal the Silent		VET HU FTR	5D20GP	12	14	16	10	12	12	08	16	09	11	RPre	3	1D12	CLO 5	27	
															DGR	7	1D4			
100	Jha'nette	*	VET HU BRD	1D6GP	04	16	12	08	09	11	13	14	07	10	LBOWe	1/5/8	1D6	NON 1	13	
101	Rikar Ravenhair		VET HU FTR	3D8GP	17	07	11	15	15	13	05	12	13	09	DGR	8	1D4	LTH 6	39	
															LGAXe	4	3D6			
102	Murphy		INT HU NON	1D10GP	05	12	14	16	10	04	12	07	06	13	LBOW	1/5/8	1D6	NON 0	16	
103	Barnabas		HUGE DOG		13	08	12	15	03	02	00	11	14	12	WHIP	8	1D4			
104	Senri		GR HU NON	1D6SP	08	13	11	12	07	11	07	10	08	13	3ITE	4	1D6	FUR 3	21	
105	Abdor (leader)		VET HU FTR	2D6GP	12	10	13	16	08	13	13	10	07	06	DGR	13	1D4	NON 0	14	
106	Foreigners 1-4		INT HU FTR	1D6GP	13	08	11	09	09	09	09	11	09	09	SCIM	4	2D6	LTH 6	28	
107	Rhau d'Ahetz		VET HU FOR	5D8GP	14	12	17	13	15	10	03	08	11	11	CTLSS	5	3D3	LTH 5	25	
108	Kohl j'Unggar		EL HU FOR	2D100GP	14	17	13	12	07	13	11	10	12	16	LGAX	4	2D6	CLO 5	30	
															LASSO	5	TANGLE			
															SLING	1/6/11	1D4			
109	Tamal j'Unggar		VET HU FOR	3D20GP	09	13	16	12	13	12	12	15	10	08	SPEARE	3/6	4D5	LTH 6	33	
															WHIPe	3	1D6			
110	Raya! j'Unggar		VET HU FOR	2D20GP	12	15	14	10	11	09	05	12	08	17	LBOWe	0/4/7	1D6	NON 3	23	
															WHIP	6	1D4			
111	Franklin j'Hessii		VET HU CAV	1D10GP	13	15	12	12	06	11	07	15	10	14	WRHMR	5	2D6	LTH 5	28	
															LASSOe	3	TANGLE			
112	Bobif the Stick	b	VET HU THF	2D10GP	08	15	19	09	12	10	06	03	14	08	SPEARE	3/6	3D5	LTH 5	26	
															HBOW	2/5/10	1D6			
															SMAXe	6	3D3	CLO 6	19	
															BOLO	1/6/11	1D5			

Notes:

- * Female
- t Magically enchanted weapon or armor (value given)
- a NPC wearing valuable/ostentatious personal jewelry
- b Bolo is normally used to tangle foe's leg (1D6mm to remove); weapon is -4 HP if thrown to damage
- d Only silver or magical weapons can cause damage
- e Expert with weapon
- j NPC wearing some jewelry
- m NPC has useful (but not combat related) magic item on person
- o NPC has potent offensive magic item on person
- p NPC has protective magic item on person (value given)
- s Armor consists of shirt only; no protection for head and extremities
- u Untrained with weapon
- v Vampire's bite does additional damage to STM -- 2D4 (halved if saving roll against current STM); if STM reaches 0, victim dies
- x Short handled version of weapon being used

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PRIMITIVE PASSIONS...

run high in the city of Zal' Akhen, from the gladiatorial combats of the Arena to the gaudily displayed delights of the great trade Bazaar, and in the hearts of the fanatical zealots who serve the Temple of Zat'ak as High Priests or as warriors in the Legion of Fiery Vengeance. As the capital of the loose confederation of tribes that occupy the northern and eastern reaches of the High Valley, there are men and women here who wield great power — including skilled battle mages in the highest levels of the Temple hierarchy, the mysterious Cleff, the unchallenged master of the bazaar, and the Lord of Zal' Akhen, the hereditary ruler of the Council of Nations and Supreme Commander of the Zat'akhari army. Despite its present might, Zal' Akhen remains a city heavily focused on its past — and its prophesised future. The seven eternal flames maintained around the city symbolize the meteoric seven year reign of the warrior wizard Zat'ak, who purchased great power at the cost of his soul, and whose dying words swore that he would return to claim his revenge on those who had defeated him. And so the Temple and the people of Zal' Akhen serve his memory and watch — and wait.

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City of the Sacred Flame contains a detailed city map, dozens of shop and NPC descriptions, city encounter tables, and two complete introductory scenarios — enough material for months of adventuring. If you like rough-and-tumble excitement with an exotic flavor, then the city of Zal' Akhen is the place for you!

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